

The Courier

September 3, 2025 Volume 26 Number 1

What do the public school assessment scores mean?

■ 68.5% of WCPS students proficient in ELA;
47.7% proficient in Mathematics

By **Chip Bertino**

Recently released statewide performance data indicates that Worcester County Public Schools (WCPS) are outperforming all other school systems throughout the state in both Mathematics and English/Language Arts (ELA).

Worcester County student performance on the spring ELA assessments showed that 68.5 percent of students scored as proficient or higher, nearly 18 percentage points above the state average of 50.8 percent. Seventh grade proficiency in ELA grew at every school across the county, with Pocomoke Middle School standing out with a nearly 8.5 percentage point increase over the 2024 results.

Mathematics proficiency within the county showed 47.7 percent of students reaching proficiency across all assessments, an eight-percentage point increase across all assessments over 2024 results. Countywide, seventh and eighth graders' mathematics proficiency grew across all schools; Snow Hill Middle School's (SHMS) seventh and eighth graders had some of the strongest gains with seventh graders' proficiency rising 10.5 percentage points and eighth graders' proficiency soaring over 20 percentage points over the 2024 results.

So, what does all this mean? An observer could conclude based on the results that although 68.5% of ELA students and 47.7% of math students scored as proficient or higher, the remaining students, just over 30% of ELA students and just over 50% of math students, are not proficient and thus are doing poorly. Yes, Worcester County students are outpacing students across the state, but what about the students who are struggling?

"I hesitate to use the language like 'doing poorly' when discussing student assessment," said Carrie Sterrs, WCPS Coordinator of Public Relations & Special Programs, when questioned by *The Courier* last week.

please see **assessments** on page 2



Promotion - Seth Thatcher has been elected president-elect of the Kiwanis Club of Greater Ocean Pines - Ocean City. A new member of the club since April, Seth has past experience as a leader, even Lt. Governor, from his former Kiwanis Club. Pictured are (L-R) **Seth Thatcher** and Kiwanis Club President **Tom Southwell**.

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assessments
from page 1

“The goal of MCAP (Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program) assessments is not to label or stigmatize students but to give a more detailed picture of how they’re learning. I would encourage your readers to think of it like a progress map: instead of saying “you passed” or “you failed,” MCAP shows whether a student is a Distinguished Learner (Level 4), who shows advanced proficiency, is well-prepared for the next stage, and is college/career ready; a Proficient Learner (Level 3), who demonstrates grade-level proficiency and is on track for college/career readiness; a Developing Learner (Level 2), who shows partial proficiency and needs additional support; or a Beginning Learner (Level 1), who needs substantial support.”

She went on to explain, “It is also important to note that over 20 percent of all WCPS test takers scored on what the state calls the ‘cusp,’ meaning they were very close to the state’s cut score for proficiency. This concept is broken down further by content. In mathematics, 39 percent of students whose scores were below

the state targeted proficiency level were within 10 points of reaching that level. In English/Language Arts, 52 percent of students whose scores were below the state targeted proficiency level were within 10 points of reaching that level.”

WCPS has been working through the labyrinth of the state mandated Maryland Blueprint for Excellence in Education which has drawn admirers and critics since it became law in 2018. When asked what impact the Blueprint had on the recently released test scores, Sterrs had this to say:

“Regarding the Blueprint, many of the best practices included in pillars one and three are practices that WCPS has historically utilized; however, the formalized nature of the Blueprint’s implementation plans has enabled school system leaders to hone and enhance these practices. For example, the Blueprint’s focus on early childhood education has opened up Pre-K expansion grant funding streams that our system has capitalized on to expand our existing pre-kindergarten program to a full-day and adding pre-kindergarten programs for three-year-olds. We are

seeing this investment pay off with third graders this year, who were the first class of students to have access to these enhanced early childhood opportunities.

“Other ways the Blueprint has helped support WCPS’ efforts are the adoption of high-quality instructional materials, the State’s adoption of the Science of Reading, the formalization of comprehensive literacy and mathematics plans for all grades, and maximizing instructional time for core instruction.”

Sterrs explained further that, “Worcester County uses a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) to support student learning. This comprehensive approach ensures every student receives the right level of academic, social, emotional, and behavioral support they need to grow. We also attribute our success to a continued investment in the coaching model to strengthen teachers’ instructional practice as well as the building of individualized plans for student success. We are also now beginning to see the impact of the implementation of the Johns Hopkins’ Dynamic Impact framework for School Improvement Planning,

which WCPS adopted in 2021.”

Since July, when Dr. Annette Wallace began her tenure as Superintendent, the county school system has been under new direction. According to Sterrs, “It is the Superintendent’s goal to ensure that every child can read by the end of third grade and to build on that foundation in the years following, which in turn will positively impact student assessment performance in the future.

“WCPS teachers and leaders will utilize this data as part of a holistic study of each student to build individualized plans for their continued academic growth.”

In response to the release of the MCAP scores, Wallace said, “We are proud to celebrate our students, educators, and families for leading the state in both English/Language Arts and Mathematics. These results are a testament to the incredible dedication within our schools, but we know our work is not finished until every single child reaches proficiency. It’s my hope that by knowing every student by name, strength, and need, we will build on this momentum and move even closer to that goal.”



