



RITON VOICE



Triton High School

Triton's Student-Produced Newspaper

April 17, 2026

OPINION

Schools Becoming Ghost Towns

Mental Health Key to Increasing Student Attendance at School

By Willow Murnahan, Staff Writer

Schools around the country have experienced rapid declines in attendance since 2020. The rapid decrease is leaving teachers wondering why their classes are so empty. Some say students are becoming lazy, some argue that they just "don't like school." However, studies show that mental health has a major role to play in chronic absences.

The National Alliance on Mental Illness states that, "some students may not necessarily have a mental health condition but are having a challenging day or week where their mental health is suffering. For all these students, there are times when their mental health can interfere with school performance or overall functioning."

Some students who stay home on a school day and are not ill may be going through something connected to school, whether it be a bad relationship with a student or teacher, or a big test that is making them anxious.

While some adults claim that students miss school because they do not want to learn, and do not want to show up, researchers at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health write that it depends on the situation. "Chronic absence is often considered an education issue. Yet many of the root causes can originate outside the school setting and may include limited access to health care, housing instability, and family stress," they write.

Some students will miss school because of stress at home as well, not having the ambition to get out of bed and go to school due to their mental health difficulties.

At the same time, Massachusetts has laws require attendance in schools. The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education states that "Massachusetts law requires that the school principal or headmaster, or a designee, make a reasonable effort to meet with the parent or guardian of a student who has 5 or more unexcused absences to develop action steps for student attend-

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Aspen, Triton's student attendance system, shows the many absences and dismissals a student had this year. Better mental health services would help alleviate some of this problem (Aspen).

ance. The action steps shall be developed jointly and agreed upon by the school principal or headmaster, or a designee, the student, and the student's parent or guardian."

However, there are schools that do not follow this policy. Some, such as Triton, only assign make up times for hours lost, such as through Saturday school, detentions, or other ways.

Overall, most schools are focusing too much on attendance and not enough on the mental health, which is what is causing the decline. Schools need to begin focusing on mental health, and then maybe the attendance will increase.

Personally, if I had had more help with my mental health I would not have missed as much school as I have. We need to take more steps to help students, instead of punishing them for struggling.

Student Drug Use Leads to 'Holds'

By Sadie Deveau Staff Writer

Triton has been experiencing substance-related issues since the beginning of the year, but last week students and staff saw more significant problems. During each of the three "holds" — times when students and teachers must stay inside their classrooms — last week, each student was medically transported to a hospital for treatment after using drugs. Each of the students have recovered now.

"There were some students who had significant medical reactions," said Principal Patrick Kelley. "Other students were found to be in possession of or using substances."

Kelley said he wasn't able to say much due to confidentiality purposes when discussing students. However, he was able to say that students were found in the bathroom with illegal substances as well as that administrators used the vape detectors to find out who was there at the time of the incidents.

According to the state of Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education website, in 2024-25 Triton had 36 major student discipline issues. Eight of those issues were drug-related, with a 0.5% rate of in-school suspension, and a 1.5% rate of out-of-school suspension rate for all students for drug use.

Teachers and administrators are hoping for a change in student behavior. Math teacher, Mr. Jason Bonneau said he has witnessed the

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Vikings: What Are You Doing for April Vacation?

By Triton Voice Staff Writers

Junior Tristan Vo: I'm going to Spain!



Junior Riley Tarmey: I am going to the Celtics game and going to Florida to do some work and get a good tan.



Senior Maddie Modini: I'm going to Florida with my family to look at colleges and my new house. I might go to the beach, too.



Mr. Max "Mr. G" Girourd: My dad recently got engaged, and we are having a bachelor party for him.

OPINION

More Than A Number

Schools Should do More to Favor Learning Over Testing

By Laura Ewell Staff Writer

Over the past several decades, the schools in the United States have gradually transformed from less of a learning environment and into one that vastly focuses on tests and grades. Instead, the American school curriculum should center more on direct, hands-on learning, rather than assignments and tests.

