

# College Counseling: What's It All About?

By Anya Hill

College counselor Jill Deknatel has spent 6 years at IACS helping students discover and build their career paths after high school.

Her own experience in higher education inspired her to help students with the application process, "I always loved college, I think I had a fantastic undergrad college experience, and I really loved touring colleges as well."

Deknatel graduated from Providence University with a bachelor's degree in English.

"My initial thoughts were that I would be pursuing a career in the publishing industry. I was a real bookworm as a student, so I majored in English Literature. But, those kinds of jobs are really hard to come by so I was never able to land a job in publishing without moving away. I wanted to stay here, so my friend got me an interview in admissions and I was able to get my first job."

After working in admissions at Bentley University in Waltham, Deknatel began working in financial aid at Northeastern University where she stayed for 7 years.

"Working at a college is fantastic because there are so many great things about being around college students. It's energetic, there's always lots to do, lots to learn, and I could take free classes at night." She earned her masters degree in education through these classes.

During the day, she helped Boston Public High School students work on their college applications. "Working with them is how I knew I wanted to work with high school students," she says.

There are many perks that come with being a college counselor that allow Deknatel to gain more knowledge about post-high-school



*Photo: Anya Hill*

options for IACS students.

"The best part of my job is that I get to do professional development, so I've been able to visit a lot of colleges, and I've been invited to attend fly-in events," she says. "It's fun for me to see places, and I like to bring that information back to you guys since a lot of students aren't able to go out and tour."

One of her most memorable experiences like this was meeting author Toni Morrison at an event hosted by Oberlin College.

"I had written a 25-page paper on one of her books and to get to meet her in person and hear her speak was

amazing."

Ms. Deknatel always emphasizes that it's okay to not know what career you might want to pursue yet.

"You really shouldn't know what you want to do for the rest of your life when you're 16. You've barely experienced the world. Kids often figure that out during the process and end up changing their mind anyway."

As noted before, she herself had planned to go into the publishing field and had changed her path after graduating! Even before that, she notes, "I was pre-med, but then I took one semester of college level chemistry and I was like, yeah, no. I'm never going to do this again."

Being able to try different kinds of career paths were important experiences to Deknatel in finding what she really wanted to do, which was helping high school kids build their futures.

"I feel honored to be part of their process," she says. "This role doesn't really exist outside of private and charter schools, so the fact that I get to talk to students about their future and help them navigate that process is really exciting."



*Students in last year's College Tours Endersession in Boston*

*Photo: IACS Hawk*

# The Innovator Exhibition IACS Returns!

By Ethan Matte

Exhibition night returns!

Well, as close to it as possible. On March 21, from 3:15 PM to 5:15 PM it will return as Exhibition IACS.

So, one might wonder, what is exhibition night? "It's an event that historically has been a really great celebration of learning," says Melissa Kapeckas, director of curriculum and instruction, "it's got almost a museum kind of vibe to it". With a combination of displayed student works and interactive exhibits, students are able to showcase their work from classes they are currently enrolled in. Students should hear from teachers about choosing works for Exhibition IACS relatively soon. Advisors will also check in with their advisees to ensure that they each have a piece of

work for Exhibition IACS. Some students will present at the event, making parts of it similar to a quality night or POL.

With the event starting earlier than previous years, the Students of Color Affinity Group will be holding a multicultural potluck directly after the event. The curriculum directors decided to move Exhibition IACS to an earlier time to engage a higher amount of the student population, removing complications from the original system. The half hour between the end of the school day and the start of the event will be time for students to set up their exhibits, and for student previews for any student staying at the school for that timeframe.

Kapeckas says, "we're really excited to get the whole community excited about the event, and it's felt like a real celebratory event in the past. We're hopeful that it'll be that way this year as well"



*An Exhibition Night from December 5, 2008  
Photo: Innovator Archives*

## Federico Pereyra Selected as Principal

By Anya Hill and Colin DeLuca

Yesterday, Federico Pereyra was selected as the new IACS principal. Pereyra has been serving as interim principal since the start of the school year.