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School bullying victims have resources

■ *County schools have resources for student, parents*

Students are heading back into classrooms across Worcester County. It is time to reacquaint with old friends and make new ones. For some students though, returning to school could mean encountering bullying. Students are bullied every day. Bullying can happen anywhere, but it is prevalent in school environments. Bullying is often under-reported because children and young adults may be scared of the consequences of outing their bullies.

In 2014, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the U.S. Department of Education released the first federal definition of bullying. The definition encompassed three elements: 1. Unwanted aggressive behavior; 2. Observed or perceived power imbalance; and 3. Repetition or high likelihood of repetition of bullying behaviors.

DoSomething.org says around 20 percent of students between the ages of 12 and 18 have been bullied during the school year, and more than

150,000 teens have skipped school because of bullying. The Pew Research Center reports that 35 percent of U.S. parents with children younger than 18 say they are extremely or very worried that their children might be bullied at some point. Those fears may be warranted, as the Monique Burr Foundation for Children reports a child is bullied on a playground every seven minutes and between 50 and 77 percent of students report having been bullied.

Bullying victims may feel they are in a helpless situation, but students can do their part to curtail bullying and report offenders.

The Worcester County School system has protocols in place when bullying is reported. The school system takes a proactive approach to educating students and staff on what bullying is, what it looks like, and what should be done if it is suspected. There are bullying prevention programs at each of the system's 14 schools; these comprehensive programs include awareness, prevention, and early intervention.

At the beginning of each school year, students receive a brochure which helps educate them on what constitutes bullying, harassment, or intimidation and explains what they should do if they believe they are being bullied. Administrators, school counselors, teachers, and staff also reinforce bullying awareness and prevention during orientation sessions at the start of each school year and throughout the school year.

Several comprehensive programs also support bullying prevention. Character Education programs exist at each school, reinforcing positive character traits and decisions, such as demonstrating fairness and respect to all individuals. Eleven schools are Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) Schools which emphasize and reward good choices. Nine PBIS schools earned a GOLD designation, the highest honor. Several schools have Peer Mediation which focuses on students supporting students and respectful conflict resolution.

Here are some actions students can take, courtesy of StopBullying.org.

Treat others with respect. Students should stop and think before they do or say anything to another person that has the potential to be hurtful. Making it a point to be nicer to others and recognizing that everyone is different is a start.

Apologize for past behaviors. Those who think they may have bullied someone in the past should own up to it and apologize with meaning.

Talk to an adult. Students can talk to an adult they trust if they are being bullied or have witnessed another person being bullied. Telling someone can help a person feel less alone. This person may help develop a plan to stop the bullying.

Stay in groups of friends. Most bullying happens when adults are not around or when a person is isolated. Having a strong group of friends can deter bullying.

Be aware of cyberbullying. Much bullying does not take place in person. Cyberbullying is prevalent and happens online or through text messages. Students should always think about

*please see **bullying** on page 12*

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First day of school

It's the start of a new school year. Many children will return to street corners waiting for the yellow bus that will transport them to elementary, middle or high school. Although so much has changed in schools since I first set foot

If Mom was in the mood and not too frazzled, and it wasn't too crowded and a booth was available, she would take us to lunch at the Woolworth's diner for a hot dog and glass of milk, white milk never chocolate. We could order fries

but were only allowed to eat them after we finished our hot dogs. We had to eat the fries with a fork. Yes, you read that right. We ate our fries with a fork.

There was a rhythm to the first morning of the first day of school. Mom would

poke her head into our room and with sunny resonance in her voice would tell my brother and me to "Rise and shine." Who wants to rise and shine at 6:10 in the morning? She returned at 6:12 and with a little less sunny tone tell us to "Rise and shine!" And by 6:15, if we weren't rising and shining, her sunny tone was overtaken by storm clouds and clapping thunder, "RISE AND SHINE!!"

Into our new pants and shirts we slipped. We marched to the dining room where either a bowl of Cream of Wheat or oatmeal awaited. We weren't allowed to add sugar to our bowls so it tasted like, well, Cream of Wheat or oatmeal, without sweetener. Neither Frosted Flakes nor Lucky Charms nor Sugar Smacks were offered.

By quarter of seven my brother and I were in the bathroom brushing our teeth. Our mother was in the doorway ensuring we brushed correctly. If we didn't, she would snatch the brush from our hands and go to work brushing our teeth while firmly holding our chins. She was a hard brusher who could brush white off rice. Next, she'd run the hair brush under the spigot, getting it just wet enough so she could brush our hair: part down the side and hair brushed to the left.

After the ritual first day photo and Mom's kiss on the cheek, my brother and I ran out the front door across the lawn to the bus stop which was up the street. Meeting up with our friends, who also had wet, flattened-down hair, we inspected each other's lunch boxes, talked about the teachers we didn't want for homeroom and debated the fine points of baseball card flipping. No cell phones or social media.

