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Saratoga High School >> Saratoga, CA
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Spielberg revisited

Director Steven Spielberg first walked Saratoga's halls 50 years ago. A look back. **pg. 4**

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Median grade: B+

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WHETHER the school should be allowed to punish for off-campus cyberbullying.

The Net widens

NEW CALIF. LAW LETS SCHOOLS PUNISH FOR OFF-CAMPUS CYBERBULLYING

By SabrinaChen & DeepthiKannan

A new California law, Assembly Bill No. 526, that allows schools to punish off-campus bullying, took effect on Jan. 1. School administrators and superintendents can now suspend or even expel a student for bullying that occurs via an "electronic act," such as sending messages via text, email or social media from an on or off campus location.

The previous law only allowed school suspension or recommendation for expulsion for cyberbullying occurring within a school or direct-

>> **BULLYING** on pg. 8



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY SABRINA CHEN

CLASSES

Physics Honors to replace AP Physics

By DeepthiKannan

For the next school year, the College Board has mandated that all schools make AP Physics B a two-year course with two separate AP tests in order to cover material slowly and in a more in-depth way. The first year will largely consist of mechanics and rotational dynam-

ics, and the second year will focus on electricity and magnetism.

To work around these new requirements, the school has proposed that a new course, Physics Honors, be created instead of adopting the two-year Advanced Placement program. The district board voted on and approved the proposal on Feb. 4, but the change is still being discussed.

AP Physics teacher Kirk Davis said the reason for the suggestion was the department's worry that fewer students would be willing to take a two-year course.

"Our concern was to make it available for as many students still as possible," Davis said. "So we felt that if we went to a two-year program, we would lose maybe not some top-notch

engineering students, but some others who are taking it just because they want to get exposed to physics and because it's an AP, and then move on."

Davis said that Physics Honors would be similar to the school's current AP Physics B class, making necessary adjustments to cover all of the Col-

>> **PHYSICS** on pg. 8

CULTURAL DIVIDE

The Saratoga Factory

DOES ACADEMIC COMPETITION CREATE BETTER STUDENTS OR SIMPLY AN ENDLESS RACE?

By SamuelLiu

At an ASB meeting in November, some members posed a question for student debate: Should Saratoga remove secondary GPA awards from the graduation program?

A few students argued that the awards — Very High Honors, High Honors and Honors — implied that certain students were better than others, and further enforced the school's

(some say) "overly competitive" atmosphere. Others argued that such an omission wouldn't give students who had worked hard their due credit. And, unsurprisingly, one student asked: Do people even read the graduation program?

The debate seemed to highlight an already visible division in the community's attitudes toward academics. One faction believes in competi-

tion — increase number of AP classes offered, use test preparation companies and focus on academics. The other side believes that students are already overly stressed, and the solution is to limit AP classes and decrease the focus on academics.

It's tiger mom Amy Chua vs. Denise Pope, a battle happening in American campuses

>> **SARATOGA** on pg. 18

DRUGS ON CAMPUS

School drug busts spike; administration responds

By BruceLou, GraceMa, & ArmanVaziri

This year, and especially in recent weeks, the school has seen a dramatic increase in drug citations — some leading to suspensions or possible expulsions, assistant principal Kevin Mount said.

Last year, the school gave no citations for drugs; so far, Mount said, the school has cited several students — a number Mount described as "under 15."

Mount said the administra-

tion is committed to reducing the number of students participating in drug usage on campus.

"I think they need to hear that hey, the reason why Mr. Mount and campus supervisors Mr. Hernandez and Ms. Sevilla are out in the front parking lot is because the front parking lot has been a problem," Mount said. "We want to be a presence and we want kids to know that we're paying attention."

>> **DRUGS** on pg. 3



Leadership takes a trip to Disneyland

Building spirit and conference at schools was the topic of a leadership conference attended by Leadership class students on Jan. 31. The 11-member group was chaperoned by assistant principal Kerry Mohnike and teacher Arnaldo Rodriguez.

"The conference gave us some tips that we will definitely bring back to the school," senior Katie Truong said. "It was also a good bonding time with some of the students of leadership, which makes us stronger as a group."

