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THE DETAILS

The Blue Devil is in The Details

Students and teachers adjust to the new normal

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The educational and health benefits of sheep in school

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Can the Grammy Awards become relevant again?

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Introducing New Principal, Mrs. Chandi

Ushananthy Umashankar
Grade 12

Due to the pandemic, this school year has started a bit differently: students are going to class every other day, everyone is wearing masks, and there are fewer school events. We also weren't able to give a "Laurier welcome" to the new additions to our school: Grade 9 students, new staff, and our new principal, Mrs. Saby Chandi! To remedy this, the Details has decided to feature an interview with Mrs. Chandi for the first issue this year, to properly introduce her to the students and parents of Sir Wilfrid Laurier C.I.

Just like Mrs. Chandi, grade 9s are newcomers to the Laurier community. Mrs. Chandi's advice for them? Don't just study, take time to enjoy the high school experience. "I'm not saying don't study, but,

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Interview with the Principal

work hard, do your assignments, and make connections" she explains. In a normal year, clubs and extracurricular activities would be a great way to make new friends, however, it might not be possible to join a lot of clubs due to the pandemic. Though Mrs. Chandi says that "Even when we're just in virtual land, I feel there's a lot that is geared towards a lot of different interests and students…so you can definitely find something that fits you."

Grade 12s may also feel nervous because it is their last year of high school. For those going on to post secondary education, Mrs. Chandi says that it's normal for students to experiment in their studies and not know what they want to do right away. The opposite is true as well–she knew that she wanted to be a teacher since she played 'school' with her sisters at 10 years old. But for those who are scared that they might not like what program they chose, she says that "You can switch, a lot of universities allow for students to change their major. It just means that you might finish a little bit later, but at least you figure out what works for you, versus sticking in something just to graduate."

Mrs. Chandi attended Concordia University in Montreal. She eventually went on to become a vice-principal at Albert Campbell Collegiate Institute and later, Lester B. Pearson Collegiate Institute, before becoming our new principal. In addition to being Laurier's first female principal, Mrs. Chandi is also our first South Asian principal. Her identity as a South-Asian woman has meant that she has had to overcome unfair assumptions. She tells me an example of this from her time as a VP. She was standing in the main office beside a white man and someone came in and automatically assumed that he was the VP and that she was perhaps the secretary. When you think of a VP or Principal, you think of somebody who is white and probably a man and that idea sticks with you. She remembers thinking "Why? What is it about me that made you think I was not the VP?"

She grew up as the first 'Canadian' in her Punjabi family, not knowing where exactly she fit in, never feeling fully Canadian or fully Punjabi, a feeling many Laurier students can relate to. She got through this confusion with help from mentors who gave her invaluable advice. She says "you'll always need someone in your life that will help pick you up when you're down, someone you can rely on to prop you up when you need it." However, the most important influencecame from within herself and the fact that she worked hard, felt she had a lot to give, and enjoyed what she was doing.

Despite coming to Laurier for the first time during an abnormal year, Mrs. Chandi is liking Laurier a lot so far! She would normally get to see students walking around the hallways or sitting down during lunch, but because now they're all in masks, she says that "it's been a bit of a strange start getting to know people and I'm missing a bit of that. But it's a great school, great experience, and some really, really great teachers and office staff. COVID put aside, it's been a great start."

In her first months here as the principal, she has taken many measures to help students and parents to feel safe and comfortable when coming to school despite COVID-19. The alternate class schedule and the option of learning virtually help as only 500 students come to school every day which is much less than the usual student population of about 1400. The direction decals on the floor also help as "they eliminate a lot of the kids crossing each other, with the smaller hallways having one-way signs and the bigger hallways going both ways" she explains.

She also discusses how parents often get anxious when the school sends home a cohort, which is understandable as it can be worrying. However she reassures those concerned that, "Luckily every cohort we have sent home has come back without another case, which means masks, washing your hands, and staying far from each other work. All those pieces work because, knock on wood, no case has gone from a student to another student," she explains.