The decision was made after interviews were conducted with prospective candidates by teachers, parents, and students to determine the best fit for our school.

Four candidates were interviewed, and experienced a tour of IACS as well as getting a taste of the community through the school's faculty and students.

The student panel consisted of high-schoolers Ellee Xiong, Addario Miranda, Maxine Donahue, Alex Butters, and Anya Hill. Middle schoolers Ismah Sengendo and Sumedha Giridharan also attended. The students asked and responded to questions while discussing their own experiences. "I feel very informed," Xiong commented.

Since the students and teachers will be the ones interacting the most with the future principal, student inclusion in the process was a critical part of the process. Each interview covered a wide variety of topics, and students explored a broad range of issues the new principal

may address.

Feedback was taken from the interviews and used by Head of School Greg Orpen to make an informed decision. According to Orpen, staff and parents agreed that Pereyra would be the best choice. After the decision was made, Orpen sent an email to IACS students and families informing them of the decision, and congratulating Pereyra.



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The Innovator is a student–run newspaper at Innovation Academy Charter School in Tyngsborough, Massachusetts, committed to providing the IACS high school community with accurate, informative and up–to–date stories, and a public forum for student expression.

The Innovator is entirely student–run, and therefore, all decisions are made by students. The editors will often seek guidance from the faculty advisor, but all final decisions are made by the Head Editors. Questions, comments, or concerns should be directed to the Head Editors.

The Innovator is an open forum for student ideas and opinions. Ideas and opinions can be sent to The Innovator in the form of a letter–to–the–editor. The editors reserve the right to reject student submissions if they breach any of the policies listed in our charter. All editorials reflect the unanimous opinion of the newspaper staff.

All submissions can be sent to:

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## The Struggle of Student Drivers

By Leo Lovell

Have you ever struggled to get driver's ed classes and driving lessons? Well, you're not alone. Many other students are also struggling to get their licenses. Not only is getting a license in Massachusetts as a minor extremely difficult but completing driver's ed is just as challenging.

The initial challenge teenagers face when obtaining their licenses is getting their permit. It can be a long and even anxiety-inducing process. Luckily it has been made easier because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Permit tests were administered online at home, and this structure was kept which makes taking them less stressful for many people. But this is only the first step in getting a license.

The next step is getting driving hours with parents. To get a Junior Operator's

License, a teen has to get 40 hours of driving with their parents or guardian. For some people, this isn't that hard, for others this is extremely difficult. They can struggle to find time out of their schedules to go driving, let alone a time when their parent or guardian is also available. This part is incredibly difficult but even harder still is getting through driver's education.

There are four different aspects to driver's education. One is the 30 hours of classroom instruction that the state requires. Depending on the auto school, the structure of the classes varies but this does not necessarily make them easier. Sitting in a room full of strangers for multiple hours on end multiple times is just not fun no matter what. Additionally, a teenager's parents or guardians have to go through their own class. Both of these things can be difficult to complete due to scheduling conflicts. This also goes for the final two

## Editorial: Students Should Have More Lunch Options

By Colin DeLuca

The IACS cafeteria needs to offer a more broad variety of options for students during lunch. Currently, the only alternatives to the main menu offerings are sandwiches and pre-made salads, which are scarcely available if offered at all. This lack of alternative options creates a hyper focus on catering to every extreme within the main menu. The result is days like meatless Monday, where the cafeteria caters to vegetarian students leaving other students feeling dissatisfied. While it is important to offer options for students that fit their dietary needs, these options should not only just be offered en masse on one day, but provided as an alternative every day. Having options both for students that want meat and students that do not on any one day, and giving students the choice on what they want to eat would allow students to find more meals they enjoy while also not just limiting those with dietary restrictions to eating the lunch on one designated day. Offering a broader menu with more options each day would prove beneficial lunch at IACS, and the community as a whole.

