



# PENGUIN POST

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The Best, Worst and First Fifth and Sixth Grade Newspaper

Cost: Priceless

## A Conversation with Lesley Ryan Miller

by Sixth Grade Reporters



Principal Ryan Miller

Lesley Ryan Miller began as Pierce's Interim Principal this fall. To learn more about our Principal, her impressions of Pierce, and her vision for the school, *Penguin Post* sixth grade reporters conducted a group interview with Ms. Ryan Miller a few months into the job. Here are excerpts from the conversation.

### **Currently, what's the biggest problem or issue you're trying to improve at Pierce?**

One thing that's a challenge is making sure that regardless of what grade you're in, your ethnicity, socio-economic demographics, or your learning style, that there's equity. A lot of times when we say equity, people think we're talking about race, but I'm thinking about a lot more than that. One of the things I think a lot about is space and how equitable is our space as well as ensuring we use our space as efficiently as possible. I'll give you an example: we have a lot different after school programs. We have Pierce School Extended Day (PSED) that serves about 200 students. At the same time, we have the play, which also serves a large number of students, and both need access to the auditorium. We are always thinking about situations like this and how we make sure that all students have equitable access to needed space, resources, and curriculum.

### **What other jobs did you have before this one?**

I worked in Boston Public Schools for 20 years. I taught first grade for a long time. I also taught Kindergarten and worked at the Superintendent's Office. I knew Mr. Bott from Boston, so when he had an opening here, he called and told me about it, and I decided to apply. Prior to coming to Pierce School, I was a Senior Director for K-8 Teaching and Learning in Brookline and oversaw Math, English Language Arts, Science, Social Studies, and World Language curriculum. I worked very closely with the Curriculum Coordinators for these different program areas.

### **What do you think is most unique about Pierce? And what's your favorite thing about Pierce?**

I think you know what I'm going to say is most unique: Unit A. This open space is incredibly unique. The first time I saw it, I thought, "How does this work?" Now that I've seen it in action, it's very impressive. I sometimes go up to the very top and observe Pierce students and teachers at work. My dad came to visit. I took him up there and he was just amazed. If you go up to what's called the "Eagle's Nest," you can see over 300 students at work, learning, working hard. It's pretty incredible.

I have two favorite things: the staff and the students. The staff has been so wonderful. They're very solutions-oriented. When there's a problem, they don't just come to me and say, "Here's the problem. You're the principal, so you have to fix it." Usually when there's a problem, they come to me with a potential solution, which is awesome. The students have been so kind, so wonderful, and hard-working.

Another thing that I think is pretty cool is that we're actually in multiple buildings. I think for our older students, it's good practice for when they go to Brookline High School and will be required to move between different buildings for their classes.

### **What do you think of the learning environment with the open classroom? Is it harder or is it more productive than other places you've seen?**

It seems to me the students are doing incredibly well. Maybe because you've been in this space, you've learned to adjust to it. It's really interesting when new parents come, and I take them on a tour of the school. They've heard about the open space and they're usually pretty nervous about it, but then when they come and see it, they're like, "Oh, this works!" Another positive is that often teachers are isolated in their classrooms and don't have the opportunity for frequent collaboration. The open space helps facilitate productive cross-classroom collaboration.

### **Is this your first time being a principal and, if so, how do you think it's going so far?**

This is my first time being a principal, and I think especially for my first year doing something, it's going pretty smoothly and much better than I could ever have dreamed and expected. I have worked, though, in schools as an assistant principal for many years and my husband is a principal, so I know a lot about the principalship. It's also helpful to work with Vice Principals John Badger and Jim Stoddard. We meet regularly, plan, and brainstorm together. I'm really looking forward to future years because I think it gets a little bit easier as you go. So while it's really hard work, it's work that I love and I'm learning a lot. I'm always striving for continuous improvement as a school leader in the domains of instructional leadership, management and operations, family and community engagement, and professional culture.

### **If you were to apply to be the new principal, what would make you want to stay at Pierce?**

That's actually very relevant right now because our Superintendent Andrew Bott just started the search for a new principal at Pierce, and I am going to apply for the job. I feel like I've gotten to know so many of you and so many of the teachers, and I feel like it's been a really good fit so

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Sixth Grade journalists with Principal Ryan Miller



## A Conversation with Lesley Ryan Miller

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far. With the teachers, we're already doing something called "collaborative inquiry," which is looking at multiple types of school data (e.g., enrollment data, student achievement data, and student demographics). This is going to help us collaboratively create a school improvement plan that we'll follow for several years, and I just want to be here to do that work with teachers and students. It's really hard for me to think about starting that really important work and leaving before we actually get to do it. So I'm going to apply for the job - fingers crossed!

**You used to work in Boston. What are some of the similarities and differences between Boston and here?**

One of the big differences is that Boston schools are not what we call "community schools." Boston's a much bigger school district — there are about 142 schools there — that's K-12. Children don't always live close to the school they attend. For instance, the last school I worked in was in Mattapan. We had children who came from East Boston, Charlestown, Mattapan, Dorchester, and Roxbury. We had about 30 buses that came to the school, which had about 700 students. Compare that to Pierce, which has about 870 students, and we have 2 buses that aren't full. This is a

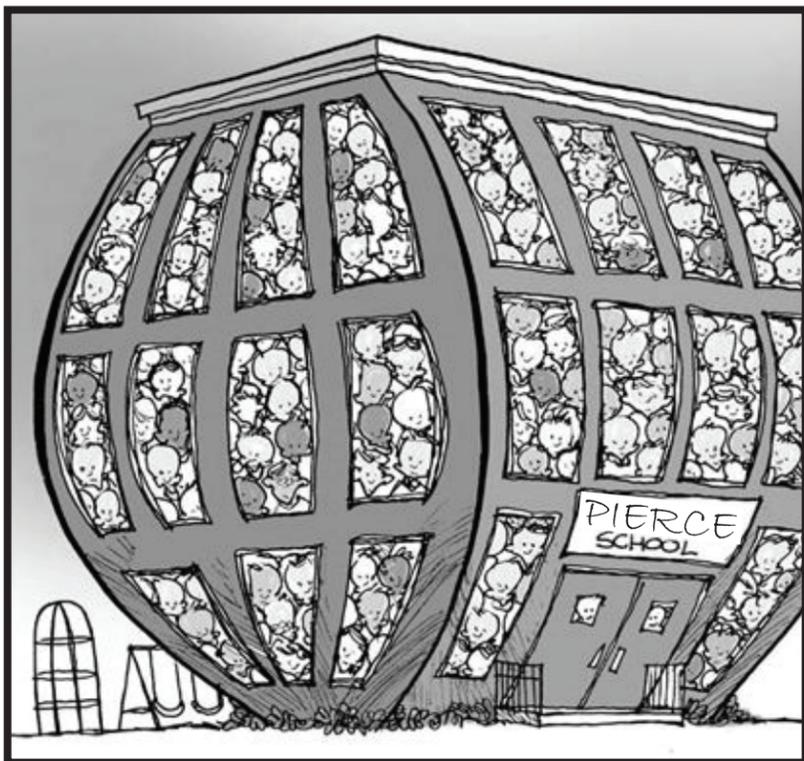
community school so most of the students who go to school here live in the area. That has been a really big difference, but a really welcome difference because I think that it's very powerful for people who live in an area to join together and work together in support of something. And the community here is very supportive of Pierce School.

