



# The High School View

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## Administration reinstates late policy

BY NIKEYA TANKARD

As the Martha's Vineyard Regional High School (MVRHS) relaxes its COVID protocols, administration has ramped up enforcement of attendance policies regarding tardiness and cutting classes in an effort to encourage timely attendance.

According to the MVRHS Student Handbook, accumulations of tardies, unexcused absences, and cuts can result in a variety of consequences, including an inability to participate in afterschool activities, detention, and even loss of class credit.

The current policy is that students receive a detention per five lates, five tardies, or three class cuts. Principal Sara Dingley said that the detention system was reinstated to reduce classroom

disruptions being caused by students arriving to class late. "The Student Affairs Office was trying to move away from punitive consequences," she said. "We were trying other things, but [administration] was receiving a lot of feedback that cuts and lates were problematic to teachers. So we started to reinstate detention and after school consequences."

While many students dislike the increased enforcement of the late policy, others see it as reasonable. Sophomore Gunnar Graham, who recently served four detentions, said, "It's my problem, because I'm showing up to class late."

Junior Paige Alley agrees with the legitimacy of the policy itself. "I would say the lates and the cuts that I've received have been fair because, well, I was either late

or cutting class," she said.

Principal Dingley explained the reasoning for the stricter enforcement of attendance policies. "We weren't really cracking down [on attendance penalties during the first half of the year], but instead trying to make sure that we were back to normalcy and that students were back to the expectations of being in school," she said. "I think that's probably why it is being [strongly] enforced now."

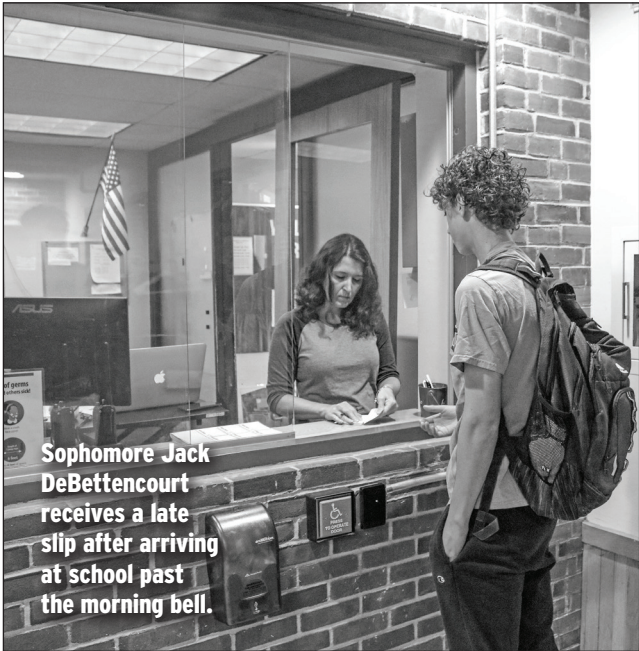
She added, "At the end of COVID, there was an attempt to try and keep things positive and keep kids in school. But now we're reacting to a lot of tardies and increasing cuts."

Spanish teacher Erin Slossberg, who also helps to oversee attendance, said, "We came back to school, in masks, in person. We

weren't focusing on these [attendance] details yet."

The policy has received additional backlash from students due to how the policy impacts flex attendance. Flex period is a 40-minute time slot during the day where students can schedule themselves to meet with teachers for educational or enrichment purposes. The scheduling of flex can get disorganized as students may want to meet with teachers they didn't sign up for or need to go to a different room. A student may not show up to the flex they originally signed up for and will ask another teacher to "pull" them in. If this teacher forgets to pull them, it can result in them being marked for a cut.

Sophomore Georgia Magden said, "Sometimes my flex teacher isn't con-



Sophomore Jack DeBettencourt receives a late slip after arriving at school past the morning bell.

ZACH POTTER

sistently present in the classroom and won't be able to take every student's attendance. And so then they'll get a cut."

Fellow sophomore Eli Freidman has also been erroneously marked as "cut" during flex. "I received a cut because I went to a dif-

ferent flex in a different room because my teacher was out that day."

Paige said, "I haven't always signed up for flex, but I feel like I shouldn't receive a cut since I am still present in a classroom. I would say that both sides need to take accountability." **HSV**

## Teacher of the Year finalist champions alternative education

BY HARDY EVILLE AND JULIET MORSE

English teacher and Project Vine department chair Dani Charbonneau has been nominated for Massachusetts's Teacher of the Year and has made it to the semifinal round.

Project Vine is an embedded alternative education program within Martha's Vineyard Regional High School (MVRHS) that focuses on community-building. "We have the same school day as everybody else. Our students take English, history, and math with us, but all their other classes they can take are in the mainstream classes at MVRHS," Charbonneau said.

After her nomination,

Charbonneau responded to various essay prompts and participated in a phone interview before being chosen as one of 12 semifinalists. Before advancing to the finalist round, she submitted a 20-minute video of herself teaching a class.

The next step to determine a winner from the three finalists will involve a team from the Department of Education visiting MVRHS to observe Charbonneau's classes and speak with her colleagues. She will also be asked to respond to more questions about her education practice from previous Massachusetts Teachers of the Year during a Zoom interview.

Charbonneau's role as a teacher in an alternative edu-



English teacher Dani Charbonneau.

COURTESY DANI CHARBONNEAU

cation program sets her apart from other teachers. "In our state we define alternative education as a different pathway towards education," she said. "It must address dropout prevention, and of-

fer character education and socialization."

However, Project Vine isn't only for students who are struggling. "[Many students] were doing fine academically and socially. They just saw [Project Vine] and were more interested in this," she said. "I've never seen such tremendous interest in alternative education. I think that the landscape of what students want is changing, just like the landscape of workers is changing. There's this great resignation going on, which is pushing union labor more, and you're seeing people say, 'My life shouldn't be this way due to tradition.' I think more students are having a similar epiphany."

Charbonneau attributes

much of Project Vine's success to the community it provides. Students spend most of their days together, hold events, and go on trips to Boston and Penikese Island.

"Project Vine is, in a larger respect, their home base. Students often start their days here, they'll have breakfast, I put on some music. They come here for study halls or flexes," she said. "We also let them clean, take care of, and decorate the space, so there's personalization."

Charbonneau feels that her nomination as Teacher of the Year signals that state-level policymakers are paying attention to the value of alternative education.

"I think that more and more students are looking

around and going, 'What else can I get out of this high school experience?' Alternative education offers that. I've been saying that pretty loudly throughout this [teacher of the year interview] process," she said. "By getting this far, I have to think that our state agrees with me."

The teachers chosen as Teacher of the Year in their respective states continue to teach, but often speak at events and are asked to serve on boards for education-related organizations. They also visit Washington, D.C., and meet with the U.S. president to discuss education policy. The Massachusetts Teacher of the Year will be announced this summer. **HSV**

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