We end this interview with her message for Laurier's students during such stressful times.

Quick Facts about Mrs. Chandi!

Her Favourite Animal
I'm really scared of big dogs and those that jump up! So if I had to pick a favorite, I would say small dogs.

Her Favourite Book Genre
Murder Mysteries

Her Favourite Food
Butter chicken and rice, otherwise, pasta.

Her Favourite Musical Artist
Growing up, it would be Madonna and U2. Now, if you turn onto 99.9, I'm good.

Her Best Vacation Place
I'd have to say Puerto Vallarta.

"We're happy to have you back! When we were here in late August without any students, the building was strange without kids! We're happy to have the students back, we're happy to see you. I think we'd also like to say: reach out. Even though we're behind masks and things aren't normal as they should be, we also don't want people to be sitting with any problems and not talking, so reach out to us, reach out to what you feel comfortable with, whether it's a teacher or a guidance counselor, us. The last thing we want is people going home with something that they felt that they didn't get to talk it through.

Whether you have a problem or you think you have a problem, there's nothing wrong with talking it through. So we are not here just to discipline. We're here to solve one thing.

When people say, "Oh, I don't know my VP, I've never been in trouble" , you don't need to be in trouble to know your VP. Just connect with us, that's all."

Roll Out the Red Bus Lane

Zain Khurram
Grade 12

If you have driven on Morningside Avenue this fall, you may have noticed a strip of red paint on the road. This isn't a Nuit Blanch art installation, but rather, this is Toronto's newest and only bus lane.

Officially named the RapidTO program, it is part of the TTC's 5-Year Service Plan. It aims to move people more efficiently on transit by improving reliability, speed and capacity. Hopes are, this bus lane will help to attract new riders while improving transit equity.

Stretching from Kennedy Station to UTSC, it primarily services 5 routes; 12 Kingston Road, 86 Scarborough, 905 Eglinton East Express, 986 Scarbrough Express, and our favourite, the 116 Morningside! Since its launch in October, it has significantly improved my daily commute. Intersections like Morningside and Kingston, where the bus would get stuck in traffic, are no longer a problem! The bus just speeds through!

Surprisingly, we have COVID-19 to thank. Originally set to be installed in 2024, the project was advanced to accommodate riders and ensure social distancing. Another interesting fact is that this corridor mirrors the now defunct Eglinton East Light Rail Line, which would have connected with the under construction Crosstown LRT, providing a seamless trip from Pearson Airport to UTSC. But for now,

these red bus lanes are a great alternative, although they do have their consequences.

The problem with evaluating the benefit of transit priority is that the TTC simultaneously removed several stops along the corridor. Their argument was that this would mirror the proposed future LRT expansion, but that

But for now, these red bus lanes are a great alternative, although they do have their consequences.

scheme is so far in the future, and its funding so uncertain, that the buses will be stopping at the "LRT" stops for a very long, long time.

Though, due to the work of local residents, three of the eliminated stops have been reinstated, proving how powerful our voices can collectively be. If you want to share your opinions about transit, then you can fill out the TTC's 5-Year Service Plan youth survey. It may seem insignificant, but your opinions can go a long way. Who knows what transit improvement is just around the corner! But at least for now, we can enjoy a fast, smooth bus ride on Toronto's newest red carpet.

To fill out the TTC's 5-Year Service Plan youth survey, you can go to this address: https://forms.gle/1ahFkf3SSvhQr5vV9.

Teachers Adjust Alongside Us

Samantha Smith-Fletcher
Grade 11

This year, new things were introduced, programs, classes, but more importantly the option of virtual learning! While it is difficult for parents and students to figure out, it is also difficult for the teachers. I've interviewed a few teachers to find out their perspective of the new normal.

A common issue that the teachers face is having the technology be reliable. Ms. Forget, a Grade 9 Academic French teacher, says that one of her biggest problems are glitches in technology.