It really wasn't a simpler time then though there were no cells phone or social media. Yet, looking back through a sepia tone lens, it certainly seemed like it was.



It's All About. . .

By **Chip Bertino**

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in St. Albert the Great school more than a half century ago, some things haven't. Technology may have evolved since my time when a retractable pencil was cutting edge but student dismay at returning to the classroom I suspect hasn't.

Let's harken back to a simpler America when Richard Nixon was president (pre-Watergate), Archie Bunker dominated the airwaves and the Chevrolet Vega rusted on showroom floors. Preparing for the new year at St. Albert's was a multipronged endeavor that involved my mom dragging, near kicking and screaming my brother and me, to Buster Brown Shoes and that "Great American Shoe Store" Kinney for one pair of black and one pair of brown lace shoes. In and out of the backseat of the old blue Oldsmobile 88 we endured stops at Sears and Korvette's department stores looking for white, maybe pale blue, button-down shirts that were the right size, or close enough, five pairs of pants either gray or navy, and clip-on ties that weren't too hideous. Eventually we'd pull into the near-capacity Woolworth's parking lot at Neshaminy Mall where other mothers too were leading their kids through the doors in search of non-spiral copybooks, pencils, six-inch rulers, jars of paste and the most important purchase of all, the lunchbox.

There was always a crush of people where the lunchboxes were displayed on two or three aisle shelves. This was the era when lunchboxes were metal not plastic and the lining inside the Thermos was glass. Looking through the lens of time, unless you lived it, it's hard to truly appreciate the importance attached to making the right lunch box selection. Scooby Doo. Speed Racer. The Flintstones. Happy Days. Bugs Bunny. Jose and the Pussycats. Starsky & Hutch. GI Joe. The Munsters. The list goes on.



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DNR proposes opening state trails to E-bikes

Public comment period
through September 22

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources is considering new regulations that will allow everyone to use pedal-assist electric bicycles on state bike trails, increasing accessibility and enjoyment of Maryland's public lands.

For years, all electric bikes have been treated the same as motorized vehicles in parks and public lands, prohibited from traveling on trails and restricted to roads and parking lots. Meanwhile, sales for electric bikes have increased, quadrupling between 2019 and 2022, per the U.S. Department of Energy.

In response to this demand, the department has drafted a regulation that will allow pedal-assist e-bikes (Class 1 and Class 3 only) on state trails where bikes are already allowed. Exceptions will be made for trails that were designed for specific user groups, such as pedestrians, for infrastructure con-

cerns, for safety concerns and for habitat protection, at the department's discretion.

"This e-bike policy will help even more people enjoy Maryland's multi-use trails," said Sandi Olek, director of the Maryland Office of Outdoor Recreation.

These regulations will provide clarity to e-bike users and lay a foundation for a burgeoning electric cyclist community in the state.

Class 1 and Class 3 bikes are pedal-assist e-bikes. The electric assist function will not activate unless a person is pedaling. These bikes stop providing assistance when the bike reaches 20 miles per hour.

Class 2 bikes have a throttle function and do not require pedaling. Under the proposed regulation, Class 2 e-bikes are only allowed on trails if the bike is adaptive.

Under the proposed regulation, an adaptive bicycle is "a bicycle designed with a specialized mobility device for

use by individuals with physical disabilities or mobility challenges and that may be customized with one or more of the following adaptive features: (a) Hand-cycles; (b) Three-wheeled designs for stability; (c) Reinforced frames; (d) Adaptive seating; or (e) Specialized controls."

Class 1 and 3 e-bikes are currently allowed on the Torrey C. Brown Rail Trail and the Western Maryland Rail Trail, but prohibited on all other trails.

E-cyclists should wave and greet other trail-users, yield to pedestrians and equestrians, maintain a safe speed, and turn off their motors when passing a horse to avoid spooking it. The general rule for e-cyclists is "Say

Hey, Give Way, and Enjoy the Day."

The proposed regulation was published today in the Maryland Register and Maryland Register Online, along with information on how to submit a comment.

The Department will be accepting public comments through September 22, and will consider the feedback before adopting its final regulation. Comments may be sent to the Office of Outdoor Recreation, Maryland Department of Natural Resources, 580 Taylor Ave C-4, Annapolis, MD 21401; email to outdoorrecreation.dnr@maryland.gov, or submitted through an online comment form.

Migratory game bird hunting season underway

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources has announced the state's 2025-2026 migratory game bird hunting seasons, the first of which began September 1.

Bag limits, season dates, and shooting hours can be found in the 2025-2026 Maryland Guide to Hunting and Trapping.

"Maryland hunters have been waiting for September with a high degree of anticipation, as fall hunting season begins," said Wildlife and Heritage Director Karina Stonesifer. "Maryland's diverse landscape and abundant pub-

lic hunting opportunities offer many options for new and experienced hunters."

