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Under plan, half of city schools could close

BPS sees larger buildings with more offerings



By Deanna Pan and Christopher Huffaker

GLOBE STAFF



1 in 3 buildings have comprehensive HVAC systems

50% lack auditoriums

44% have no full science labs

17% have no art spaces

As many as half of Boston's public schools could close in the coming years, as the district reckons with problems of declining enrollment, crumbling infrastructure, and rife inequities in student offerings, particularly at the high school level, according to a new plan released Wednesday by the city.

The long-term facilities plan for Boston Public Schools envisions a future with fewer but larger schools that have broader offerings. It notes the current number of buildings — 119 — are too many given that enrollment in the district has been steadily dropping, more than 13 percent since 2006, to fewer than 49,000 this year.

"The result has been inconsistent and inequitable student experiences, inefficient use of resources, and buildings that don't fully support a high-quality student experience for every student," BPS said in its plan.

But whether the district actually follows through in closing such a large number

SCHOOLS, Page B4

N.H. primary doesn't mean much — or it's everything

If a surprise happens anywhere, it'll likely be there

By Emma Platoff

GLOBE STAFF

Early-state presidential contests can feel like expensive political catnip meant only for obsessive insiders. Who outside Iowa understands the minutiae of the caucus process? Does it really matter how the handful of residents of Dixville Notch, N.H., vote at midnight?

But if you have a strong opinion about whether Donald Trump should be the next Republican nominee and possibly the next president — and love him or hate him, you probably do — then you care about the New Hampshire primary, too.

With due respect to the dazzling fall foliage, New Hampshire's greatest claim to fame is its first-in-the-nation primary and the lore that

►What to know about the primary. **B1.**

surrounds it. Every four years, the legend goes, this folksy collection of moderately sized cities and idyllic small towns gets the chance to deliver upsets and crown presidential underdogs. It's where John McCain drove his "Straight Talk Express" to a 2000 primary victory, where "Jimmy who?" became Jimmy Carter, president of the United States. (GOP contender Nikki Haley, incidentally, has also taken to delivering that line, telling crowds at her stops here that in an early political race in South Carolina, she, too, was "Nikki who?")

Now, as the new year dawns, candidates are entering the final weeks before the Jan. 15 Iowa caucuses and the New Hampshire primary on Jan. 23. In a primary contest dominated on the Republican side by Trump, it's still far from clear that any long shot can swoop in for a first-place photo finish. But if it were to happen anywhere, analysts say, it'd probably be in New Hampshire.

Countless conversations with early-state voters, and poll after poll, show that much of the country looks with dread upon the prospect of a Joe Biden-Trump rematch.

If that's going to be avoided, the contest will need to shift in the next few weeks. Biden, as the incumbent president, is almost certain to be

NEW HAMPSHIRE, Page A8

'There's no question that higher education has been dragged into the culture wars.'

IRENE MULVEY, *president of the American Association of University Professors*

No escape from politics for colleges

As conservatives work to assert influence over higher education, school leaders see a threat

By Ivy Scott and Niki Griswold

GLOBE STAFF

Claudine Gay's resignation from her post as Harvard University's president followed months of scathing criticism by conservative politicians and media personalities, a relentless campaign she denounced Wednesday as peddling in "recycled tired racial stereotypes about Black talent and temperament."

"The campaign against me was about more than one university and one leader," Gay wrote in a New York Times opinion piece, a day after resigning. "This was merely a single skirmish in a broader war to unravel public faith in the pillars of American society."

The university's first Black president was one of several academic heads to face grievances not only from students, alumni, and donors, but also from right-wing

leaders who have sought to steer education away from liberal ideas through legislation and targeting university leadership.

"There's no question that higher education has been dragged into the culture wars. Whether we like it or not, there are partisan attacks," said Irene Mulvey, president of the American Association of University Professors.