*Opinion*

parts of driver's education, driving lessons and observation. The state requires 10 hours of driving with an instructor and 12 hours of observation. While these requirements are smaller than the 40 hours of driving with parents, it can be even harder to accomplish because of the lack of availability. Most lessons happen during the school day which means students have to miss class time and get an unexcused absence from school. This is even harder for IACS students because our school day ends significantly later than most other schools, leaving less time for after-school lessons.

In general, the process of getting a license as a minor is arduous and demanding. And while you are working through it, it is important to remember that you are not alone. Many of your classmates are experiencing the same stress and anxiety as you.

## Join the Environmental Youth Task Force!

By Kevin Hankins

Last summer, I visited the Folklife Festival in Washington DC, on an all expenses paid trip with the Smithsonian. While there, I assisted in running a booth all about youth activism, saw many of the Smithsonian museums, and met with Congresswoman Lori Trahan. I visited the National Zoo, and even had the opportunity to feed the sloth bears bloodworms.

In the fall, I helped plant a pollinator garden in Lowell, which aimed to provide a safe habitat full of flowers for our local pollinators.

These are just two examples of the incredible things I have been able to experience with the Environmental Youth Task Force (EYTF).

The EYTF is a local environmental group in Lowell, Massachusetts and joining in is an opportunity you do not want to miss.

I have had the opportunity to participate in the group for over a year,

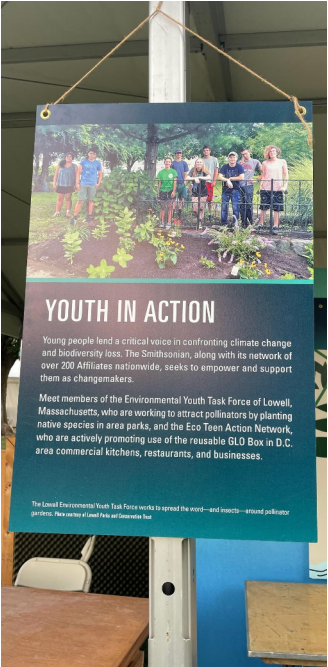
and have thoroughly enjoyed every moment of it. It is a group full of novel experiences and exciting opportunities.

I have found great success during my time with the EYTF, and have had the opportunity to meet many influential figures fighting for environmental justice and rights.

Joining the group is at most a weekly commitment, every Tuesday from 4:30 to 5:30. There are occasional events on Saturdays, but these have several weeks of notice beforehand.

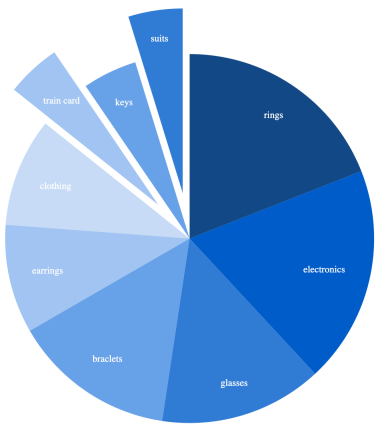
To join, simply send a private message to @lowelleytf on instagram asking to join, or email either Kevin Hankins (kevin.hankins@innovationcharter.org) or Seth Lupo (seth.lupo@innovationcharter.org).

Looking forward to seeing you there!



## Why Are You Guys Losing These?

By Leo Lovell



The Lost and Found is a staple of our morning announcements. Its place at the bottom of the 33-page document holds a special place in all of our hearts. From rings to headphones, there are so many interesting and unexpected things that can be found there.

Currently, there are 21 items in the lost and found. Rings and electronics hold the spot for most items with both categories making up 19% of the total.

Some stand-out items on the list include: a Charlie train card, a phone, and a suit. The oldest item was added on September 13th. It makes you wonder, who do these items belong to? What poor soul has lost their phone and has yet to retrieve it from Ms. Cynar? Are these rings ever going to be claimed? What will ever become of the three different pairs of glasses that have been found?