



# The Hawkeye

Fall 2025

## New Kitchen

By Kaianne Mark and Ruhi Zhou

The Charter room looks different than last year, and it's because a new lunch providing system has been arranged. The newspaper club and many others wondered about how this new kitchen set-up and system was put into place. So, the *Hawkeye* interviewed Mr. Patton about this.

We first asked why our school switched from the old system to the new one. To understand why, we need to know a little history behind Charter's lunch program.

It all started eight to ten years ago when the school was smaller. During that time, Charter ordered lunch from whichever vendor we wanted and could afford. For example, most days Charter would order from Pizza Star. However, a law was passed to make sure schools were providing nutritional lunches for their students. So that law forced schools to go out and advertise a job for catering services to provide lunches and to accept the lowest bidder.

To prevent schools from evading this law, we were required to have an open bidding process, where schools put up ads for a food catering companies to bid on if they want the job. The companies would submit price and service offers, and the lowest bid would win. .

About two to three years ago, Charter had a catering company that Mr. Patton said "was so bad that so few meals were being purchased. This wasn't very profitable for the company, so they dropped us." After that, Charter got a new catering company called Catering Solutions. This new company was the only one that bid on the job, so Charter had to take it. But because of their food also not being good or fresh, Charter decided to cut Catering Solutions.

While waiting for the new kitchen to be built, Charter paid Diangelos to cater for a month in 2024, until the new kitchen appliances were installed and ready.

The new lunch service that Charter currently has is named Machios,

and Mr. Patton thinks that “this change has more stability than Catering Solutions as the food is better, fresher, and made the morning of” the day it is consumed.

In conclusion, this new kitchen system is here to stay--for now.

## **Charter Unplugged**

By Anya Daruwala and Elaine Xu

Summary: Princeton Charter School has instituted a new rule for our school: Charter Unplugged, in which students do work more on paper than electronically. This model also involves students spending less free time on electronic devices and more time on more beneficial activities.

The preliminary discussions of Charter unplugged began a long time ago because Mr. Patton, Mrs. Dowling, and Mrs. Eckstrom have long been worried about the amount of time students spend online. Mr. Patton asked, “If we all know that this is happening, then why aren't we doing something?” The heads of school had been considering initiating this unplugged policy for a while now, and there were two deciding factors:

1. The benefits to mental health from increased social interactions and decreased screen time.

- “Screen time has been linked to sleep problems, depression, and anxiety” – National Institute of Health

2. The improved grades and bolstered focus that other schools have seen from the unplugged school structure.

- An experiment was done in which researchers found that “high levels of total screen time and TV and digital media in young children were associated with lower achievement levels in reading and math on standardized tests in elementary school.” - Article by Academic Researchers

*The Hawkeye sat down with Mr. Patton to discuss this issue further.*

**Hawkeye:** Is there anything interesting or special that influenced you to start Charter Unplugged?

**Mr. Patton:** (Mr. Patton quoted Mrs. Eckstrom...) “I think we were all over time just watching this happen and kids are spending lots of time online. It became sort of a question to me. We actually had a rule that we didn't want to see cell phones out during the school day. An article I read said that if a student was taking a test, and they had their phone right next to them, they would be likely to do worse on that test rather than if the phone was somewhere hidden.

**Hawkeye:** I think that is really important. Do you know if other schools that have used this unplugged model have seen benefits in grades or other measures?

**Mr. Patton:** This is all pretty new for a lot of us, I know Princeton Middle School is doing the same thing.... A letter went around in Princeton saying to wait until [age] 16 for social media. Their rules are actually more strict [than ours]..

**Hawkeye:** So are there any challenges you have seen with unplugged format?

**Mr. Patton:** There's a part of me that wishes that the students didn't have [devices] at all.... But the real challenge is that we need them for the post-three-o'clock time frame for outside sports, activities, and going places. It is challenging. At the end of practice the coaches are saying call your parents. I mean, we don't want cell phones at all.