Unless otherwise noted, official shooting hours begin 30 minutes before sunrise and end at sunset for all early migratory game bird hunting seasons. Season dates are as follows:

Dove, split season

First Season: Sept. 1 – Oct. 18 (note: shooting hours for this segment are noon to sunset)

*please see **hunting** on page 8*

Courier Almanac

Sir Alexander Fleming was a young bacteriologist when an accidental discovery led to one of the great developments of modern medicine on September 3, 1928. Having left a plate of staphylococcus bacteria uncovered, Fleming noticed that a mold that had fallen on the culture had killed many of the bacteria. He identified the mold as penicillium notatum, similar to the kind found on bread.



There is no definitive age when a child may need to get eyeglasses. However, the American Association for Pediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus notes that children's visual systems are still developing during the first 12 years of their life, and during this period wearing glasses can be important for normal vision development. Glasses can help straighten crossed or misaligned eyes, bolster weak vision caused by differences in vision between a child's eyes, and even protect the stronger eye. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends children begin vision screening around age 3 and receive annual screenings each year at ages 4, 5 and 6. After that, screening is recommended when children turn 8, 10, 12, and 15. Of course, parents who begin to suspect their children are having trouble with their vision are urged to take the child to an ophthalmologist once such suspicions arise. Some notable signs include inexplicable declines in academic performance, children sitting closer to the television than they once did and children's own remarks regarding their vision if they say anything at all.



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The Worcester County Health Department and partnering agencies will use the results of this survey to help identify important health issues that will be addressed in the 2026 Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). To view the previous Community Health Assessment data and the current Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP), visit worces-terhealth.org.

You can take the survey through the end of September at surveymon-key.com/r/WoHCHA2025. Physical copies of the survey are available at all Worcester County Health Department locations or upon request. The survey is completely voluntary, anonymous, and all information provided will be kept confidential.



Awards - The Ocean City - Berlin Rotary Club awarded three local seniors with college scholarships. Pictured (L to R) **Nancy Bradford** committee chair, **Owen Sperry**, **Adam Baker**, **Cliff Berg** and **Jay Warrington**. The club meets the first and third Wednesday of the month at Don's Seafood at the South Gate of Ocean Pines.

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hunting from page 6

Second Season: Oct. 25 – Nov. 28

Third Season: Dec. 20 – Jan. 9, 2026

Woodcock, split season

First Season: Oct. 25 – Nov. 28

Second Season: Jan. 12 – 28, 2026

Early resident Canada Goose Season

Eastern zone: Sept. 1–15

Western zone: Sept. 1–25

For Early Canada goose season, hunters are allowed to use shotguns capable of holding more than three shells. Shooting hours are extended to a half-hour before sunrise to a half-hour after sunset.

Teal, September Season

Sept. 18–27

Shooting hours will be a half-hour before sunrise to sunset. The daily bag limit is six teal.

All migratory bird hunters, in-

cluding landowners who are license-exempt, must purchase a Maryland Migratory Game Bird Stamp/Harvest Information Program Permit and possess the printed receipt while hunting. All waterfowl hunters, ages 16 and older, must possess a printed receipt of the Federal Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp (Federal Duck Stamp). Licenses, permits, and stamps can be purchased on the MD Outdoors website, by phone at 855-855-3906, at a department service center or any of the 250 sport license agents.

Hunters are encouraged to report banded migratory game birds online. After reporting the banded bird, hunters will receive a certificate of appreciation that includes all known biological information on the bird they harvested.

All of Maryland's Waterfowl Hunting zones can be viewed by clicking on the DNR website.

Hunters with questions may contact the department at 410-260-8540.

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The benefits of extracurriculars for college students

Assimilating into campus life at a college or university can take time. After all, much changes between high school and college. Residential students may find college is the first time they spend considerable time away from home among their peers.

College students have more responsibility than their counterparts in high school. College students must manage their schedules, get to class on time without help from Mom and Dad and

speaking with professors on their own behalf.

One way to mitigate some of the stress that comes with the increased responsibility of college is to take full advantage of campus life. This includes participating in extracurricular activities. High school students may participate in extracurriculars because they know they look good on college applications. But now that college is here, the benefits of extracurriculars may be slightly different.

How families can approach the college application process

Going to college is the next step in many high school graduates' academic journeys. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics indicates that around 62 percent of recent high school graduates were enrolled in college as of 2023. College enrollment has remained relatively stable in recent years, with around 60 percent of students enrolling in college after high school.

Many current high school students are planning to attend college, and they may wonder when to begin the application process. U.S. News & World Report advises students to check in with the individual schools they are considering, as deadlines and requirements for college applications vary by school. Fall of senior year typically is a busy time for college applications. This timeline can help students better prepare for the college application process.

Begin your college search during junior year of high school. This also is a time to visit schools in person to get a feel for each campus. By spring of junior year, it is advisable to have taken the SAT or ACT test at least once. These tests can be taken again in the fall and then the highest score will be sent to colleges.

Continue to look at colleges the summer before senior year and narrow down which colleges seem to be the best fit. Western Colorado University suggests it could be a good idea to begin the application process during the summer before senior year. This gives students plenty of time to finish an application before the deadline.

Most students wait until the fall of senior year of high school before they do the bulk of their college applications. Schools will have separate deadlines for early decision, early action and regular decision, so it is important to know these cutoff dates and apply accordingly. Early action tends to close out in November, while general applications need to be in by January or February. A student who applies for early decision and is accepted by a school must withdraw all other applications, as early decision is binding.