According to sophomore Luke Salin, the speaker of the conference, Keith Hawkins, covered specific points, such as not being afraid of being judged and respecting the wisdom of mentors. The message, said Salin, was that we each decide who we are and how we can impact the world.

After the conference, the students went to Disneyland on Feb. 1 and Feb. 2.

—Andrew Jiang

900-wing bathroom reopens after repairs

The restroom on the 900-wing reopened on Jan. 7 after being closed to repair damage from a fire.

According to assistant principal Kevin Mount, it took approximately 24 maintenance hours and 12 custodial hours to restore the restroom. The repairs included replacing tiles and toilet paper dispensers and putting in a new seat cover. The repair cost was about \$1,660.

"Apparently, someone lit the toilet paper roll and the fire spread from there," Mount said. "The wall where the fire was started was blackened, and the entire restroom had to be scrubbed down and repainted because of smoke damage."

The fire occurred at roughly 7:30 p.m. on Dec. 11.

—Jay Mulye

Spanish trip attendance smaller than ever

A group of 19 Spanish students and two teachers, Spanish teacher Arnaldo Rodriguez and health teacher Amy Obenour, will leave for the annual trip to Cuernavaca, Mexico on Feb. 20 and will return on Feb. 22. While in Mexico, the students will take Spanish classes at Universidad Internacional as well as tour the city of Cuernavaca.

This year, the number of students going on this trip is particularly small due to a time conflict with Bombay in the Bay, which is occurring on Feb. 15. As a result, fewer students will be going on the trip, compared to the usual 40 to 50 students.

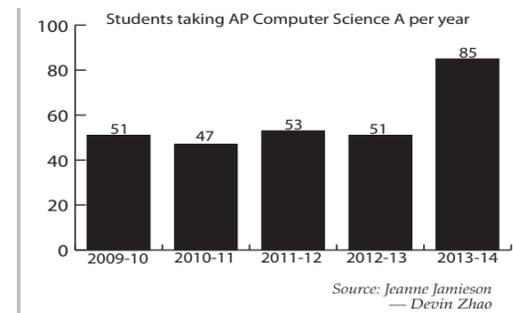
Rodriguez said having a smaller group can have its benefits.

"One advantage [of the smaller group] would be that we are all in the same bus," Rodriguez said. "We have always had two buses because of a larger group."

Sophomore Michelle Wang, going on the trip this year, said, "I'm excited to take a break from school and immerse myself in a different culture while strengthening my Spanish skills."

—Ariel Liu

>> falconfigures



>> picturethis



Sophomore Deepthi Sampathkumar (left) teaches the Bombay in the Bay sophomore girls' dance at Shreya Shiel's house on Jan. 18. The Bombay in the Bay performance will be on Feb. 14 and 15.

FALCON // SHAZIA GUPTA

ACADEMICS

Schoology website helps teachers organize classes

BY AnantRajeev

This semester, several teachers are beginning to use "Schoology," a website that organizes all their class's information into one place for free.

Schoology is a type of educational online media with social networking feature. The system also boasts an organizational system: Teachers can upload files, calendars and class agendas. Students also have the option to share files and assignments with peers in their class and their teacher.

English teacher Ken Nguyen is one of the teachers at the school to test it out.

"I attended a meeting last semester with a few other teachers from the district and we decided to pilot different Learning Management Systems to see which provided

the most features," Nguyen said. "It's an online presence for what I would typically conduct in a normal classroom setting."

Schoology has an organized Facebook-like website that makes it very accessible to students.

"It's much easier to navigate because with Schoology, everything is in one place," sophomore Summer Smith said, who has used it in Nguyen's English 10 class for the past month. "There is no need to go to several different websites for different things."

Schoology, while serving primarily as a tool for course organization, also acts as a communication tool between students and teachers.

"The messaging feature in Schoology is more efficient than messaging with social media because it's much quicker to communicate with

your peers and even your teachers right on the spot," sophomore Neel Jain said, who is also in Nguyen's English 10 class.

The school's speech and debate team began to use the website as of last fall for planning events and keeping in touch with the coaches.