**Hawkeye:** What do you think was the final straw that led you to initiating this policy?

**Mr. Patton:** It was really multiple things. First, we read a couple of books about how constantly being on electronic devices affects students' thinking skills and creativity and also how there are overwhelming numbers of mental health issues and self harm [perhaps related to electronics usage].

**Hawkeye:** Do you think that there are other downstream benefits such as less fighting and kids being more calm from Charter Unplugged?

**Mr. Patton:** I think absolutely, and that is the main goal, for students to obtain the 'skills' to figure out how to entertain themselves, converse with others, and enjoy each others' company without the aid of technology. Sometimes, boredom is a good thing.

**Hawkeye:** Do you think that this policy affects computer science proficiency?

**Mr. Patton:** I think that technology is crucial in today's society and...that AI is going to affect computer science proficiency. Because of this, we are not going to need to know how to program, which is scary.

In conclusion, we might be a lot smarter if the heads of schools had installed Charter Unplugged a long time ago. We are also curious about our fellow students' opinions. Does Charter Unplugged bolster our interpersonal skills, focus, and creativity?...or...does this model make us extremely sneaky and rather tempted by this forbidden fruit? We will explore this further in a subsequent issue of *The Hawkeye*.

## **New Teacher Interview**

By: Laila Mehrotra, Olivia Tan, Cassi Yang

*The Hawkeye* interviewed new third and fourth-grade Science Teacher, Mrs. Semkowycz.

**Hawkeye:** What's your favorite part of teaching?

**Mrs. Semkowycz:** Interacting with the kids. I like getting to know them and their personalities. Once I get to know them better, I know my lessons will be better because I know what they will like.

**Hawkeye:** What's your favorite unit to teach?

**Mrs. Semkowycz:** Teaching animal adaptations. Cool, kids enjoy animals

**Hawkeye:** Do you have any kids or/and pets?

**Mrs. Semkowycz:** I have two daughters, Emerson is seven, and Scout is two. And I have a dog named Lucy. I would love for my kids to come here. This school is the best.

**Hawkeye:** Do you have a favorite experiment to do with your students?

**Mrs. Semkowycz:** I am still learning, but I really love doing experiments like elephant toothpaste, an easy and fun experiment

**Hawkeye:** What's your favorite place related to science?

**Mrs. Semkowycz:** Liberty Science Center because of its hands-on activities.

**Hawkeye:** What type of science do you like best?

**Mrs. Semkowycz:** Earth science and the solar system. The earth is my favorite planet!

**Hawkeye:** If you could have a teaching superpower what would it be?

**Mrs. Semkowycz:** The ability to grade really quickly because that takes a long time.

**Hawkeye:** How long have you been teaching?

**Mrs. Semkowycz:** This is my 16th year of teaching. I taught at Pace Charter School in Hamilton.

**Hawkeye:** What are your goals as a teacher?

**Mrs. Semkowycz:** For one, I would like to gain more familiarity with the curriculum, since I used to be an English teacher. I was looking for a change, so teaching science was a new challenge, and I feel you get to be a better teacher by challenging yourself.

**Hawkeye:** What do you do in your free time?

**Mrs. Semkowycz:** I watch a lot of Disney movies, do lots of outdoor activities, and conduct science experiments.

*The Hawkeye* also interviewed new third- grade English teacher Ms. Graham:

**Hawkeye:** What's your favorite children's book?

**Ms. Graham:** *The Doll People* by Ann M. Martin. I haven't read the book in a long time, but I remember it being my first favorite book as a kid. I liked how it was unique but relatable.

**Hawkeye:** Do you have any kids or pets?

**Ms. Graham:** No kids or pets.

**Hawkeye:** What is your favorite book genre?

**Ms. Graham:** Nonfiction, I like to read a lot of books about teaching and human relationships and some memoirs

**Hawkeye:** Do you consider comic books to be real literature?

**Ms. Graham:** Yes, there is more to literature than just chapter books, and comic books take a special kind of literacy that not everybody recognizes but that is important.