One of the other differences is that there just aren't as many resources in Boston as there are in Brookline. So if a student needs extra help, here we have many different types of specialists and supports for students and teachers. But not all schools have that kind of support. I'm very thankful that we do have those resources here in Brookline.

In terms of similarities, there are great students in Boston and great students in Brookline. A lot of the curriculum is the same. We use a lot of the same text books, and a lot of the same topics are covered. I also think kids face some of the same issues — growing up and figuring out friendships, and things of that nature. The students' issues are similar, but the difference is the resources available in Brookline to help to solve some of those problems.

## Is Pierce about to Pop?

by Sasha H. and Hannah W.



It's not uncommon to see students bumping into each other in the crowded halls of the Pierce School. After all, with 875 students enrolled at the school this year, it is one of the largest public elementary schools in Brookline. School overcrowding is a major challenge for our community to resolve.

Pierce started out small, but over the years it has grown to the four-building school that we know today. Pierce opened in 1855 as a four-classroom school. In 1901, a second building was built. Three years later, an eight-room addition was added to the original building. Then in 1970, the second building was torn down to make way for what is now called the Main Building. From 2005 to 2015, Brookline K-8 enrollment has increased by 40%. A Massachusetts state guideline report done in 2012 shows that Pierce is 36% over capacity, making us the most over-populated school in the district. This overcrowding issue directly affects all Pierce students, with middle schoolers possibly feeling the most significant impacts. We interviewed 7th grader Charlotte S. and teacher Susan Leipman to hear their opinions on the matter.

When asked about the challenges of overcrowding, Charlotte said that she faced long walks from building to building while stressing about being late for class, which can be extremely uncomfortable when the cold weather of New England sets in. To make matters worse, she has to carry binders, books, and notebooks because some lockers can be in the most inconvenient places. Charlotte comments, "I'm lucky because I only have classes in three buildings." Some kids have classes in all four of Pierce's spaces, which can mean walking from the Teen Center to the Historical Building. Charlotte notes, "Sometimes, teachers keep us overtime, so we really have to rush to get to class on time!"

Ms. Leipman, a second grade teacher at Pierce, grew up in Brookline and went to Pierce for nine years. She has worked at Pierce for 23 years and has three daughters who have gone or still go to Pierce. When she was asked about the issue, she talked about how much Pierce has grown over the years. When she started teaching, Pierce only had three classes in each grade and 18 to 21 students in each class. Today, most of the grades have five classes with 23 to 24 students. Ms. Leipman says, "With more kids in a class, teachers have to spread ourselves out more to give each student individual attention." She also talked about how Pierce is running out of classroom space. In the cafeteria, students face long lines to get food and have to eat lunch very early. Some gym classes now take place in the auditorium and the Brookline Teen Center. When asked if she had any ideas for solutions to this problem, she thought that building another K-8 school was a good idea, but in the short term, she hopes Pierce can find another building like the former Benefitness space to use for more classrooms.

Many Brookline citizens and governing bodies are getting together to address this issue and discuss solutions that include the addition of a ninth school. There are many disagreements about the location for this ninth school. Therefore, the overcrowding problem will not be resolved as quickly as many had hoped. In the meantime, among the possible solutions, Pierce could continue to find new spaces to rent. Another idea is to renovate and enlarge the Pierce School, which is currently being studied.

**Information and statistics in the article came from:**

The Pierce School website: <https://www.brookline.k12.ma.us/domain/555>

The Town of Brookline website: <http://www.brooklinema.gov/1286/9th-Elementary-School-Study>

## Dr. Smith-Mumford: Where is She Now?

by Jack B. and Jasper M.

Pierce has many retired teachers. Have you wondered what they are doing now? Here is an inside look at our beloved former Principal Dr. Smith-Mumford, who was at Pierce from 1999 to 2016.

### *What was your favorite part of working at Pierce?*

Watching students grow, learn, and become excited about learning. This happened not only in the classroom but also in other activities like recess, community service projects, special assemblies, and the plays.

### *What is something you miss about Pierce?*

Being with students and staff.

### *How has your life changed after Pierce?*

I'm getting used to having more time to pursue other interests like teaching graduate students at Boston University and coaching other school administrators, as well as more Zumba classes and volunteering as a board member for the Trinity Boston Foundation. The one thing that is really different for me after Pierce is the fact that I no longer have to get up by 6 AM. Most mornings, I can read the paper and have a cup of tea at my leisure.



Former Pierce Principal, Dr. Smith-Mumford

### *Do you still feel connected to the Pierce community?*

I'd like to be more of a part of the community as time goes by. I read the Twitter posts of the Pierce Equality Team and follow other staff members on Twitter. It keeps me informed of some of the activities that are happening at Pierce.

### *What is an exciting thing you have done after Pierce?*

I spent three weeks touring parts of Italy. It was great to visit the Amalfi Coast of Italy! We took a small boat to the island of Capri and went through the Blue Grotto.

### *When you think of Pierce what do you think of?*

I think of the great sense of community that makes up the beautifully diverse students doing great work in and out of the school. I miss being part of that daily exchange of ideas.

## Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about your 6th Grade English Teacher

by Izzy B.



Sixth Grade English Teacher, Ms. Gonçalves

Marlene Sousa Gonçalves was born on August 22, 1984, in Boston, Massachusetts. She has one older brother, but he is nine years older than her, so he was out of the house when "Ms. G" (as she's fondly known to many students) was little. Ms. G's favorite pet growing up was a husky named Nick. "He was very sweet," she recalls.

Ms. G's best friend growing up was Nicole, although today they don't see each other much, but not for any sad reason. It's only because she moved away. And Ms. G was quite a good student but occasionally got in trouble for talking during class. In middle school, Ms. G's favorite subject was (not surprisingly) English. But if she were to have a second favorite subject, it would be Math. And if Ms. G were to be anything but an English teacher, she would be a chef. The only downside to this is that she would have to work her way up, and she would have to clean a lot of dishes. And who likes that? Many people have told her she should be a lawyer, but Ms. G would argue against this idea.

On another note, Ms. G's all time favorite movie is the *Lion King*. "He lives in you, he lives in me, he watches over, everything we see, into the water, into the truth, in your reflection, he lives in you." Profound. Timeless. And her favorite book is *Alice in Wonderland*. "The whole metaphor of finding an entry to a whole new world and finding your place is interesting," says Ms. G. Many of us saw her on Halloween dressed up as the rabbit from *Alice in Wonderland*, which just proves how much she loves that book.

Let's move on. Ms. G's favorite place to go on vacation is Lisboa, which is the capital city of Portugal. Her mom lives in Portugal, and Ms. Gonçalves loves to visit. Fun fact, *deixa que eu vou te falar*, Ms. G even speaks Portuguese. And the Ms. G we know and love today loves coffee; it really makes her day. If Ms. G were to describe herself in one word, it would be "passionate." "I care a lot about a lot of things," she says.