"The most distinguishing feature of this website is that unlike Facebook, you can tell who's serious about the team and who's not," sophomore Aakash Thumaty said. "Facebook groups and events are for usually for anyone interested, whereas the events and groups on Schoology are for those really committed to the team."

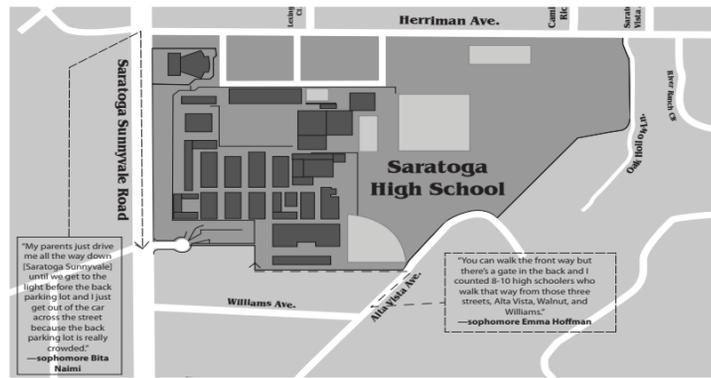
Schoology is a rising website that could be of much use for students, teachers and administrators everywhere, according to Smith.

"Once schools start using it, it will be much more beneficial in the organization of school life," Smith said. ♦



Nyugen

SHORTCUTS TO GET TO SCHOOL



—Carolyn Sun and Shreya Tuma

DRUGS >> School marijuana busts on the rise

continued from pg. 1

Although most of the citations have been to students using drugs, there have also been problems with students selling drugs on campus.

"Any kind of sale or furnishing is a mandatory recommendation for expulsion by California state law," Mount said. "That doesn't mean the student will be expelled, it means we have to recommend to the superintendent and the school board that the kid be expelled. Selling is a felony."

In response to the increased number of drug busts, mostly involving marijuana, the administration is planning a series of presentations in the spring.

The plan is both to educate students about the use of drugs and to reiterate the policy on drugs. The administration also hopes to get parents and counselors

involved in the situation.

"The discipline policy is public, and the policy on drug use hasn't changed for a really long time," Mount said. "And this is why we're going out to the classrooms, to remind kids of the policy, because the fact that they're not reading the handbook is clear."

While there has been an increase in drug busts, Mount said it's probably because students are being "less smart" with drugs on campus, instead of an increase in drug use.

Events in other states may also factor in to the "mainstreaming" of marijuana, which takes the criminality out of using the drug.

"I don't think because in Colorado

they legalized recreational use for adults that [students] can bring it to school," Mount said. "In fact, [even] if you have a medical marijuana card and you're an 18-year-old high school student, it remains you cannot bring it to school. It's against the law."

Students attribute the increase in drug busts to the easier availability of drugs in California.

"[Drug use] has increased because of the availability of the drugs, especially in California," said one student who uses marijuana. "People aren't necessarily becoming less careful, they are conscious of what they are doing to their body and that it's illegal, but it's more of a libertarian movement in that high schoolers, as

they gain independence from their parents, believe that they can put whatever they want in their body."

The students said that others are "just being more and more careless" about drug use on campus because of the lack of busts in the previous year.

"My perception is is that not a lot of parents realize the current technology that is revolving around marijuana use," Mount said. "Recently I had a parent say to me, 'Well I never smelled it on my kid.' I think the old school way of kids rolling joints to smoke marijuana is kind of anachronistic."

The administration plans to reiterate the consequences of getting caught using or selling drugs.

"When we get out to the classrooms this spring, we want to make sure students understand it's a zero-tolerance policy," Mount said. ♦

It's more of a libertarian movement ... as [high schoolers] gain independence.
— anonymous student

LEGISLATION

Audrie's law looks to tighten sexual assault punishments

BY SabrinaChen & DeepthiKannan

In recent months, the Pott Foundation has worked with attorney Robert Allard and state Sen. Jim Beall to pass a new sexual assault law.

The purpose of the law, nicknamed named "Audrie's Law," is to toughen laws surrounding cyberbullying and sexual assault for juvenile and adult offenders.

Consisting of four key points, the law would make sexual assault a felony for both juveniles and adults and allow courts to disclose a minor's identity as a sex offender. Assault against unconscious victims and the sharing of photographs depicting sexual assault would also become felonies.