**Hawkeye:** What is your favorite unit to teach?

**Ms. Graham:** Writing narratives.

**Hawkeye:** Do you think your students like writing essays?

**Ms. Graham:** I don't know if they like it, but my goal is to help them enjoy it.

**Hawkeye:** Why did you become an English teacher?

**Ms. Graham:** I liked school as a kid, and wanted to be a teacher from a young age, specifically an English teacher because teachers can influence everyone.

**Hawkeye:** If you could have any superpower to help you teach, what would it be?

**Ms. Graham:** I would want the power to motivate any kid.

**Hawkeye:** What do you like most about Charter so far?

**Mrs. Graham:** I like being outside on break with the kids.

**Hawkeye:** How do you handle disruptive students?

**Mrs. Graham:** Lots of redirecting, and reteaching expectations and applauding students who are following directions, as well as partnering with my co teacher and caregivers at home. Our system is focused on positivity. We have a system to give points to teams who are doing well. Punishments are given depending on the needs of the students.

## **Fifth Grade Student Interviews**

By Elodie Houck and Ari Seung

For this article, we asked the fifth graders how different their experience in fourth grade was from that in their current grade. Here is what they said:

**Hawkeye: How does the 5-8 building differ from the K-4 building?**

**Nuri:** It's way harder to move between classes because of the stairs. Also our

backpacks are so much heavier! We have so many things to carry...

**Noah:** Last year we were at the top of the food chain. Now we're at the bottom.

**Sadie:** There are *three* floors, and we have to walk up or down to *all* of them.

**Elza:** The 5-8 building is larger, so we need to move around more.

**Pratamesh:** This place is way bigger, and there are more bathrooms!

**Reina:** There are white boards instead of BEN-Q's.

**Augie:** This building is *way* bigger. I don't know if that's good or bad.

**Mark:** There's older architecture in this building.

**Hawkeye: How are the classes different?**

**Nuri:** We have to go up the steps, and we barely see the other class.

**Noah:** We actually move around without the teacher... We have *freedom*!

**Sadie:** There's *way* more homework. And fifth grade is more independent, because in 4th grade teachers had to take us *everywhere*.

**Elza:** Fifth grade is harder than fourth. I mean, it has more difficult classes with *real work*!

**Pratamesh:** There are different subjects and classes, so we have to take our stuff and move around.

**Reina:** There are heavy textbooks for history and math, which is annoying..

**Augie:** There are *a lot* of math classes. Last year we only had 4A and 4B.

**Mark:** There is so much competition in classes... 5th grade math placement is like the Hunger Games!

**Hawkeye: Are the classes easier or harder than the K-4 building? How?**

**Nuri:** Math is *way* harder. There's so much homework in math... and there are tests, like, every week.

**Noah:** English is also way harder, because we have to start with an *essay*.

**Sadie:** Harder, especially in math (because of the levels), english (because of essays), and science (because of flashcards).

**Elza:** Harder, because there are more tests, writing, and little details we have to remember.

**Pratamesh:** There are tests way more often!

**Reina:** Harder. There is so much more competition...

**Hawkeye: How is fifth grade different from what you expected?**

Nuri: It was harder, because there's more homework.

Noah: Honestly, it's easier than I expected. My brother was telling me how *hard* science was.

Sadie: Not as hard as expected. I thought math would be *way* harder.

Elza: It's easier than expected, which is *really* good news!

Reina: Fifth grade is way different than what I expected. Different subjects are harder, and some are easier.

Augie: I expected it to be hard from the start, but it's slightly harder.

Mark: I find 5th grade easy, but it's still a big transition.

Pratamesh: Harder than what I expected. I expected that teachers were going to be way stricter, which did happen, and there's lots of organization required (which I don't like).

**Hawkeye: Anything more to add?**

**Nuri, Sadie, Noah:** Even if we're not allowed to be playing in games, we should be allowed to practice in school sports teams!