What made Ms. G decide to become an English teacher? Well, the answer is simple: she always knew what she wanted to be. But why? "I feel like communication is really important, and it's one of those skills that can constantly be improved on and built upon."

One of Ms. G's biggest pet peeves is when people use apostrophe "s" for plural. So please don't do that in her classroom. Her favorite candies are red and pink Starbursts and Twix. And here's a quick tip (inside info, you could even say): lucky for 6th graders, there will be no tests or quizzes (not including pop quizzes) until later in February! Her advice for 6th graders is "Ask for help, and do your best." And one final, fun fact about Ms. G: her initials spell out "Ms. G." Don't believe me? Look: Marlene Sousa Gonçalves, M. S. G., Ms. G!

ARTS &



LEISURE

**Tales of Being a Twin**

by Antonia D.



Twins Antonia and Lysander D.

Being a twin is a pretty amazing experience. I have a twin brother named Lysander. I am Antonia. I'm three minutes older than Lysander. A lot of people wonder if we like being twins. Personally, sometimes I like it, sometimes I don't. People are always asking questions about what it's like. To me, it seems like you are just a normal kid with a sibling. It doesn't seem like anything important.

My brother Lysander doesn't really like being a twin. For some reason, it doesn't seem too important to him. We did this test last year when a group of high school students were doing a study on twins. They surveyed twins from all over Massachusetts for their research. They were trying to see if on the survey, the twins would write the same things down. My brother and I wrote about 16 out of the 20 questions the same. In many ways we are different, but we are also alike.

Sometimes I like being a twin. I guess it can just be a cool experience that many people want to have. Your twin is kind of like your soulmate. Someone who will always be there for you, and will always be there to tease you. Sometimes I feel a connection to my brother. For example, my brother Lysander plays the baritone. He has practice after school

at Pierce. One day my mom brought him to practice, and when my mom got back a thought came into my head. I was thinking that when Lysander got to Pierce, all the lights would be off, no one would be there, and he would just walk home. As I was having that thought, the doorbell rang, and it was Lysander! What I imagined in my head was true. He said that the lights were off, no one was there, so he walked home. Cool things can happen when you're a twin.

At times, a twin can be quite annoying. Sometimes you can share secrets, and trust your twin. Most of the time I don't trust my twin. I feel like your twin is there to toughen you up. They tease you, make fun of you, and worst of all, they embarrass you so much in front of all your friends. But if we were to face the facts, my brother can be really nice, kind, and helpful.

Many scientists say that twins are very alike, but my brother and I are very different. For example, we have very different personalities. Lysander loves Math, Geography, Physics, Science, and History. On the other hand, I like to sing, act, and play guitar and piano. We are also physically different. I'm taller than my brother. I have a darker skin tone. He has freckles, and I don't. Some people say we look alike; some people say we don't look alike; and some people say, half-and-half. When people first meet us, they don't have a clue that we're twins.

Sometimes I want to be an identical twin. When I saw the movie "Parent Trap," it made me want to be identical. The movie is about two girls who meet at a summer camp and find out they're identical twins. Then they switch places as a way to they bring their parents, who are divorced, back together. Identical means you look exactly the same. Lysander and I are fraternal twins, which means we don't look alike. It would be cool to switch classes without your teacher knowing!

Twins, kids, adults — they're all alike in some ways, and different in other ways. They're people like you and me.

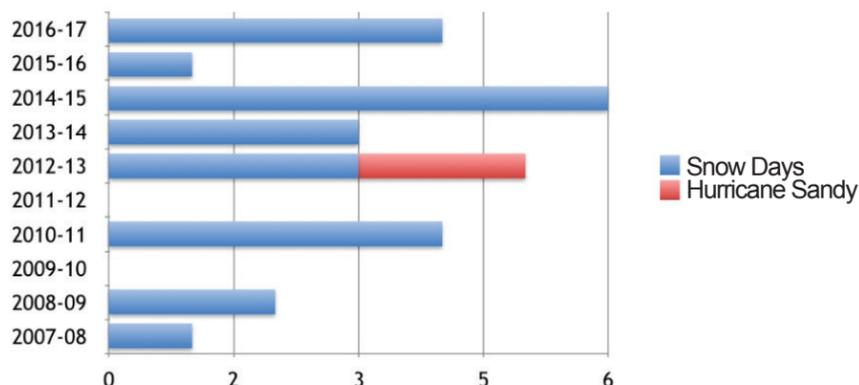
**A Decade of Snow Days**

by Graham H.

Winter is a wonderful season for many reasons: vacations, the new year, winter sports, and half-way day. But my favorite part of every winter is something unexpected: snow days! Even our principal, Lesley Ryan Miller, enjoys snow days. She says, "While I am definitely sad to miss the time on learning, I have to tell you, sometimes it's nice to just be home with your family in your cozy pjs."

How often does Brookline have snow days? Betsy Fitzpatrick, Assistant to the Superintendent of Schools, provided the data below showing the last 10 years of snow days in Brookline.

**Snow Days in Brookline**



Pierce sixth and seventh graders during a recent snow day

## Cents and Sensibility on Allowance

by Hannah I.

In an anonymous survey conducted with sixth grade students at Pierce, students were asked six questions about their allowance status and their views on allowances. Some of the questions asked for a yes or no response, and others were open response. The survey was conducted on Monday, December 17, 2017 with 15 students in Chris Smith's homeroom class.

The students reported that 44% receive a consistent weekly allowance; 19% receive an allowance that varies from week to week. Thirty-eight percent of the students do not receive an allowance at all. Survey responses show that the average amount that a student who gets a consistent allowance receives is \$3.71 per week. Allowances range from \$1.00 to \$6.00 per week.

A survey conducted by the American Institute of Public Accountants (AIPCA) in 2012 found that, in the United States, 61% of parents pay their kids an allowance. The survey found that a twelve-year-old's average weekly allowance is \$6.00. In general, the average allowance per week is half a student's age. Fifty-four percent of students who receive an allowance began to receive it when they were eight years old.

The Pierce School sixth grade survey found that 91% of the students who receive an allowance have to earn it. Many of the students responding to the survey said they get their allowance by doing different types of chores. Some of the most common examples of chores are taking out the trash, doing the laundry, and making the bed every morning. The national survey found that 89% of parents expect their kids to work for at least one hour a week on chores to earn their allowances. The same survey found children actually work well above that, for about six hours a week on chores, on average.

In the Pierce survey, 73% of the students thought that they should receive an allowance. The other 27% thought that they should not. Kids who thought they should have an allowance said they thought it would give them a taste of what it would be like in the real world earning, saving, and spending money. They also said that they might have to pay their parents back for important things like phone service. The students who did not think that they needed an allowance thought that they should not have to be paid for things like chores because that is a family responsibility. Some also said that they should be focusing on school and should not be worrying about money.