Sheila Pott, Audrie's mother, said that the law is designed to educate students about the danger of engaging in such behavior.

"Our hope is that the new law will bring awareness to students at SHS and across the state that will deter students from engaging in such behavior and encourage students to support each other when exposed to potentially volatile situations," Pott wrote in an email to The Falcon.

Audrie's Law would change the current California juvenile law that requires a victim to be conscious to consider an assault "forcible." Currently, digital penetration, which the three boys were charged with, is seen as a felony sexual assault rather than forcible rape. Forcible



From left to right: Sheila Pott (Audrie's mother), Robert Allard (the family attorney) and Lisa Pott (Audrie's stepmother).

FALCON // CRISTINA CURIELLI

rape carries harsher consequences than felony sexual assault.

Pott said the bill is in the process of being submitted to the legislature. The bill may take up to nine months to become law.

According to Beall's office, the bill is still too premature to talk about in detail, other than that it will "speak to address some of the aspects of the incident."

According to The Mercury News, the three boys who sexually assaulted Audrie have all spent time in Juvenile Hall as punishment for their actions. The two juniors who still attend SHS have spent 30 days in Juvenile Hall, serving their time on weekends. The boy who now attends Christopher High School in Gilroy served 45 consecutive days.

The Pott family is continuing with its civil case against the boys and their families. There is currently no case against the Los Gatos Saratoga High School district, according to Jane Marashian, assistant to the superintendent.

Pott said she hopes the Foundation's efforts will lead to significant improvements.

"We realize that this is just the beginning in trying to effect positive change in the lives of students on and off campus," she wrote, "but we feel as a community of students, parents, teachers and administrators working together, we can save lives." ♦

>> THE bigidea

Audrie's Law

1. Sexual assault involving penetration of any kind would become a felony for both juveniles and adults.
2. The judge would be given discretion for serious crimes to disclose a minor's name and records publicly. The juvenile would be listed as a sex offender, which would give parents and school administrators the right to know the juvenile's identity.
3. Sexual assault on unconscious or otherwise disabled victims would be considered "forcible."
4. Sharing photographs depicting any sexual assault would be a felony.

Source: Pott Foundation

DRAMA



FALCON // SIMI SRIVASTAVA



TOP: Junior Nastaya Kutuyev and senior Zofia Trujillo perform an angry scene from "God of Carnage." LEFT: Senior Charles Li and Trujillo argue. Directed by senior Annelise Nussbacher, this student production showed on Jan. 31 and Feb. 1-2. It featured a fight within a fight — two sets of parents fighting over a fight between their sons.

FALCON // SIMI SRIVASTAVA

Last student production ramps up the intensity

BY SimiSrivastava

Nussbacher also said she was working with limited time and resources because the show overlapped with the second student production of the year, "Up," along with the spring musical, "Les Miserables."

"I chose 'God of Carnage' for a number of reasons, some of those being out of love of the show and some of them being out of practicality," Nussbacher said. "I didn't want to be the kind of director where I bite off more than I can chew and then end up producing a half baked production because it ended up being too much work."

Though the show was only one act long with no intermission, it was packed with emotional intensity that made production challenging.

"It was definitely the hardest show I've ever done. There are no time jumps, no intermission, and nothing the audience doesn't see," said Trujillo, who played Veronica. "It's just us four, in character, on stage for an hour and a half." ♦

Those who attended the student production "God of Carnage" Jan. 31 and Feb. 1-2 witnessed a lot of fast-paced, intense fighting among two married couples, the kind of fighting that leaves audience members feeling surprised.

"I didn't know what to expect when going to see 'God of Carnage.' I figured it would be a pretty serious show," junior Siobhan McMillan said. "It turned out to be a kind of twisted dark comedy; most of the time I wasn't sure whether to laugh or contemplate my very existence."

The show was directed by senior Annelise Nussbacher and starred junior Nastaya Kutuyev and seniors Charles Li, Ehrland Hollingsworth and Zofia Trujillo. The show's plot features a fight within a fight; two sets of parents fight over a fight between their sons.