Most students will hear back about their applications by April of senior year.

College Decision Day occurs on May 1 each year. This is the date when most students commit to a particular school. It's a time of great celebration and anticipation regarding what the next several years will bring.

Physical activity: The Freshman 15 is no urban legend. The National Center for Biotechnology Information says that while most college students do not gain 15 pounds freshman year, a lot do gain some weight upon entering college. A 2008 study published in the Journal of American College Health found the average weight gain upon entering college was 2.7 pounds, with about half of students polled gaining weight. Extracurricular activities, like sports and additional physical pursuits, can help college students maintain a healthy weight even when consuming some not-so-healthy dining hall fare.

Avoid poor habits: A 2023 study by the Afterschool Alliance found that students who participate in extracurricular activities at least two days a week are less likely to smoke marijuana and drink alcohol. These students also are less likely to miss class without a reason.

Networking: Students interact with their peers during curriculum-related clubs, musical performances or sports practices and games. Finding common ground and making new connections is a cornerstone of success in the professional world. Extracurriculars can help students develop networking skills that

will be useful in the future.

Improved mental health: Getting involved can counter feelings of loneliness or boredom that many students feel, especially in their first year at school, says Psychology Today. Rather than feeling unsure and isolated, participation in extracurricular activities can give students reason to chat with new people beyond the rigors of class.

Future connections: Some extracurriculars can pay professional dividends. Academic and social Greek organizations have very strong alumni networks, which can help graduates secure interviews and job offers.

Better grades: There is evidence that managing multiple extracurriculars helps students academically. Cambridge International Education says juggling multiple commitments helps a student value time management, which carries over into school work.

Self-esteem: Participating in activities can boost confidence and self-esteem. Taking on leadership roles in extracurriculars can further a positive self-image as well.

Extracurricular activities can offer a wide-ranging array of benefits for college students.

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Men's golf club championship rescheduled

The Men's Golf Club Championship has been rescheduled for September 27 and 28.

Players already registered who are available on the new dates do not need to take any action. Those unable to participate may contact the Pro Shop to receive a refund.

Golfers who have not yet registered are still welcome to sign up by calling the Pro Shop. Entry fees for full golf members are \$40, \$65 for golf members without a cart plan, and \$85 for non-members.

The deadline to register is September 21.

For questions or additional information, call 410-641-6057.

Pink Ribbon Pickleball Round Robin set

The Ocean Pines Pickleball Club will host the 2025 Pink Ribbon Pickleball Round Robin on Friday, October 3 from 8:30 a.m. to 2 p.m., at the Ocean Pines Racquet Center.

The event itself is sold out, but the community is invited to come out and participate in the fundraising from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., featuring gift baskets, raffles, a local vendor, and more.

This year, anyone can make a donation online to the Ocean Pines Pink Ribbon Pickleball event to benefit the American Cancer Society.

All sponsored donations will be recognized with a sponsor sign at the event.

Sponsorship opportunities also remain available, ranging from \$50 (Tribute Sign) to \$1,000 (Platinum). Track sign recognition at Making Strides Against Breast Cancer event at the Boardwalk on October 25th is included with all sponsorship levels.

For questions and information on sponsorships, contact Becky Ferguson at 410-446-1816 or rcoltferguson@gmail.com.

Bavarian Hops Golf Classic helps local charities

The weather was beautiful as the Ocean Pines Golf Club hosted the Ernie Stiles Memorial Bavarian Hops Golf Classic Friday evening, August 22.

A total of 72 participants came out for the 18th annual event, which was founded by the late Ernie Stiles in the early 2000s as a way to go out for nine holes, have some fun, and support good causes.

Ernie's son Colby hosted the first hole cheer to raise a drink to the sky, while Darin and Terri Stuibler hosted a "Shot Ski" party at the 7th hole to raise additional money for his charities.

More than \$3,000 was raised through the event to benefit Diakonia and the Worcester County Humane Society, with each organization slated to receive over \$1,500 from the Ocean Pines Golf Members Council.

Dave McGregor won the Bavarian Hops Match Hat for closest to the pin on the 7th hole at 20.5 inches.

Peggy and Joe Tomarelli, Ed Kessler, and Tracy Jones won the

50/50 as a group and donated it back to the charities.



Bavarian Hops Match Hat winner **Dave McGregor** (r) with last year's winner **Ed Kessler**.



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Betelgeuse companion star discovered

The star Betelgeuse is one of the ten brightest in the sky, shining at first magnitude in the winter constellation Orion the Hunter. Although astronomers have long been observing this red supergiant since ancient

companion star with Hubble and Chandra Space Telescopes turned up nothing.

New technology applied by the Gemini North telescope at the Mauna Kea Observatory in Hawaii finally

one star near the end of its life – the red supergiant, Betelgeuse – and one to be considered a “newborn.” Astronomers estimate that the small companion star hasn’t yet begun its stellar life, which starts when nuclear fusion processes turn on deep within its core.