Other teachers don't find online learning to be as hard, "I don't find it harder, it's just different." says Ms. Leblanc, a Grade 11 English teacher. While the majority of teachers seem to prefer in person class to virtual, it has little to do with the actual technology. Teachers miss the faces and presences of their students. Many teachers describe their students' lack of cameras as a problem. Mrs. Jackson, a Grade 11 law teacher explained that "We can't see the children's faces to see if they fully understand."

We as students and teachers are both finding our ways to adjust with the new ways of schooling. As students, we can make it easier for the teachers by turning on our cameras just to let the teachers know they are doing a great job helping us understand!

Should our school allow sheep?

Arrththi Sreeranghan
Grade 11

What if our very own school had sheep? Although, it may seem like an odd thing to think about, it most definitely has its perks, believe it or not. The four-legged, cud-chewing, furry mammal is well known for its soft wool used in the production of sweaters and socks.

But what other aspects can be applied and contributed when permitted on school property? Hypothetically speaking, if sheep were brought onto school grounds, why not use them to our advantage and incorporate the sweet animals into our learning as well? This can be particularly beneficial for classes such as biology, when learning about anatomy or cloning, and business, in terms of the food and textile industries.

They can also be used for entertainment purposes if brought onto school grounds, especially when hosting events and fundraisers, where the buying and selling of wool, sheep and milk (as long as it's pasteurized and follows all health and food safety guidelines) could take place.

It's also been proven statistically that animal interactions can significantly improve feelings of depression, anxiety, stress and loneliness. Animal interactions can also prevent the elevation of certain health conditions such as hypertension and increase levels of serotonin and dopamine, which can be easily achieved due to their pet-like qualities.

Aside from our school reaping many of the benefits sheep have to offer, they can also be of use to our surrounding environment by acting as a lawnmower, since they primarily enjoy consuming weeds and grass. Sheep manure is also great and a natural fertilizer that contains a variety of nutrients essential for nourishment in large open fields, encouraging plant growth. Overall, these herds of joyous creatures seem to bring a lot of promising and lucrative options if shepherded to the right direction.

Grammys Were Never Excellent

Anjali Mookerjea
Grade 12

The Weeknd made waves in entertainment news recently in the wake of the 2021 Grammy nominations where he failed to be nominated for any awards despite the overwhelming success of his most recent album After Hours, and its hit single "Blinding Lights". The Toronto born musician accused the Recording Academy of corruption, tweeting on November 24th that "The Grammys remain corrupt. You owe me, my fans and the industry transparency..."

His is a sentiment that has been echoed by many other big name artists: Drake, Elton John, and Frank Ocean, to name only a few. The Weeknd's Grammy controversy is only the most recent of a long list of grievances with the Recording Academy.

For starters, the Weeknd's accusations are not completely out of left field. The Recording Academy has a long history of discrimination against people of colour, specificlly Black artists. Since the conception of the award in 1957 Black artists have been nominated far less than their white counterparts for the "big 4" categories (Album, Record and Song of the Year and Best New Artist). This is despite the fact that they more than excel in categories that are typically deemed "Black" such as rap and R&B.

Furthermore, the academy has also been accused of sexism and general corruption, most notably by their former CEO who was forced out of her role after only five months with the excuse of bullying. She later sued the academy claiming that she was kicked out because she had uncovered misconduct and corruption in the selection and voting process along with rampant bias, sexual assault, and a "boys club" mentality that lets all of it go unpunished.

On top of that, even if we ignore all the recent allegations of racism and sexism, there would still be issues in the actual structure of the Grammys decision process that would allow them to get away not being as unbiased as they claim to be. When the award was first formed in the 50s it began with the claim to celebrate excellence. But they never actually describe what they mean by this. How do they determine what is and what isn't excellent? Keeping the basis for their choices ambiguous, they are free to define excellence as they see fit.