Nussbacher chose the show because she felt many people could relate to it.

SARATOGA HISTORY

50 years later, looking at Spielberg's teen past

By Sabrina Chen & Amy Lin

Fifty years ago, a 17-year-old named Steven Spielberg first walked through the halls of Saratoga High School. It was a different time then. Spielberg was a sports writer for a letter-sized Saratoga Falcon (sports column name: "Athlete's feats"); the giant redwood in the middle of the quad was only a sapling then. And, as has been well documented, Spielberg faced anti-Semitism.

Attending SHS only for his senior year (1964-1965) after moving from Phoenix, Spielberg remembers his time here as "Hell on Earth."

In Joseph McBride's book "Steven Spielberg: A Biography," Bert Pfister, Spielberg's journalism teacher, remembers that he was "very capable [and] a good student, but he kept very much to himself."

As he walked down the halls, Spielberg kept his head down as some of his classmates eyed him with disgust. This was sometimes paired with penny-throwing and name-calling. The phrase "Jew" followed him everywhere he went.

Feeling isolated, Spielberg buried himself into the world of film.

"He knew what he wanted to do. He was so confident and sure of himself. At

the same time he was having to live the life of the moment in high school," said Spielberg's classmate Mike Augustine in McBride's biography.

Spielberg went on to direct blockbuster films such as "Jurassic Park," "Saving Private Ryan" and "Schindler's List." Spielberg has been nominated seven times for Academy Awards Best Director and won the title twice.

What if Spielberg were a student here today? Would he fit in? Would he have more options?

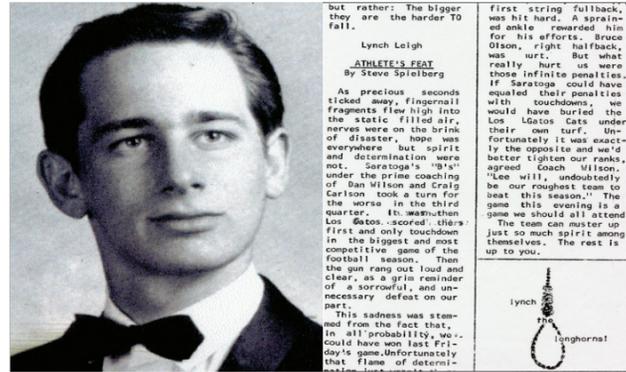
As he walked down the halls, Spielberg kept his head down as some of his classmates eyed him with disgust. This was sometimes paired with penny-throwing and name-calling. The phrase "Jew" followed him everywhere he went.

Since Spielberg's time, the school has done a lot to make the school more technologically based. LIFE (Learning Involves Fulfilling Experiences) was a program that for-

mer English teacher Kerry Mohnike and World History teacher Mike Davey co-taught, combining history and English. After Saratoga applied for and received a grant offered by the state of California, LIFE developed into MAP, the school-wide media arts program that incorporates digital side of the era.

Sophomore MAP student Saro Acharyo said that Spielberg is one of his favorite directors and "one of the reasons I want to go into film."

"I love Spielberg because he knows how to make a movie that can really pull at your heart strings," Acharyo said.



Left: Spielberg's graduation photo. Right: One of Spielberg's sports columns for The Falcon. Note the now politically incorrect use of "lynch" to demean Leigh High School.

"Most, if not all, of his movies are emotional roller coasters. He really develops and fleshes his characters out and makes you care about them."

Acharyo said that he's knows about Spielberg's harrowing experience at Saratoga High, but feels that it is hard to imagine that happening today.

"He felt SHS wasn't appropriate for someone interested in film which isn't true in present day," Acharyo said. "Our MAP program specifically caters to students who want to go into filmmaking, animation and anything else media related."

but rather: The bigger they are the harder to fall. Lynch Leigh ATHLETE'S FEAT By Steve Spielberg As precious seconds ticked away, fingernail fragments flew high into the static filled air. As disaster, hope was everywhere but spirit and determination were not. Saratoga's 'B's' under the prime coaching of Dan Wilson and Craig Carlson took a turn for the worse in the third quarter. It was then Los Gatos scored their first and only touchdown in the biggest and most competitive game of the football season. Then the gun rang out loud and clear, as a grim reminder of a sorrowful, and unnecessary defeat on our part. This sadness was stemmed from the fact that, in all probability, we could have won last Friday's game. Unfortunately that flame of determi-



FALCON FOCUS: ISABEL MALCOMSON Synchronized swimmer to dive into 2016 Games

By Deepthi Sampathkumar

A potential 2016 Olympian, senior Isabel Malcomson feels chills running up her back. The chatter of the audience permeates the room; eyes bear down on Malcomson and her team of eight.