**Anonymous 5B student:** I'm so happy there aren't any more bathrooms in the classrooms!

**Elza, Pratamesh:** We should have a break after tests in class!

**Reina, Augie, Mark:** We *need* to get rid of flashcard checks and heavy textbooks!

**All:** No more math placement! Also, we love fifth-grade history!)

## **8th Grade Play: Puffs**

By: Annelise Sutphin, Anya Blix, and Eliz Ruggeri

PCS has an eighth-grade play each year in which the 8th graders show off the skills they have learned throughout their years at PCS. Students audition for the optional eighth-grade play at the end of their seventh-grade year. Rehearsals take place on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, and there are additional rehearsals closer to the performance dates. Those who play fall sports can still participate in the play, although not in a lead role. The after-school rehearsals are a time to learn to act while spending time with friends. This year the 8th graders prepared and performed *Puffs*, a twist on J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* created by Matt Cox. They performed their play for students and parents three times (November 21 and twice November 22), and each ticket costs 10 dollars.

*Puffs* retells Harry Potter from the perspective of the “Puffs”, the overlooked students in the Hufflepuff-like house. The three main characters, Wayne, Oliver, and Megan, navigate the dangerous, magical school as side characters, making this a story for students who feel sometimes that they take second place. It takes place over seven years of intense magical training, finishing with a final battle and a heartbreaking loss.

### **Jokes and Riddles:**

Written by Anya Blix, Katherine Brookshire, and Allegra Shank

#### **Jokes:**

Q: Why was the math book sad?

A: Because it had too many problems

Q: Why was the blanket so confident before the test?

A: It had the material covered.

Q: Why should you never argue with a 90-degree angle?

A: Because they're always right!

Q: Why do bananas wear sunscreen?

A: Because they peel.

Q: What is seen in the middle of March and April that can't be seen at the beginning or end of either month?

A: The letter R

Q: What has teeth but can't bite?

A: A comb

Q: Did you hear about the restaurant on the moon?

A: Great food, but no atmosphere

Q: Why did the coffee file a police report?

A: It got mugged

Q: Why did the Beatles break up?

A: They started to bug each other

Q: Why are prisoners not good musicians?

A: Because they're always behind a few bars and can't find the key

Joke: I had a nightmare that I drowned in an ocean of orange soda, but thankfully it was just a fanta sea

Joke: I hit my friend in the head with a diet coke today, but they're ok it was just a soft drink

#### **Riddles:**

- A man calls the police saying he thinks his friend is dead. The police officer asks him to confirm this and on the phone he hears a shot. The man calls him back and says, “Yeah, he’s dead.”
- You see a boat filled with people. It has not sunk, but when you look

again you don't see a single person on the boat. Why?

Answer: They had all just gotten married!

- If an electric train is moving north at 55 mph and the wind's blowing east at 70 mph, which way does the smoke blow?

Answer: An electric train doesn't emit smoke.

- Mississippi has four *S*'s and four *I*'s. Can you spell that without using *S* or *I*?

Answer: T-H-A-T!

- **Question:** There are three lightbulbs in a closet. On the outside of the closet, there are three switches. Each switch turns on one of the lightbulbs. However, you do not know which switch turns on each lightbulb. You can not turn on multiple switches when the closet door is open, but you can turn multiple switches on when the closet door is closed. For example, you turn on one switch, open the closet door, and see which light switch is on. Then, you close the closet door, and turn on another switch. What is the minimum number of times you have to open the closet door to find out which lightbulb belongs to which switch?

**Answer:** One. First turn on one of the switches (A), and leave it on for one hour. Then, come back and turn that switch (A) off. Turn a different switch (B) on and open the closet door. One of the switches (B), will be on. Another switch (A), will be warm from being on for an hour, and the last switch (C) will be off.

### Note from the Editor

Dear *Hawkeye* readers,

Thank you for reading our first issue of the newspaper this year. For those of you who don't read the news at home, this might be your first introduction to a newspaper. I hope it isn't the last you read.

Our reporters work very hard in the limited time they have to help decide on topics for articles to cover and then to research and write the articles you've read here.

We can't report "daily" news like large newspapers with full-time reporters and small armies of editors do, but we try to cover topics of interest to the PCS community. As your newspaper, that's our main concern and our purpose. If you have any questions or suggestions for future issues of *The Hawkeye*, please email me, and we will discuss them at our next planning meeting. Anyone in grades 6-8 wishing to join now should also email me. --Mr. Myers