In the *Harvard Business Impact* article 'Why Focusing on Grades Is a Barrier to Learning,' author Gerald E. Knesek shared his observations about grading: "What's apparent in all this focus on grades is that there's no real emphasis on learning—the true purpose of education. It is a rare occurrence that students come to talk with me about concepts or new material presented, and even in learning-focused discussions, the topic of grades almost always arises."

It is apparent that students feel that the numbers are what defines them.

The issue at play is that the content being learned in school is not valued for genuine understanding and knowledge. Instead it is viewed primarily as a tool for achieving high grades. Many students note that they often forget the information they learned shortly afterward tests, but what does it matter, they say, if they end up getting a good test score?

Some may argue that high-grade assignments



Students complete testing on Chromebooks in an elementary school. Our editors believe hands-on learning should be prioritized over testing (Image by Adobe Express)

and tests are essential because they provide measurable ways to access student understanding and ensure academic accountability.

But the truth is that while assessments are pivotal to record students' comprehension, relying too much on them discourages the understanding of important subjects and reduces it to temporary memorization.

OPINION

Wanted: More Than 3 Minutes
Students Need Increased Time to Get to Class

By Asher Clifford, Staff Writer

Every day at Triton High School, when a class ends, students have three minutes to get from point A to point B. Some students are lucky enough to have classes right next to each other, while others have to walk from one side of the school to the other. Students who need to use the bathroom have little time because of the three-minute time limit in the halls. So, because of this, many students have been late because of the small amount of time they have between classes.

The bottom line is that it would be beneficial if students were given 2-3 more minutes to travel between classes

For junior Sam France, it's hard to get from his F-period gym class to his G-period English class in three minutes because of the distance between the gym and the English hallway.

"I have to rush out of gym class every time I have it, so I make sure I'm not late for my next period," said France. "I have gym during F period and English the period after that. I basically have to try and aim to leave class early so I can make it to English, since the three minutes that I'm given aren't enough."

A major roadblock is that Triton already has the minimum number of hours of learning time required by the state. That means that adding passing time would extend the school day. The simple answer to this problem is that Triton could start at 7:30 instead of 7:42. The day would still end at 2:13, and students would be able to have more time before their next class. According to the article, *Passing Periods: Three Minutes isn't*

enough, *Potential Solutions To The Passing Period Crisis* by Griffin Knape, of Chatfield High School in Colorado, this could also give students a five-minute grace period, which would allow them more time to communicate with friends, refill water, and ask teachers questions.

However, there is a downside to this schedule — students who have trouble waking up in the morning are now expected to wake up earlier. An alternate solution could be changing the school start time from 7:42 to around 7:50 am or 8:00 am. This could be beneficial for students with this problem. However, school would then have to end around 2:30 p.m. - 2:40 p.m., which would result in the elementary schools being pushed back with their timeframes as well.

Junior Shane Olson expressed dissatisfaction with the thought of more school. Still, it would be a worthy sacrifice since this would give students the proper mentality to face the day, said Olson.

"I think changing the times could be a great idea since I don't tend to wake up automatically in the morning," said Olson. "I need at least two or three alarms before I'm actually up. More school would kind of suck, but if you think about it, we'd get more time to sleep, and we'd get more time to process between classes. Which I don't have a problem with."

There are pros and cons to changing the school schedule; however, allowing more time between classes would be a great help to students who have trouble getting to class or just need a little time to relax before their next period starts.



Dear Helga

How Can I Get more Sleep?

Dear Helga,

I'm a busy student involved in many activities in and out of school. So I'm perpetually tired at school. How do I get more sleep?

Sincerely,
Sleepless

Dear Sleepless,

As a high school student, it can be tough to balance homework, a social life, sports, and activities, so I totally understand why it can be difficult to find room for sleep!

Although it can be tempting to just push back your bedtime to fit everything in, this will ultimately make you fall further behind. I would recommend that you make a to-do list when you get home from school, mark which commitments are your top priorities, and establish a time by which you will be in bed. Finish your "must-do's" and if your "may-do's" or "can-do's" aren't done by your established time, then you just have to go to bed to prioritize your sleep and mental health.

I'd also recommend not going on screens at least a half an hour before bedtime or if you absolutely need to, wear blue-light glasses so it doesn't affect your melatonin production.