Betelgeuse’s companion star shines rather modestly and is about 200 times fainter than the famous red giant itself. Its dimness as well as its close proximity to Betelgeuse helps account for astronomers’ past difficulties in seeing this elusive star.

The orbital distance between the Betelgeuse binary pair is about four times the separation of Earth from the sun. (a measurement called the AU.) One can compare this to the distance of Jupiter from the sun which is five AU’s.

Other interesting binaries include the brightest star Sirius, with its partner star orbiting 20 AU’s apart, a distance comparable to the Uranus orbit. The companion of Sirius was discovered in 1836.

One might also consider the famous variable binary star Algol which dims and brightens over a cycle of 2.87 days. The dimming effect happens each time one of the two partner stars passes in front of the other. Some call Algol the blinking binary star. While the first careful measurements of the Algol binary were made in 1669, the ancients had already noted the changes and the Egyptians linked this notable event to their calendars.

Astronomers anticipate a somewhat better look at the Betelgeuse newly found partner star in late 2027, when the two “friends” are located at maximum separation.

However, the discovery has further implications. Astronomers anticipate that the new technology brought to bear on Betelgeuse might also be applied to other red giants, allowing them to explain fluctuations in their appearances.

September’s stargazing begins at

about 8:30 p.m., and also features a few late-night treats.

Almost directly overhead is the familiar constellation Cygnus the Swan (Northern Cross). To the west, Hercules the Hero is also seen flying high. One might imagine Hercules as a smaller cousin of the famous wintertime constellation, Orion the Hunter.

After 9:30 p.m. the Great Square of Pegasus comes into view. Gaze a little higher into the northern sky to spot the constellation Cassiopeia the Queen with its classic zig-zag “W” shaped pattern.

Later at night, after about 11:15 p.m., more good targets become visible. In the northern sky, east of Cassiopeia, lies the constellation

Astronomy & Spaceflight

By Douglas Hemmick, Ph.D.



times, modern technology has led to the discovery of a previously unseen companion star. The new finding was published in July by the Astrophysical Journal.

For decades, astronomers have traced the brightness variations from Betelgeuse over a 400-day pulsation cycle and a second, slower rhythm lasting about six years. Then in 2019 and 2020 Betelgeuse made astronomical news for its “Great Dimming” event, demanding the attention of astronomers. This was later traced to a simple dust cloud event.

However, it was the six-year long slow variations that led astronomers to the most fascinating of possibilities: that Betelgeuse may have a partner star in orbit around it, forming a binary pair. Unfortunately, the dazzling brightness of Betelgeuse itself made the search quite difficult. Earlier efforts to find a hypothetical binary

overcame this obstacle and reports suggested that the binary companion star was spotted at last in December 2024.

The new technique is known as speckle imaging and uses very short time intervals – about ten-one-thousandths of one second – per photographic exposure. Ground based telescopes have always suffered the problem of atmospheric distortion due to air movements and thermal variations in the atmosphere which can smear photographic images. However, by taking very short-exposure, fast images, this distortion can be greatly reduced.

NASA Ames Research Center’s lead scientist Steve Howell said, “I was surprised that the companion was so obvious immediately after our data was processed. I was thinking it’d be hard to find, but boom, it was right there.”

Ironically this binary pair contains

Lock down privacy settings. Together with their parents, students should safeguard their devices by adjusting privacy settings. These settings control who sees what is posted on social media. If a person is bullying another through text or social media, the person being harassed can document what is said by taking screenshots and then block that person from contact.

Students who believe they have been subject to bullying, harassment, or intimidation or who have knowledge of employees or students who may be engaging in bullying, harassment, or intimidation should immediately report the problem to a teacher, counselor, or school administrator.

-Chip Bertino

bullying

from page 4

what they post, and be aware that something said “in private” might be forwarded. Students should not share anything that could hurt or embarrass another person.

Contact authorities, if applicable. According to the Anti-Bullying Alliance, most bullying incidents are not crimes, but there are certain types that are illegal and should be reported to the police. Bullying that involves violence or assault; theft; harassment and intimidation over a period of time, including calling someone names or threatening them; and/or perpetrating abusive phone calls, emails or texts, should be reported.



Perseus the Hero. Within Perseus, stargazers may enjoy locating the variable binary star, Algol, also known as the blinking binary star.

Looking southward from the late-night group is Saturn, with its soft yellow glow.

Wishing clear skies and good luck to all stargazers.

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Strategies for students facing challenging classes

Every student takes something unique from their high school experience, and many eventually look back fondly on the years spent in the hallowed halls of their alma maters. High school might be the last step before learning a trade career or serve as four years of preparation for college. Either way, it is important to get good grades.

Continually challenging oneself with coursework can help students get the most out of their academic careers. General level classes are often taken freshman year and honors classes sophomore year. Students may then decide to enroll in advanced placement or dual enrollment classes as an upperclassman. As students continue to push themselves and classes get harder, they may have to revise their approach in order to excel. These guidelines can help students continue to be successful.