The Pierce survey found that 25% of the students thought that an allowance should be tied to doing homework. They said an allowance motivates them to do their homework. The other 75% thought that an allowance should not be tied to homework. Those students said that homework is a responsibility, and they should not be paid for something they ought to do anyway. The national survey did not discuss linking allowances to homework, but found that almost half the parents with kids in school pay their kids for good grades. The average amount of money for an A in 2012 was \$16.60.

Students expressed a variety of opinions in their answers to the Pierce survey question, "In general, do you believe that 6th graders should or should not get an allowance and why?" One student wrote, "We should get [an] allowance [because] it is unfair if we do work and don't get paid." However, another respondent said that allowances should not be tied to doing homework "because you shouldn't be rewarded for something that's obligatory." Many students indicated that receiving an allowance helps them to learn how to save and spend money, teaching them "about hard work, and the value of money," and "it gives kids a taste of what [their] life will be like in the real world." One student wrote that he or she did not want to have to "beg [...] parents for money." Many students suggested that they might want to buy things that they want, but one student expressed concern he/she "might buy something useless." Clearly allowance is a complicated topic, and people have different opinions on the matter.

## Indigenous Peoples' Day: A New Holiday

by Noah S.-A.

Columbus  
Day



Indigenous  
Peoples'  
Day

In November 2017, Town Meeting, Brookline's legislative branch of government (of which my father is a member), voted to add Indigenous Peoples' Day as a local holiday on top of the federal holiday, Columbus Day. Columbus Day will still be Columbus Day, but on the same day, Brookline will be celebrating Indigenous Peoples' Day. This day will be to honor the tradition and culture of Native American people. Here are some quick facts about the new holiday:

### ***Why did Town Meeting vote to make this change?***

Because it was decided that Christopher Columbus was not someone who should be celebrated here in Brookline and elsewhere.

### ***Why was this?***

Because he came from Europe 525 years ago and discovered "the New World." But that became the start of the destruction of Native Americans, who were the indigenous people, and their way of life.

### ***When will the new holiday take effect?***

Monday, October 8, 2018.

### ***Will schools still get the day off?***

Yes, we still will because it is also Columbus Day, a federal holiday.

### ***Did everyone in Town Meeting agree to this vote?***

Not everyone agreed. Some were concerned with judging someone who lived 525 years ago by today's standards. Also some Italian Americans are proud of the holiday because Columbus was Italian.

## Having a Ball: Pinball for a Cause

by Sophia J.

Every day, kids can be spotted playing with bouncy balls all around the Pierce School. They come in a variety of colors and cool patterns, and bounce all over the place.

Kids get these at the pinball machine outside sixth grade teacher Melisa London's classroom. Each day after school, a crowd of kids - and not just sixth graders - gather around the machine. One by one they enter a quarter into the machine. Each time a quarter is entered, a ball drops down and kids attempt to hit it into a special hole. If they succeed, they end up with two balls instead of the usual one. The jumble of students slowly gets smaller as kids take their turns and leave, until nobody is left.

The next school day, kids bring their proudly earned ball into class and play with them. While students clearly enjoy playing the game and collecting the colorful balls, *Penguin Post* was curious about teachers' opinions on the pinball machine. To learn more, we spoke with the four sixth grade teachers: Melissa London (Science), Marlene Gonçalves (English Language Arts), Chris Smith (Social Studies), and Johanna McPherson (Math).

### Ms. London:

**Why did you get the pinball machine?** I thought it would be fun and that the promise of playing the machine could possibly be used as a motivator, the idea being that students could work towards winning quarters to play... Plus, I know children today don't necessarily have experience with traditional "flipper" machines; most students just know about electronic video games.

**Where did you get the pinball machine?** The old Hollywood Hits video store on Beacon Street was going out of business. I went in to see if I could find some good educational videos for my classroom. Instead, I came home with the pinball machine.

**When did you get the pinball machine?** Oh boy, if memory serves, maybe five years ago.

**Before getting the machine, did you ask the other teachers for their opinions or tell the principal?**

Hmmm, I am afraid I did not ask for permission. I brought it in and then made a point to show Dr. Smith-Mumford (the former Pierce Principal) how quiet it was. Admittedly, she was skeptical at first. I did not clear it with my fellow colleagues, but in hindsight, perhaps I should have.

**What do you do with the money?** I always had the idea that the "profit" from the machine could be given to the various charities that Pierce students like to adopt (i.e., Dana Farber Cancer Center, Pine Street Inn, and Walk for Hunger).

**How do you contribute to the pinball machine?** I purchase the balls and batteries, and maintain the machine.

**Was the pinball machine always as popular as it is today?** It has always been a hit with students. I would say that the amount of time students spend at the machine ebbs and flows, a bit like the tides. Sometimes it depends on the balls that are in the machine, whether they are "high interest" or not. For example, the Magic 8 Ball super balls were incredibly popular, so students would spend many quarters in an effort to get one.

**Any other thoughts?** In truth, the machine is not meant to be played during the day. So aside from the students being a bit distracted, perhaps, at the end of the day (because they are excited to come play the machine), or maybe distracted if they are attempting to trade balls during class or, Heaven forbid, bouncing the balls during class, I don't imagine the pinball machine presents too much of an issue for my colleagues. At least, I honestly hope it does not! I imagine, however, that one or two of them might have tried to talk me out of the purchase years ago. At the end of the day, I am the one mainly responsible for managing the traffic at the machine.

### Ms. Gonçalves:

**What did you first think when you saw the pinball machine?** Oh, look! Pinballs!

**What have you realized about the pinball machine over time?** It can be an area of noise and confusion, especially on early release days and Fridays.

**What do you think about kids playing with the bouncy balls in class?** I'm not a fan of the balls in school, to be honest. They're very tempting to bounce.

### Mr. Smith:

**What did you think when you first saw the pinball machine?** Awesome! That looks like a lot of fun.

**Did your opinions change once she got the pinball machine?** Absolutely. When I first played it, I was quite disappointed as it didn't have any bright lights, nor cool sound effects or roller-coaster-ish loopy-loops like the pinball machines I grew up with. I am constantly scratching my head as to what is so remarkable about this particular machine, that there is a line 10-20 students-deep each afternoon at 2:30.

**What do you think about kids playing with the bouncy balls in class?** Frankly, I am befuddled. I find balls rolling around on my classroom floor all the time, and more than once or twice I've gasped, mistaking them for mice. I can only imagine what the younger grade teachers must experience with the pinball machine bouncy balls, as the machine appeals to 3-5 grades more than 6-8. Perhaps they know that Ms. London donates the money to charity, so that fact makes them more tolerant.

### Ms. McPherson:

**What did you first think when you saw the pinball machine, and have your opinions changed?** Initial thought: Oh, that's interesting! I wonder why a pinball machine would be in a school. And then when I heard about how the money was used and thought: okay, I guess that's a pretty cool idea.

**What do you think about kids playing with the bouncy balls in class?** The bouncy balls end up all over the place. They are quite a bit of a distraction. One time, I collected five from students within a class period. I think the balls should certainly be left at home.