Sincerely,



Dear Helga

OPINION

Trust Over Permission

Students Shouldn't Have to Ask to Use Bathrooms



Mr. Allen denies junior Ben Hutchinson from going to the bathroom during class. Staff at the Triton Voice believe students should have the right to go to the bathroom without asking teachers for permission (Brown photo).

By Ava Brown & Chloe Belson
Staff Writers

If schools trust students to manage homework, deadlines, and exams, they should trust them to make the simple decision of when they need to use the bathroom.

Not only should we not have to ask, but teachers shouldn't be allowed to deny students their bathroom rights either.

In the article, "Our Bodies Don't Operate on the School's Clockwork: Why Students Need Bathroom Freedom, author Ada Gordon of the Stuyvesant (New York) student newspaper *The Spectator*, discusses the importance of why students should be allowed to leave the class to use the bathroom: "For female students who need to address their sanitary product needs, an inability to do so in a timely fashion, can result in toxic shock syndrome, a life-threatening complication caused by leaving a menstrual product in the body for an extended period of time."

In recent interviews conducted with the *Triton Voice*, several students say they have been denied or held back from going to the bathroom.

Sophomore Arianna Diecidue stated in an interview, "On certain occasions, I have been asked to wait as long as 20 minutes to go to the bathroom by my teachers."

Senior Alliemay Bishop said she has had similar experiences.

"Yes, my teacher told me I had to wait until I finished my work, and then I could use the restroom, and then he let somebody else go before me," said Bishop.

Having to ask for the bathroom also leads to more distractions from class; teachers have to stop what they're doing to answer, and students get distracted and thrown off by the pause in the lesson.

"I think raising your hand would be more distracting because you're taking time out of the teacher's speaking to the other students," said Bishop.

Although there can be problems that start in the bathroom, there are solutions to those problems. In the article "How to Create School Bathroom Rules" by

Jeanne Sager of the teacher blog *Teach Starter*, the author states, "the bathroom can quickly become a hangout spot for students if too many are allowed to use the restroom at any one time."

While students may handle homework, deadlines, and exams, she admits that allowing them to leave for the bathroom without asking could lead to misuse of time, increased classroom disruptions, and difficulty ensuring student safety. It also can lead to students leaving multiple times, or even too many students at a time. But this can only be true if we fail to set up some other rules to help prevent this.

A Solution to this Problem

Each class could have one boy pass and one girl pass hanging in front of the door. If there isn't a pass, that means it's being used, and you can't leave. We also have a bathroom monitor, which will make sure there're not too many people in the bathroom at a time, preventing the bathroom from becoming a hangout spot.

When we asked math teacher Mr. Max Girouard how he would feel about this new policy, he stated, "I think students should still ask to go to the bathroom as it is not always the appropriate time for a bathroom break."

But when we asked sophomore student Joshua Ferris, he said he disagreed.

"If you have to go, go; there is no point in asking," said Ferris. "No one should be able to decide if you can perform your bodily functions."

In the end, school rules should balance both responsibility and the basic needs of the students. While it's important to prevent misuse and keep classrooms running smoothly, students shouldn't feel restricted when it comes to something like using the bathroom.

By creating simple systems like passes and monitoring without being overly strict, the school can maintain order while still respecting students. A fair policy isn't about control but about its focus on trust and safety. And making sure everyone can focus on their learning.

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aftermath of drug issues at the school.

"I try to stay vigilant so I've been a part of a couple situations," said Bonneau. "I feel like we need a more comprehensive program to deal with the overall drug use in school."

In order to prevent this from happening in the future, the Triton Voice asked Kelley what the long term plan is

"Students who look to engage in this kind of behavior often gravitate to the bathrooms," said Kelley. "This is not a new phenomenon. For many, they are looking for community and have found an inappropriate version of this. Smoking becomes a common bond, giving them a sense of belonging. This is true of both the male and female students who most commonly frequent the bathrooms."

Kelley said that the police have been notified of the drug problems.

"Whenever there are drugs involved, the evidence is provided to Newbury police department," said Kelley. "It is then their role to determine the next steps."