This means that even if they aren't actively plotting to exclude artists based on things like race, gender, or style of music, the intrinsic biases of the judges are inevitably going to leak into their decisions. For example, when The Beatles' won album of the year for Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Heartsclub Band in 1968, it came as something of a surprise. Until then, rock music simply wasn't "album of the year" material. It wasn't sophisticated enough. It was pedestrian, the music of silly teanagers. It didn't qualify for the label of excellent.

So how do we fix it? Clearly the Grammy's issues run deep, far beyond just snubbing the weeknd this year. But his tweet does make a great point about how the Grammys can still win moving forward. Transparency. Show your audience how it is you're really making decisions if the process is so fair. Stop covering up for sexual abusers, stop misleading fans, and actually respect the artists and music you're representing.

Though, if the Grammys continue to reject their opportunities to improve, it wouldn't be a hardship if they fell by the wayside. Though we are disappointed, we are no longer surprised when talented acts fail to even be nominated, and it's no secret that the academy's stances seem more and more out of date as the years wear on. If they refuse to adapt to changing tastes, eventually they will phase themselves out, and they will not be missed.

Laurier: In Person and Online

Dharrshanan Sakthitharan
Grade 10

COVID-19 has created many changes in our lives. Some examples are having to wear masks and social distancing. One major impact to students is how school is happening. At Sir Wilfrid Laurier, there are two types of learning models: in person school and virtual school.

In person school is very similar to life at Laurier before the pandemic. However, now we go to school for 3 hours and 45 minutes to do one course and then after having lunch at home we have online class for 75 minutes. The virtual learning model is that same exact thing but everything is done at home and online.

Mathan, a Grade 10 student who studies virtually at Laurier, said "It's more convenient than going to in person school. However, it's easy to get distracted during virtual school. Overall, I prefer in person school." Zain, a Grade 11 student who goes to in person school says "I prefer in person. When you're online, you can get very distracted". So, which is the better learning model? In my opinion, in person learning is great. But, once you continue to go to school every other day, it gets really tiring. You need to sit in class for almost 4 hours, trying to stay awake and focused the whole time. I would really like to try virtual school so I could compare the two because it seems to be very different from learning in person.

Both learning models can be very tiring to endure but there are some tips to help you. Make sure you have a bottle of water and a snack whether you're in virtual or in person school. Get up from your seat or do some sort of a physical activity to keep yourself energized during class. For in person students, this may mean going outside for a walk with your class. Make sure you are focused in class. For virtual school students, make sure you are in your own quiet space with no distractions.

School is a very different environment now due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We have two types of learning models and almost everything we do is now online. The COVID-19 pandemic is throwing challenge after challenge in our path but, we will keep adapting to overcome these challenges.

"39Borderline" (left)
by **Zain Khurram**
Grade 11

"Kitty Kat Posing for the Photo" (right)
by **Sadiya Ur-Rahman**
Grade 11

Creativity amidst the Chaos

Fabliha Subha
Grade 11

How do we keep our sanity with all that has been going on this year? Turns out our creative juices flow better in the chaos of our own world. We have lost focus or patience, especially now. Managing between online school and in-school, Covid, and life itself. As life takes its course, we like to express ourselves. It is in human nature to express emotions through art. Our art has developed as we face these challenges. It is like a gateway to freedom of our imagination, an escape from our responsibilities and problems. As art is subjective to a person, it can be found in many different forms.

During quarantine, we might have had more time on our hands to try out new things. This time would be great to do art and learn that there are many ways of expression. There are so many art forms to choose from that there is bound to be at least one that can help you stay sane during this chaos. Art forms include painting, digital arts, musical arts, dance, literature, and so much more!

Look below to see some Laurier students' artworks during quarantine. They were all inspired by the environment around them, and that is something you all can do. Do not think you are not the creative type because we are all creative in our own ways. Each time you force yourself to create, it can give joy to your soul by giving life to your spirit when you are down. Take some time to explore new things, find inspiration, and challenge yourself!