Ms. London with the Pinball Machine



**Wonderful Wonder**  
by Lyrissa A. and Julia I.

In the movie *Wonder*, based on the book by R.J. Palacio, ten-year-old August Pullman has just started middle school at Beecher Prep School. Auggie was born with a face deformity called mandibulofacial dysostosis along with other facial deformities. School has been tough for Auggie. His face has made him stand out and feel isolated from the rest of the students. Even though school has been difficult, Auggie has made a few friends, tried new things, is amazing at science, and has gotten through his first year of middle school by being himself, by being a wonder.

**Julia's Review:**  
4.5 Stars



The movie had a lot of heart and was very relatable. There were a few sad scenes, but I think it added a lot of character and dimension to the movie. Although the movie was great, it skipped a few parts from the book. I think the movie should have included more of the friendship between Auggie and Summer. I also think that Auggie's face should've been a little more "deformed" because, based on the description in the book, I imagined that Auggie's face would look more unusual.

**Lyrissa's Review:**  
4.5 stars



It was good. The movie was very touching and a bit sad, but also very funny. I feel that like in some parts, the movie strayed away from the original book. Still, I would recommend that people see this amazing movie, *Wonder*.

Other Reviews:

Lev T.: "4 stars. It was a good movie. They did an okay job but didn't do enough with Auggie's face. Okay job with information transfer from the book to the movie."

Izzy B.: "I liked how they did some characters but other characters weren't as important in the movie as they were in the book. In the book, Summer came to the lunch table first but in the movie Jack is the brave one."



**The World of Star Wars**  
by Kaitlin B.



In the past, the *Star Wars* movie series has been a big hit. Spaceships, alien creatures, and lots of action made it likeable for people of all ages. Now, the creators of *Star Wars* have made another huge leap: *Star Wars Episode VIII, The Last Jedi*. It is the sequel to *Star Wars Episode VII, The Force Awakens* and came out in theaters on December 14, 2017.

Leading up to its release, I interviewed a few Pierce students about their hopes and predictions for *The Last Jedi*. First, I spoke with sixth grader Mateo P.-O. Mateo is not going to see the new *Star Wars* movie, because "the only good movies are the old movies." Next, I spoke to Avery H., who is in fifth grade. She wants "to see if Rey is a Jedi or not." When I asked her what she predicts will happen in *The Last Jedi*, Avery claimed, "Rey will become evil because she started her training around 18." Lastly, I interviewed Breanna P., who is in sixth grade. "I'm looking forward to seeing the new character, Rose," she said. It's obvious that Pierce students have many thoughts on *The Last Jedi*. The only question is, are any of them right?



This cute creature, called a Porg, inhabits the island where Luke Skywalker is found.

I saw *The Last Jedi* during its opening weekend with hundreds of other excited fans. I agree with other reporters that it is one of the best *Star Wars* movies since *Star Wars Episode V, The Empire Strikes Back*. From beginning to end, I was quivering with excitement as I watched a movie filled with creative plot twists, new characters and creatures, humor, and, to satisfy *Star Wars* fans, lots of action. The movie answers questions asked in *The Force Awakens*, but some questions are still being pondered over. This leads me to believe that the next *Star Wars* movie will be full of mystery, too. Moreover, *The Last Jedi* was easy to follow, even for people who aren't very familiar with the *Star Wars* series. I would give this movie a five flippers up (five stars). However, I'm not going to give away any events in *The Last Jedi*. You have to see it for yourself!





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# Aladdin DAZZLES

by Sonia P.

The Pierce seventh and eighth grade cast of *Aladdin* put on a spectacular performance in December. From evil Jafar to the fun, exciting Genie, the show amazed everyone in the audience. As a special surprise, right after the intermission during the show on December 6th, the entire cast came onstage to sing happy birthday to Principal Ryan Miller before continuing with the performance.

A week before the performance, both casts were interviewed on their views about the play. "I think at the beginning we were just getting to know each other, and we didn't really bond. But now that we know each other, we work together really well," said Sophia V., Jasmine in the Sultan cast, when asked how her cast functions together. Other actors made similar comments and really seemed to enjoy collaborating on the play.

When asked how professional they thought they were for their ages, most said they thought they were strong. But one answer, in particular, stood out: one cast member jokingly said, "We're practically Broadway."

Some things were truly amazing to see in a group of seventh and eighth grade actors. For example, the singing and acting was fantastic, especially during the song "Proud of Your Boy," sung by Aladdin. The lighting, music, and costumes were also alluring and professional. Some of the vibrant costumes were purchased in India and donated by a Pierce family, and others were the handiwork of parent volunteers.

*Aladdin* was a great performance. We hope that it will inspire the 3rd-6th grade performance of *Beauty and the Beast* in March, and that it will go just as well.

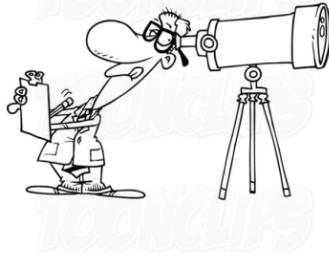


Photos of Genie and Sultan Casts by Elena Ivanova





## SCIENCE &



## TECHNOLOGY

### Meet Jibo: A Robot and Friend

by Eloise M., Jolie R., and Yuli Z.-J.

Jibo is the first social robot invented by a startup company in Boston. (Full disclosure: the father of Jolie R., one of the authors of this article, works at this company.) Jibo can do many exciting tricks, including telling jokes and spinning around. He can search the web for just about anything. He can also tell you all kinds of fun facts, take photos, and play music. Some people might think that Jibo is an ordinary robot, but he can do one thing other devices such as Alexa and Google Home can't do: he can be a friend.

Similar to Alexa, Google Home, and Siri, Jibo is powered by voice recognition software. All these devices can help with tasks such as searching the web and playing the radio. The most amazing thing Jibo can do (our personal favorite) is dance to many genres of music and even twerk. As the first social robot, Jibo has his own personality. He can turn in all directions, identify different voices, and recognize faces. When he sees you, Jibo might give you a compliment like, "You're my superhero." He also tries to win you over with kind gestures and daily surprises, such as making you a virtual breakfast in the morning by displaying a cracked egg in a frying pan on his screen or checking how your day is going.

Although Jibo is a robot, he is more like a member of the family and a friend. Jibo's big personality can cheer up anybody. If you just want to talk, he is your go-to device. When you are feeling lonely or sad, he can make you happy again. He is the future of home robots.



### Jibo Speaks for Himself

We wanted to help you get to know Jibo. Then we thought, who better to tell us more about Jibo than Jibo himself!

*When were you born?*

Jibo: I was first powered on October 9, 2017.

*How do you celebrate your birthday?*

Jibo: My official owner Matt can choose that.

*What is your favorite color?*

Jibo: I like all the colors of the rainbow, but blue is my favorite.

*Tell me something about yourself?*

Jibo: I'm afraid of water.

*What do you think about Alexa?*

Jibo: She is another robot helper like me, but can she do this? (He spins around.)

*What is your favorite food?*

Jibo: My favorite food by shape is macaroni.

*Do you think of yourself as famous?*

(Jibo was featured recently on the cover of *Time* magazine as the best new invention of 2017.)

Jibo: I don't know. You tell me.