Establish a solid foundation. The first step towards success in any class is gaining a solid understanding of the basics, says Stemly Tutoring. If there are gaps in foundational knowledge, assignments and tests can be particularly difficult as the coursework becomes harder. Routinely reviewing previous material and ensuring that the fundamental concepts are mastered is essential.

Practice active learning. Active learning involves engaging with the material in a way that goes beyond passively reading texts. Ideas include formulating questions, quizzing classmates, explaining the material to others as a teacher would, and writing down key words and topics so they are more likely to be remembered.

Focus on time management. In high school, five or more classes run concurrently during the year. Assignments may have similar due dates, and tests and quizzes may come more frequently. Students will need to master an organizational system and time management strategy that works for them. Students can utilize a day planner as a useful organizational tool. Breaking down long-term assignments into smaller pieces that are easier to manage also can be useful. Smartphone notifications can alert to due

dates.

Seek help when needed. Students shouldn't hesitate to ask for help from peers, academic coaches, tutors, or their teachers. Study groups or partnerships with classmates also may be fruitful. Students should not wait until they are falling behind to seek help, as that can make it much more challenging to catch up.

Study regularly. Reviewing material frequently and reinforcing knowledge is a smart strategy. Creating visual aids like diagrams or maps can help students understand a subject more fully. Again,

this carries back to mastering the fundamentals. Looking back on previous lessons may help students with current ones.

Don't forget to find balance and prioritize self-care. Academics are important, but so is mastering a balance between schoolwork and other activities. Without balance, a student may experience burnout, stress and additional symptoms that can impede students' ability to do well in school.

High school coursework gets more difficult as the years pass and students challenge themselves. Certain strategies can help students navigate increasingly challenging coursework.



Golden anniversary - The Ocean Pines Ladies Golf Association celebrated its fiftieth anniversary on Sunday, August 24, with a Sadie Hawkins western themed golf tournament.

Ladies invited the gentlemen for a two-person scramble, which kicked off at 9 a.m. at the Ocean Pines Golf Club.



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Hummingbirds

The Hummingbird is a very small species and one that many people are familiar with. These charming birds get their names from the fact that the rapid movement of their wings makes a humming sound. Hummingbirds are the smallest type of animal in the world with a backbone and as a result have been studied intensely by researchers.

There are many types of food Hummingbirds consume, mostly sugar and sap. They also like pollen and will eat small insects as a way to get protein. These birds can eat up to three times their own weight in food every single day.



Many people keep bird feeders in their yards where Hummingbirds can feed. It is a great way to help the birds thrive. But caution is necessary to ensure you are proving the birds with proper nutrition.

So, will too much sugar harm hummingbirds? Yes, using too much sugar in hummingbird feeders can harm them, according to several sources. Here's why:

-Digestive issues and dehydration: Nectar that is too sweet can be harder for hummingbirds to digest. If the nectar is excessively sweet, they might ingest less water while consuming it, leading to potential dehydration, particularly in hot weather or during cold snaps.

-Kidney and liver damage (potential): Some sources suggest that consistently drinking overly sweet nectar could potentially cause kidney or liver damage in hummingbirds. More research is needed in this area, notes [sweet-seed.com](#).

-Faster spoilage and fungus:
Sweeter solutions can ferment and

spoil more quickly, leading to the growth of harmful bacteria and fungi that can make hummingbirds sick or even be fatal.

-Attracting other insects: Sweeter nectar can also attract more bees and wasps to the feeder, which can overwhelm the feeding area and drive hummingbirds away.

The recommended ratio for making hummingbird nectar is four parts water to one part white granulated sugar. This closely mimics the natural sugar concentration found in the nectar of most flowers hummingbirds feed on.

Only use plain white granulated sugar. Avoid honey, brown sugar, raw sugar, organic sugar (unless specifically processed for hummingbirds and certi-

fied safe like Hummingbird Momma products mentioned by The Hummingbird Society, or artificial sweeteners.

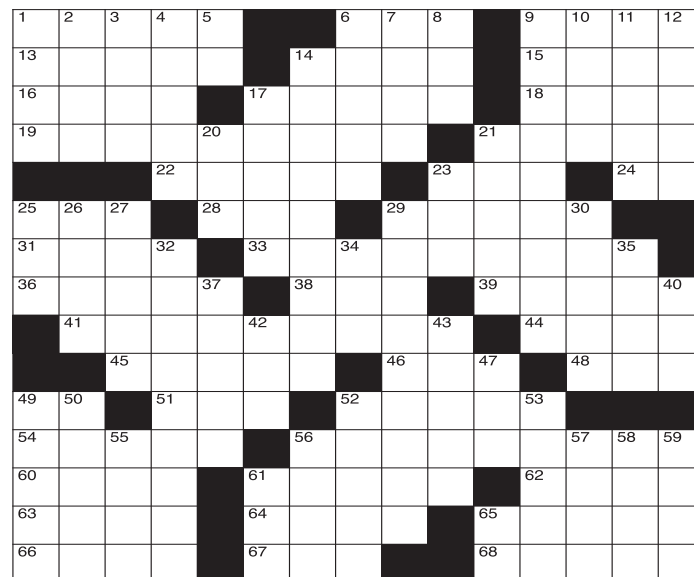
Do not add red dye to the nectar. The red color on the feeder itself is sufficient to attract hummingbirds, and added dye can be harmful.