"Unfathomable life" (above left)
by **Nidhi Mistry**
Grade 11

"Frozen Fall" (above right)
by **Fabliha Subha**
Grade 11

"Lear" (below)
by **Alexandra Kay**
Grade 12

The End

A poem by **Tasfia Rayhan**
Grade 12

The end?
The end is not just another beginning.
It may be a lesson learned or a memory left to fade.
The end of a novel is not just the start of another.
It may be a fallen tear for just that one character.
The end of a day does not just mean prep for another.
It may mean a deep, long breath and a tub of ice cream with the gang.
The end may just really be the end...so live righteously, live well, live.

"zoom"
by **Anjali Mookerjea**
Grade 12

Something Within Me Died

A poem by **Jahraa Chowdhury**
Grade 9

Something within me died,
If it was even born at all.
I don't know what,
I'm not quite sure.
But I can feel it's lost.

It's air in a room,
Where there was a void.
It's space,
Where there used to be more.
It's silence,
Where there once was a voice.
It's so dry now,
It's so cold.

Trapped between the walls of my mind.
I can't tell what is gone.
It has all been the same for a while.
The same people,
The same thoughts.
The same everything,
Day after day,
Year on, year on.

Something within me died,
If it was even born at all.
I don't know what,
I'm not quite sure.
But I can feel it's lost.

Inside my dying heart,
It will be hard to find.
Nothing has been here for some time.
It is withered, shriveled, cut and scarred.
I locked it tight,
Hoping for it to die.

To search my soul,
It is to search what once was.
A place of so much hope,
So many dreams and lies.
I couldn't tell what died.
So much has,
I can't tell them apart.
It's a graveyard of innocence.
Where my ambitions rest dead,
And by its side my happiness lies.

Something within me died,
If it was even born at all.
I don't know what,
I'm not quite sure.
But I can feel it's lost.

To search me whole,
Is to search for nothing at all.
For there is nothing to find.
I now feel like I am husk,
A dead man who forgot to die.

So I will write my sad poems.
The one thing I can do right.
Change my blood for ink.
Let paper be wrapped to my skin.
An open book, for all to see.
For something within me died indeed.
Or something that wasn't born at all.

Something within me died,
If it was even born at all.
I don't know what,
I'm not quite sure.
But I can feel it's lost.

The more I search,
the more I think.
That it was me all along.

Letter from the Editor

Hey Laurier,

This year, I think we have all been feeling our share of isolation and lethargy. That's why I'm so proud of all the students who contributed to this edition of the Laurier Details. I'd like to thank them for putting in the time and effort to submit pieces which make them proud and for coming together to create this issue, even with all the chaos going on in our lives these days.

Would you like to be involved in the next edition of the Laurier Details? Follow us on Instagram (@laurierdetails) for information on how to get involved, or better yet, join our Google Classroom! The code is jpalixa. We accept news articles, opinion pieces, short stories, poems, visual art, or anything else you can think of that you would like to share with the Laurier student body!

-Alexandra

Editor, Laurier Details
laurierdetails@gmail.com

Messages from Laurier Clubs

Hey Laurier! Just a reminder that Mind Over Matter is back for this school year! We have already organized two big events such as the World Kindness Week Challenge and Anti-Bullying Awareness Week activities. To be a part of our exciting plans for the rest of the year, join our Google Classroom, code zzp6jvn. Also, don't forget to follow our ig account @laurier_mindovermatter.
-Mind Over Matter

Hey Laurier! The Lauier Debate Club would like to welcome any students who are interested in joining! We meet Wednesdays at 4pm via Google Meet. Follow us on Instagram @laurierdebate for more information. You can join our Google Classroom using the code rrh3m2o. All levels of experience are welcome, can't wait to see you there!
-Laurier Debate Club

Are you involved with a club or group that has an event coming up? Looking to reach new members? Just want to say hi or get your club's message out? Email us at laurierdetails@gmail.com or dm us on Instagram @laurierdetails! We'll publish your message in the next edition of the paper.