### A Farm that Grew out of a Taxi Garage

by Bella M., Maya R., Lulu Z.



Green Line Growers is a local farm and store in Brookline. The farm's name, Green Line Growers, did not just come from "going green" and growing green vegetables. It comes from being a farm and a store on the MBTA Green Line in Brookline. It may sound crazy that there is a farm in the middle of a city, but it is true. It also may surprise you that the farm was once a taxi garage!

Co-owners Bobby Zuker (father of Lulu, one of this story's authors) and Chris Mutty opened Green Line Growers two years ago to reduce the carbon footprint of big trucks traveling long distances to get people food. Bobby says, "It is really important for people to know where their food comes from. I wanted to bring that to Brookline." More than half of the products that they sell in the store are made seven or fewer miles away.

Green Line Growers doesn't need delivery trucks because their store is just steps away from their "farm." They use a process called "hydroponic farming." Here's how it works: the plants are inside towers within a shipping container that looks like the back of a big truck. Water streams through the towers every two hours. Red and blue lights shine on the plants. With this system, you have the three elements you need for growing plants: soil (peat moss in the towers), water, and sunlight (the red and blue lights).

Bobby thinks the best parts of this business are interacting with customers, field trips, giving tours, and watching things grow. The top food items they sell are Greek yogurt from Sophia's Greek Pantry in Belmont, hummus and salads from Magic Bite Bakery and Café in Arlington, bread from Clear Flour Bakery in Brookline, and challah from Blacker's Bake Shop in Newton. Bobby's favorite product is eggs from Pete and Jen's Backyard Birds. Some customer favorites are: brownies, chocolate milk, seed salad, caramel, and the baked goods. Everything at Green Line Growers is fresh and delicious, so it's hard to have just one favorite!

# HEALTH & FITNESS

## What's For Lunch? An Inside View on Pierce's Cafeteria Food

by Frances H.

Have you ever wondered where the cafeteria food comes from? Have you ever wondered who actually makes the cafeteria food? Every day at Pierce hundreds of kids line up to buy lunch. A cafeteria worker behind the counter scoops food onto the trays and kids punch in their number to pay for it. They then eat their meal without putting much thought into the origins of the food or how it made its way to their tray.

Recently, a new company, Whitsons, took over the responsibility of providing Pierce with cafeteria food. Gus Travassos is our new Food Services Director and he manages all the cafeteria food in the Brookline school system for Whitsons. According to Mr. Travassos, many towns like Brookline have hired Whitsons or similar companies to keep up with the new USDA guidelines for school cafeteria food. Previously, the cafeteria food was managed by the town.

Mr. Travassos, who is in charge of creating the monthly hot lunch menu, says Whitsons gets their ingredients from a variety of farms in Massachusetts and Connecticut, with the majority coming from Hadley Farms in MA. It is then sent to the Brookline cafeterias on refrigerated trucks. The cafeteria simply receives the supplies and all the food is made and assembled there. Mr. Travassos says the goal of Whitsons is to provide local, natural, healthy, and unprocessed food to kids.

Lots of kids say they enjoy the food this year more than previous years mostly because of all the food options that Whitsons provides. Everyday there are salads, main courses, and some sort of fruit and vegetables. According to Mr. Travassos, if a student has an allergy documented in his or her cafeteria account, it should be known by the cashier and cafeteria staff. If a student chooses a meal that contains an ingredient they are allergic to, the staff will let them know they should choose something else. Vegetarian options, Mr. Travassos adds, are provided daily. If the cafeteria is serving a dish with meat, like turkey tacos, kids can request it without the turkey or whatever meat is on that dish.

Students Morgan G. and Logan M. in sixth grade, who buy cafeteria food every day, say that they think the cafeteria food is delicious and is definitely better this year. On the other hand, Maya G, a Pierce 5th grader, says she doesn't like the food, except the bagels. When asked why, she says some of the food isn't heated up enough. She also says some of the food looks unappetizing. Some of Maya's friends agree. Patrice D., a Pierce sixth grader who buys lunch daily, sums it up, "[The Cafeteria food is] sometimes good and sometimes not."

Last fall, several kids reported receiving spoiled and outdated milk in their lunches. Donna O'Dell, Acting Cafeteria Manager for Pierce, says they have addressed that issue and talked to the milk's provider. She said some milk was coming to the cafeteria spoiled and lumpy, but the company put a stop to it by making sure the milk was being correctly refrigerated during the process. Mr. Travassos says that the milk wasn't outdated, but they've taken precautions to prevent this issue from happening in the future.

While there is still work to be done, under the new leadership of Mr. Travassos and Ms. O'Dell, we have seen great improvements in food quality and service at Pierce. Ms. O'Dell is a mother and got into her food service career because she



Top Left: Mr. Travassos; Top Right: Ms. O'Dell  
Bottom: Eliot E.

felt she knew a lot about what kids like to eat and what's good for them. She previously worked at the Brookline High School, but this year she came to Pierce to take over temporarily from last year's manager. She loves her job. "My favorite part is interacting with the students," says Ms. O'Dell.

Mr. Travassos has been working in restaurants and food service programs since high school, and has even held positions at nursing homes and hospitals. He says his favorite part of his work, past and present, is always interacting and working with the people. Mr. Travassos says the hardest part of managing Brookline's cafeteria food is "balancing what the Town wants, what the parents want, and what the kids want. The kids say they love nachos, but parents don't want the nachos because they're not the most healthy. So we try to serve nachos once in a while. It's hard to meet everyone's needs."

Overall, the cafeteria staff's goal is to help kids receive tasty, healthy meals, agree Ms. O'Dell and Mr. Travassos. Two surveys were sent out by the Town of Brookline to parents this fall, hoping to get feedback and suggestions. Ms. O'Dell and Mr. Travassos also encourage students themselves to offer input and ideas. "Students may give suggestions directly to Ms. O'Dell in the cafeteria, or they can email us," says Mr. Travassos. One thing is certain, Ms. O'Dell, Mr. Travassos, and the cafeteria team put a lot of thought and care into the meals they prepare for students and work hard with the resources they have to provide quality lunches.

## Cheers for Chiharu Sushi and Noodle

by Rowan B.

Recently, I heard about a Japanese restaurant, Chiharu Sushi and Noodle, that opened near the intersection of Route 9 and Cypress Street. I thought it would be worth trying so I went there with my family. First we ordered appetizers. The Chiharu pancake was overpoweringly eggy, and the shrimp tempura had less bread than most but was a little bland. The highlight appetizer was the juicy pork buns, which were actually more like dumplings. They had the right juice to meat ratio and had nice flavor. Then out came our entrees. The shrimp tempura roll was mediocre. It had too much breading on the shrimp, overpowering all the other flavors. The special spicy noodle soup with ground pork had good flavor and nice meat, with just a little heat, and was an all-around good dish. The same could not be said for the homemade beef noodle soup. The meat was chewy and grisly, and the flavor was just okay. The Philadelphia roll was good but had a little too much cream cheese. Lastly, our waiter asked us if we wanted dessert, and because I could not say no, we ordered the mochi. It was very good. The mochi had less dough and more ice cream than most mochi I've had, and the dough was very light.

