

# The Boston Globe

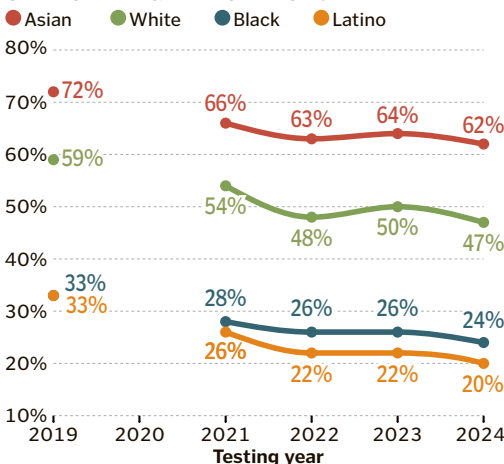
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WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2024

## English language arts performance

On the state English language arts exams, Massachusetts students are further behind pre-pandemic scores than they were in 2019. A similar trend was seen across most subjects.

### GRADE 3-8 STUDENTS MEETING OR EXCEEDING EXPECTATIONS



## MCAS shows many still struggling to catch up

Test results underscore pandemic's lasting effect

By Christopher Huffaker and Deanna Pan

GLOBE STAFF

Long after schools reopened from the pandemic, Massachusetts students across the board are falling further behind academically, according to the latest state MCAS scores released Tuesday. The results raise worrying questions about whether an entire generation of children will ever fully recover.

More than 450,000 students in elementary, middle, and high school took the math, English, and science exams last spring. In most grades and subjects, fewer students scored at grade level than the year before. And, on every single test, students trailed their pre-pandemic peers by substantial margins

Overall, only 42 percent of students met expectations on the tests; before the pandemic, half did. Nearly 40,000 more students failed English tests than in 2019 — even though there were fewer test-takers.

Even the youngest students, third-graders who weren't yet in kindergarten when schools shut down, remain significantly behind their pre-pandemic peers. Likewise, 10th-graders, whose graduation hinges on the high-stakes exams and who have the least time left to catch up, continue to lag.

MCAS, Page A7



### School by school

To see the results for specific districts and schools, scan the QR code or visit

[bostonglobe.com/mcasresults](https://bostonglobe.com/mcasresults).

## Black market pot farms on rise in Maine

Remote areas are draw to those with crops to hide

By Kevin Cullen

GLOBE STAFF

MACHIAS, Maine — The blue four-bedroom house, with two red barns out back and neighbors few and far between, looked like any number of nondescript farmhouses that dot the sparsely populated towns of central and northern Maine.

But last November, on a crisp fall day, as he got out of his cruiser to check out a tip about suspicious activity at the remote home, Machias police Lieutenant Tim Mace knew something was off. The shades were drawn. A new, industrial-sized electrical box on the side of one of the barns was preposterously large.

"The electrical box looked like it belonged on a Walmart," Mace said.

As he walked around the house, his nostrils filled with the pungent aroma of marijuana. It turned out to be an illicit marijuana cultivation operation. It was also some of the first hard evidence of a new phenomenon that is alarming local, state, and federal officials: a proliferation of highly organized criminal enterprises grow-

MARIJUANA, Page A6

## At UN, Biden sounds a warning

In final speech, he highlights renewed global connections but notes fragility

By Sheryl Gay Stolberg and David E. Sanger

NEW YORK TIMES

President Biden used his final speech to the United Nations on Tuesday to celebrate his defense of Ukraine against Russia's invasion

and his work to restore the United States' global alliances, but he also warned that the advances of his administration could easily fall apart if America returned to isolationism.

In an address of a little more than 20 minutes to the UN General As-

sembly, Biden combined personal touches with policy imperatives and an impassioned defense of democracy. He traced the arc of his own political career, from election to the Senate in 1972 at age 29, to his "difficult" decision two months ago to drop his bid for reelection — a decision he framed as a lesson for other heads of state.

"My fellow leaders," Biden said,

"let us never forget: Some things are more important than staying in power."

Not surprisingly, Biden focused heavily on America's and the West's response to the Ukraine invasion, declaring that the United States and its allies, chiefly NATO, had "ensured the survival of Ukraine as a free nation."