Gay's resignation came less than a month after a conservative activist and a writer published an article alleging several instances of plagiarism by Gay. The writers called for her resignation, underscoring what they called additional accusations of suppressing free speech and "overseeing a racist admissions program." Two weeks later, a House committee launched a probe into Harvard's re-

CULTURE WARS, Page A9

Right-wing reporting brought plagiarism allegations to light

By Aidan Ryan

GLOBE STAFF

Criticism of Harvard University from conservative quarters would normally find its audience in right-wing echo chambers. But the torrent aimed at president Claudine Gay broke through in a big way, ultimately scoring a rare direct hit against one of the premier institutions in liberal academia.

The conservative coverage of Gay was a departure from the usual partisan playbook: While there were plenty of the usual appeals to ideology over Gay's handling of antisemitism on campus, the most distinguishing content was based on vintage news reporting. Gay resigned this week after a series of plagiarism allegations that emerged from the right.

"A great scoop can come from anywhere," said Brian Stelter, a media reporter who previously hosted CNN's "Reliable Sources" and was a fellow at Harvard's Shorenstein Center. "Right-wing media historically has talked about others reporting, but done very little reporting on its own."

MEDIA, Page A9

DESTRUCTION IN JAPAN



KYODO NEWS VIA ASSOCIATED PRESS

Days after powerful earthquakes killed at least 73 people in western Japan, rescuers searched for survivors before heavy rain moved in, leading to worries about landslides and further damage to half-crumbled homes. Ishikawa prefecture (above, a burned marketplace in Wajima) was hit by more aftershocks Wednesday. **A6.**

Bringing the robotic warehouse to life

N.H. billionaire turns Symbotic into a tech leader

By Aaron Pressman

GLOBE STAFF

Rick Cohen has a modest goal for the warehouse robotics company he's spent 16 years building: "To move every box in the world."

The New Hampshire billionaire, who made his fortune in the grocery wholesale business, has become an

unlikely leader in the exploding robotics and artificial intelligence sector. Around Boston, the industry is filled with Pentagon-funded projects, MIT spinoffs, and the far-flung divisions of big companies like Amazon, but Cohen's moxie may be the key to building an ecosystem that can rival the region's prowess in biotech, finance, and health care.

Cohen's company, Wilmington-based Symbotic, has won over retail giants Walmart and Target as customers to install its football-field-sized automated storage and sorting sys-

tems, complete with fast-moving wheeled robots dubbed "symbots." And Symbotic's stock price jumped nearly fivefold in 2023, making it the second-most valuable tech company in Massachusetts after Analog Devices, with a market capitalization of \$29 billion. (Cohen's 219 million shares, some of which are held by family trusts, are worth \$11 billion alone.)

Symbotic declined to make the 71-year-old CEO available for an interview. But Cohen has laid out big plans

SYMBOTIC, Page A12



DANIELLE PARHIZKARAN/GLOBE STAFF

A BANNER START —

With the Professional Women's Hockey League beginning play this week, Boston forward Hilary Knight (21) and her teammates stood for the national anthem Wednesday night before their opener at Tsongas Arena in Lowell. Boston lost to Minnesota, 3-2. **C1.**

COVID-19 appears to be on the rise as people, most of whom have skipped the newest booster shot, return to their routines after the holidays. **B1.**

Wind power from south of Martha's Vineyard was delivered to the New England grid, in a development nearly 20 years in the making. **D1.**

House Speaker Mike Johnson led Republicans to the Mexican border to demand hard-line immigration policies. **A2.**

A pair of explosions at a commemoration for Iran's former top general killed at least 103 people and wounded 171. **A4.**

Overcast and out

Thursday: Cloudy and cool. High 40-45. Low 20-25.

Friday: Sun returns. High 34-39. Low 25-30.

High tide: 4:51 a.m., 5:13 p.m.

Sunrise: 7:13 Sunset: 4:24

Weather and Comics, D5-6. Obituaries, C11.

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