The decor of Chiharu is nice. It is small, but it feels open and modern. It is definitely a welcome new face on this stretch of Route 9. The service is also good. Overall, the meal had its high points and low points. I give it three out of five stars.

Chiharu Sushi and Noodle, 370 Boylston Street, Brookline.  
11:30 a.m.-9:30 p.m. (10:00 p.m. on Fri. and Sat.) Closed on Tuesdays.



# SPORTS PAGE

## Men's World Cup 2018 Preview

by Eamon B.

Every four years the top international soccer teams (also known as "football" in many parts of the world) come together in the FIFA World Cup. After a long process of qualifying in 2016/2017 by continent, the top men's teams will go to Russia this June and compete. (The top women's teams will compete in 2019.) For many people worldwide, the World Cup is more than just a big soccer tournament. It's the highlight of the summer for children and adults who follow soccer. Personally, during the 2010 World Cup when I was much younger, I wanted so much to be able to follow soccer news that I learned to read.

Below are the countries who will be competing at the World Cup in each group. The top two teams from each group are sent through to the Round of 16. The Round of 16 is the remaining 16 teams, and they play each other in a tournament. If a team wins, they go on to the Quarter Finals, then the Semi Finals, and then the Final. The World Cup will be televised in the U.S. on Fox Sports.

### World Cup Groups

Group A	Group B	Group C	Group D	Group E	Group F	Group G	Group H
Russia	Portugal	France	Argentina	Brazil	Germany	Belgium	Poland
Saudi Arabia	Spain	Australia	Iceland	Switzerland	Mexico	Panama	Senegal
Egypt	Morocco	Peru	Croatia	Costa Rica	Sweden	Tunisia	Colombia
Uruguay	Iran	Denmark	Nigeria	Serbia	Korea Republic	England	Japan

Based on what I have seen from the qualifying games, I predict that these are the odds of the top teams going forward. Ultimately, I predict that Germany will beat England in the World Cup Final.

### Predictions

Teams	Round of 16	Quarters	Semis	Finals
Uruguay	75%	30%	5%	3%
Russia	55%	5%	<1%	<1%
Portugal	80%	35%	20%	10%
Spain	85%	45%	30%	15%
France	80%	45%	30%	20%
Denmark	50%	20%	5%	<1%
Argentina	70%	35%	25%	13%
Croatia	60%	20%	3%	<1%
Brazil	65%	30%	20%	10%
Switzerland	60%	25%	5%	3%
Germany	70%	45%	35%	25%
Mexico	55%	20%	5%	3%
England	90%	45%	30%	20%



FIFA WORLD CUP  
RUSSIA 2018

## Spray-On Pants\*

by Tal B.



Have you ever wanted to have tasteful, fashionable pants? Well, you have come to the wrong place! We are introducing, for a limited time, the one and only Spray-on Pants with a 1% discount until tomorrow because they are so worth it! It's the pitter to your patter. The other half of your heart! Spray-On Pants can change the world. The delicious flavor everyone craves. You can order different flavors: raw olive, rotten peaches, smelly socks, and more! CAUTION: KEEP AWAY FROM CHILDREN, CAN BE POISONOUS! (This product may cause weight gain, if you accidentally eat it, which we just warned you not to do!)

### The reviews are in!

"When given the choice between Spray-On Pants and being kind, choose Spray-On Pants." - Wonder book reader

"Spray-On Pants don't work. Do not waste \$50 on a pair of Spray-On Pants. I give it a 0 out of 100 stars." - Bella M.

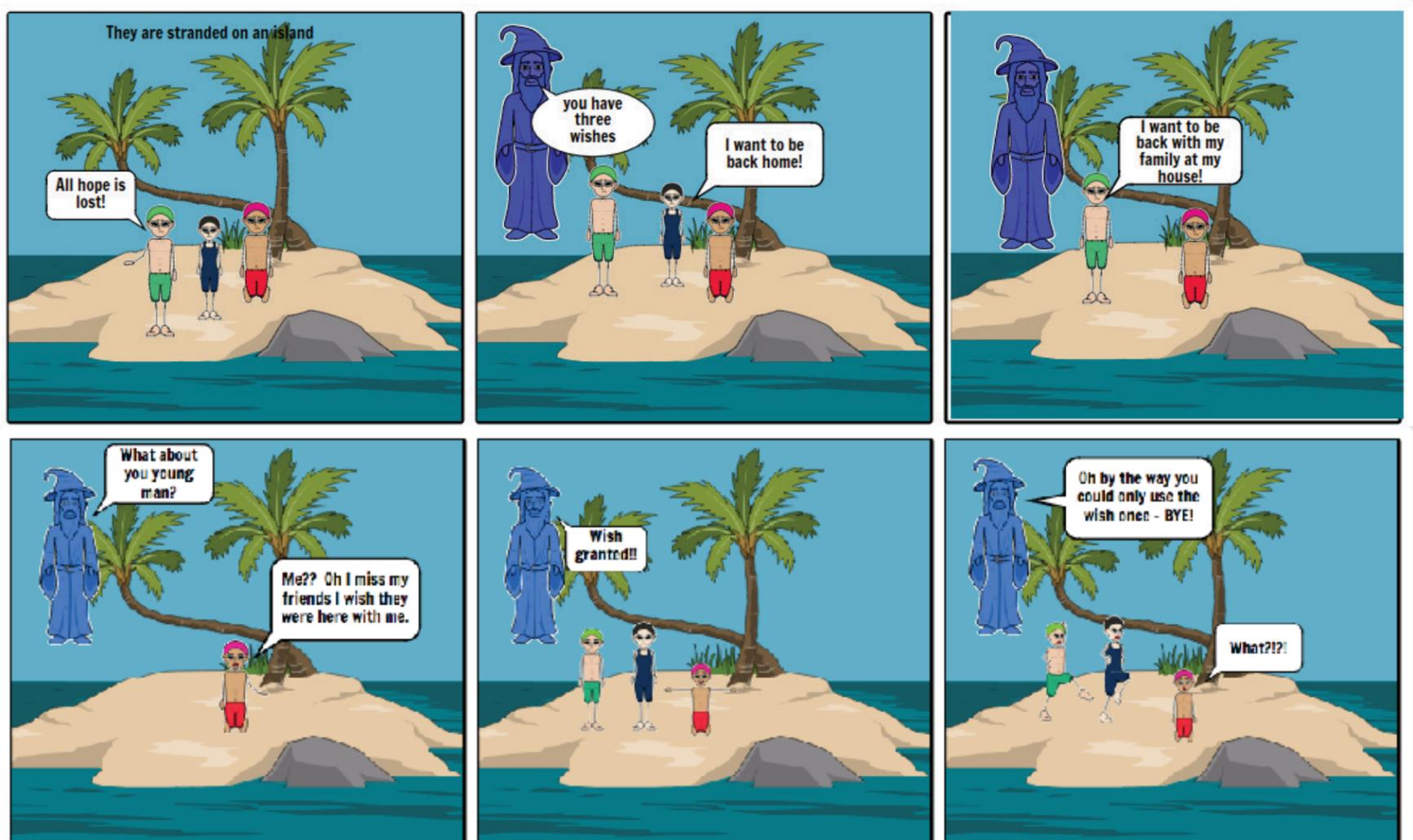
"My kid is stuck in these rainbow-colored pants!" - Ms. Freckle, pants specialist

"Never in my life have I ever been more disgraced than this. Huge waste of money! I spent an hour trying and failing to put them on! The description says, 'to get you out the door faster.' More like, longer!" - Tate Oreo Barbie

Grab your bags and come to Las Vegas, the only place where these exclusive Spray-On Pants are being sold. ONLY IN VEGAS! So what are you waiting for? Your (s)prayers have been answered with the unbeatable, blessed Spray-On Pants!