BIDEN, Page A5

## HAITIAN SUPPORT



JESSICA RINALDI/GLOBE STAFF

Members of the Haitian community and their supporters rallied at "The Embrace" sculpture on Boston Common Tuesday to denounce hateful political rhetoric aimed at Haitians in Ohio and elsewhere in the United States. Demonstrators urged leaders to stand up against the hate being directed at immigrants. **B1.**

## Statue there for the taking — if you can find it

By Billy Baker

GLOBE STAFF

For more than two decades, Jason Rohrer has been making niche video games for niche audiences, philosophical meditations with names like "One Hour, One Life" that were adored by critics but, he admits, "my friends and family never played them because they were too esoteric."

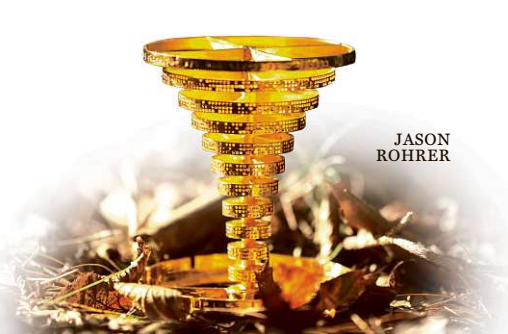
So the man who has been called "the world's most interesting video game designer" set out to create a game more people can appreciate: a real-life treasure hunt.

On Thursday, the New Hampshire designer unveiled "Project Skydrop," a game that will lead searchers to a gold statue sitting on the forest floor of public land somewhere in the northeastern United States. And unlike many famous modern treasure hunt games, this one is guaranteed to be found fast, by Oct. 10 at the latest.

The way it works is each day on the Project Skydrop website, Rohrer will publish a map of the potential location area. On day one, that map was a 500-mile radius circle covering much of the Northeast. Each day, the map circle shrinks, until on day 21 it will be just one square foot, essentially pointing at the statue.

As of Monday, the potential search area had narrowed considerably to a 194-mile radius, but it still includes Central and Western Massachusetts, most of Connecticut

TREASURE HUNT, Page A6



JASON ROHRER

## An outpouring of support for Harris. From Republicans.

Politicians, ex-officials cite desire to block Trump

By Jim Puzzanghera

GLOBE STAFF

WASHINGTON — Former Massachusetts governor Bill Weld said he felt pretty lonely in 2020 as a Republican openly opposed to then-president Donald Trump, running a quixotic primary campaign against him and then announcing he voted for Democrat Joe Biden.

Four years later, Weld's got more company.

"I feel great about it," he said of the growing group of Republicans who have joined him in publicly declaring they will cross party lines and

vote for Vice President Kamala Harris. "But I don't think it's my doing. I think it's Mr. Trump's doing."

The fears of Trump's return to power, especially after his 2020 election lies and the Jan. 6 insurrection, have spurred an outpouring in recent weeks of Republican politicians and former officials in previous GOP administrations announcing their endorsements of Harris. Now, they're part of a Harris campaign grass-roots push in battleground states, begun while Biden was still running, that seeks to peel Republican voters away from Trump in a tight race.

"I'm pretty much spending all my time trying to keep Donald Trump the hell away from the

REPUBLICANS, Page A4

**Businesses have been accelerating imports** and pleading with the Biden administration to prevent a walkout as dockworkers threaten to strike. **A2.**

**Thousands of people tried to escape southern Lebanon**, as Israel's military pounded the region with more strikes against Hezbollah. **A3.**

**Somerville's mayor says the city will resume normal hours at the library next to the high school**, but private security will be added. **B1.**

## BACK TO BASKETBALL



DANIELLE PARHIZKARAN/GLOBE STAFF

After last season ended with the team's 18th NBA championship, the Boston Celtics were ready to get started again. "Hopefully, it's a smooth transition," said forward Jaylen Brown. **C1.**



## Gray-ven image

**Wednesday:** Cloudy, windy. High: 63-68. Low: 56-61.

**Thursday:** Cloudy, showers. High: 66-71. Low: 58-63.

Comics and Weather, **G6-7.** Obituaries, **C9.**

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