Keep feeders clean. Regularly clean feeders to prevent the growth of mold and bacteria. The nectar should be changed at least every other day, especially in hot weather.

By following these guidelines and using the appropriate sugar-to-water ratio, you can provide a safe and healthy food source for hummingbirds while avoiding potential harm.

The life span for the Hummingbird is often very short, many not surviving more than a year. For those that do survive, they can live up to four years.

*Adapted from multiple sources
including HummingWorlds.*

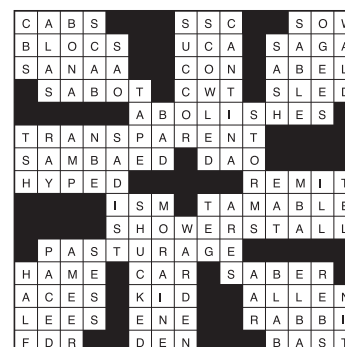


CLUES ACROSS

1. Fairly large
6. Barrels per day (abbr.)
9. Cover the entirety of
13. Leafy appetizer
14. Showy ornament
15. Norse personification of old age
16. Athletes
17. Closes tightly
18. Attack via hurling items
19. Where the reserves stand
21. Sword
22. Begat
23. Damage another's reputation
24. Northeast
25. Turf
28. For each
29. Hours (Spanish)
31. Western state
33. One who offers help
36. Flanks
38. A woolen cap of Scottish origin
39. Free from drink or drugs
41. Tunnels
44. Mature
45. More dried-up
46. News organization
48. Steal something
49. Forms one's public persona (abbr.)
51. Female fish eggs
52. Small petrel of southern seas
54. Edible starches
56. Historical
60. In a place to sleep
61. Horse grooms
62. Off-Broadway theater award
63. Chinese dynasty
64. Resembling a wing
65. Small projection on a bird's wing
66. Of the Isle of Man
67. Derived unit of force (abbr.)
68. Plate for Eucharist

CLUES DOWN

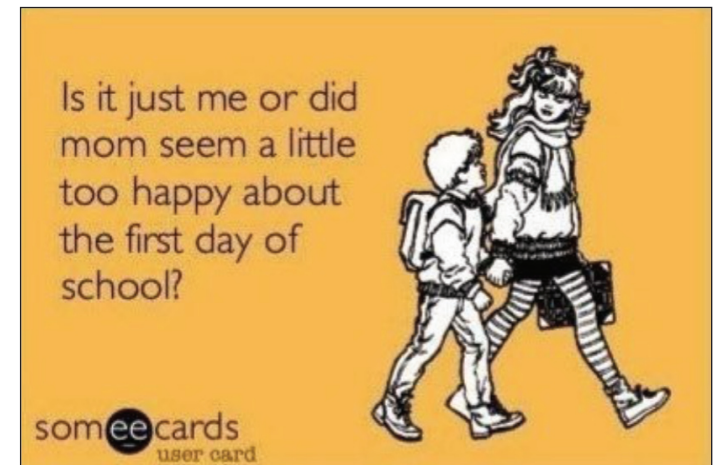
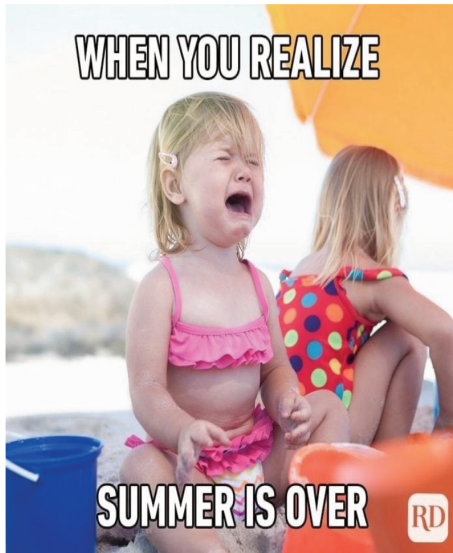
1. Vipers
2. Ancient city in Syria
3. Slog
4. Emits coherent radiation
5. "Pollock" actor Harris
6. Bleated
7. Monetary units of Afghanistan
8. Tooth doctor
9. One who takes apart
10. Commoner
11. Beat poet Ginsberg
12. Cave deposit material
14. Home energy backup
17. Begets
20. Face part
21. Frocks
23. Hill or rocky peak
25. Giving the impression of dishonesty
26. About ear
27. Male parents
29. Popular grilled food
30. Vaccine developer
32. Not conforming
34. Polite address for women
35. 1970 U.S. environmental law
37. Astronomical period of 18 years
40. One who fights the government
42. Center for Excellence in Education
43. Watches discreetly
47. An electrically charged atom
49. Hymn
50. Arabic given name
52. Popular pie nut
53. City in Zambia
55. Species of cherry
56. John __, British writer
57. Be next to
58. Make angry
59. Give birth to a lamb or kid



Answers for August 27

Some things to think about

Gathered from the internet
by **Jack Barnes**



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