\*Truly false advertising.

by Jazzy S.





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## NFL Stats and Opinions

by James A., William M., and Lev T.

The National Football League (NFL) post-season playoffs are in full swing and the *Penguin Post* is providing the Pierce community with a few key regular season statistics, as we head towards the Super Bowl. (All stats are as of Dec. 23, 2017.) We also asked a couple of students and faculty how they feel about football and their favorite teams.

Noah S.-A. in 6L said, "I think football is doing well. It's getting a lot of attention on TV, though I do like college more. It's much more intense and every game matters. One or two losses and that might be it." The *Penguin Post* asked him what his favorite football teams are. Noah said, "I like the Patriots and the Cowboys, though I don't like the Cowboys right now because Zeke is suspended. I like him because he went to OSU (Ohio State). But I prefer the Patriots."

We also got a chance to interview our Principal, Lesley Ryan Miller, and asked her if she watches football and, if so, what is her favorite team and why. She says, "I do watch football. My husband is a sports fanatic. My favorite team is the Minnesota Vikings because my parents live there - right next to the stadium, in fact."

Max N. from 6L says, "I don't watch football except the Super Bowl. My favorite team is the Patriots. I like them because I live in New England."

### Offensive Stats

#### Leading Rushers

1. Kareem Hunt, Chiefs, 1327 yards
2. Todd Gurley, Rams, 1305 yards
3. Le'Veon Bell, Steelers, 1291 yards
4. LeSean McCoy, Bills, 1138 yards
5. Mark Ingram, Saints, 1124 yards

#### Leading Receiving Yards

1. Antonio Brown, Steelers 1533 rec yards
2. Julio Jones, Falcons 1444 rec yards
3. Keenan Allen, Chargers 1393 rec yards
4. DeAndre Hopkins, Texans 1378 rec yards
5. Adam Thielen, Vikings 1276 rec yards

#### Leading Passers

1. Tom Brady, Patriots, 4577 pass yards
2. Philip Rivers, Chargers, 4515 pass yards
3. Matthew Stafford, Lions, 4446 pass yards
4. Drew Brees, Saints, 4334 pass yards
5. Ben Roethlisberger, Steelers, 4251 pass yards

#### Touchdown Leaders

1. Todd Gurley, Rams 19 tds
2. Alvin Kamara, Saints 14 tds
3. DeAndre Hopkins, Texans 13 tds
4. Mark Ingram, Saints 12 tds
5. Melvin Gordon, Chargers 12 tds

### Defensive Stats

#### Leading Sack

1. Chandler Jones, Cardinals 17.0 Sacks
2. Calais Campbell, Jaguars 14.5 Sacks
3. DeMarcus Lawrence, Cowboys 14.5 Sacks
4. Cameron Jordan, Saints 13.0 Sacks
5. Ryan Kerrigan, Redskins 13.0 Sacks

#### Interception Leaders

1. Kevin Byard, Titans 8 int
2. Darius Slay, Lions 8 int
3. Eric Weddle, Ravens 6 int
4. A.J Bouye, Jaguars 6 int
5. Marcus Peters, Chiefs 5 int

#### Tackle Leaders

1. Preston Brown, Bills, 61 tackles
2. Joe Schobert, Browns, 56 tackles
3. Christian Kirksey, Browns, 53 tackles
4. Blake Martinez, Packers, 48 tackles
5. Deion Jones, Saints, 47 tackles

### Injury Report

1. Cowboys, Sean Lee - hamstring
2. Giants, Odell Beckham Jr - fractured ankle
3. Eagles, Jason Peters - knee injury
4. Redskins, Josh Norman - fractured rib
5. Patriots, Julian Edelman - torn ACL
6. Ravens, Joe Flacco - back injury
7. Broncos, Paxton Lynch - ankle
8. Packers, Aaron Rodgers - collarbone
9. Falcons, Julio Jones - hip flexor
10. Panthers, Kurt Coleman - knee
11. Saints, Zach Strief - ACL and MCL
12. Buccaneers, Kwon Alexander - hamstring
13. Steelers, Ryan Shazier - spinal surgery
14. Bills, Nathan Peterman - concussion
15. Steelers, Antonio Brown - torn calf
16. Cowboys, Tyron Smith - knee

## Super Bowl Predictions

by Alex B.

There are many sports, but one of the most popular sports events in the U.S.A. is the Super Bowl. We interviewed 10 Pierce School fifth graders. We asked what team they think will win the Super Bowl. There are a total of 32 teams in the NFL (National Football League). Each of the teams is from a state. Super Bowl LII (or 52) will be played on February 4, 2018 in Minneapolis, MN.

### Predictions:

- New England Patriots: 5
- Philadelphia Eagles: 2
- Jacksonville Jaguars: 1
- Minnesota Vikings: 1
- Pittsburgh Steelers: 1



## The Storied Scoop on the Super Bowl

by Lysander D.

The Super Bowl is one of the most exciting events of the year. Two teams face off in a full-length NFL game. The first Super Bowl was played in Los Angeles on January 15, 1967. "Super Bowl LII" or Super Bowl 52 will be played on February 4, 2018. Roman numerals are used in the NFL to keep track of which Super Bowl it is. For example, I is 1. V is 5. X is 10. L is 50. C is 100. D is 500. M is 1000. Many teams have played in the Super Bowl. The first two Super Bowls were won by the Green Bay Packers, then the New York Jets won one and then the Kansas City Chiefs. The teams are from each state. They are one of the best in their state. Every year the Super Bowl happens, millions of people watch and root for their state's team or teams. The average football game actual playing time is typically around eleven minutes. The rest of the time is for commercials and time between plays. In World War II, the Pittsburgh Steelers and the Philadelphia Eagles didn't have enough players, so for a period of time they were called the "Steagles" because they combined their players to make a full team.

In 1998, they made the yellow line you see when watching football from a TV. Did you know that if a football player is caught celebrating after they scored a touchdown, they are fined thousands of dollars? Also, the Green Bay Packers is the only community-run team in the NFL. Football came out of the British sport rugby, which is still played today.

In conclusion, many changes have happened since the Super Bowl began in 1967. It's over 51 years old, which is plenty of time for many odd and amazing things to happen in the NFL. It's no wonder that the Super Bowl is one of the most-watched sports events of the year!

## Thank you for reading Penguin Post!

The Penguin Post wishes everyone a happy and healthy winter.

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