As the music begins to play, Malcomson straightens her back. Within moments, she disappears with her team expertly into the depths of the Olympic-sized pool.

Although life for most high school seniors consists of college applications and senioritis, Malcomson has chosen to give up her normal high school career to pursue her dream of competing as a synchronized swimmer in the 2016 Olympics.

Malcomson, who no longer attends SHS, is taking classes online to finish credits and courses she needs to graduate. She will, however, come back for the graduation ceremonies and receive her diploma with her peers.

"I can't fathom into words how much I miss everyone. I haven't even had an opportunity to come back and formally say goodbye to my teachers since I left in September," she said.

Malcomson realized that in order to take this life-changing step, she has to sacrifice other parts of her life. She now trains with the United

States National team. They work out six hours a day six days a week at their center in Walnut Creek.

"Giving up a normal high school experience was a tough choice and I often found myself feeling overwhelmed by having to make such profound life decisions," said Malcomson.

To Malcomson, the change to online schooling was a necessary switch.

"I could go on and on about all the sacrifices I've had to make," she said. "I knew the switch was bound to happen so I wasn't surprised by my new reality."

Malcomson started synchronized swimming at age 9.

Like any other 9-year-old, Malcomson saw synchronized swimming as just another extracurricular hobby; she never expected it to bring her to the Olympics.

Malcomson underwent many arduous experiences.

"Within a month of training three of our key swimmers had gotten concussions," Malcomson said. "The frequency of the injuries was unsettling. Mostly I was also scared for my own safety."

Yet, her desire to compete in the Olympics kept her going.

"Synchro has become my life so everything else is secondary," she said. ♦

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NEWS ANALYSIS

Median grade is a B+, average GPA a 3.75

By Robert Eng Sherrilyn Ling & Minu Palaniappan

Recent news stories have focused on grade inflation at prestigious colleges. For example, Harvard University revealed that its median grade was an A-, prompting outrage from those who think grade inflation is destroying the integrity of grades.

"Grade inflation is harmful because it cheats students of the opportunity to understand what they do and don't do well," The Washington Post wrote of the Harvard revelations. "Grade inflation tells students they do everything very well — a continuation of the applause and approbation most have experienced all of their lives. Grade inflation ... is in reality an education failing."

At Saratoga High, statistics compiled from Aeries indicate that the median grade is a B+, and the average weighted GPA is a 3.75.

Here is a breakdown of various classes' GPAs from senior year only:
Class of '06 — 3.70
Class of '08 — 3.63
Class of '11 — 3.66
Class of '14 — 3.77 (Does not include second semester grades)

Comparing the Class of 2014's GPA to that of 2011 yields a difference of 0.1 points in GPA. To put that in perspective, the average increase in GPA at American universities over 15 years is 0.2, according to statistics compiled by Stuart Rojstaczer, a former Duke professor and a leading researcher in the area of grade inflation.

"Significant grade inflation is present almost everywhere," Rojstaczer wrote. However, second semester will most likely bring down the class of 2014's GPA, and thereby closing the gap. While the school's average GPA and median grade may be higher than a traditional "average" grade of a C, it has nevertheless been more or less consistent through the past few years, indicating a steady standard in grading and no inflation.

To put it succinctly, in somewhat surreal Saratoga High terms: Maintaining a B+ is average and has been for a while, highlighting the type of academic standards students here compare themselves to. English teacher Erick Rector said students may be sacrificing too much to have such high grades.

"If the median GPA is that high, then how is the high school experience for our kids?" Rector said. "If the only thing

we're focusing on is getting GPA scores through the roof, what are we sacrificing to do that? I would much prefer to have a student who is well rounded rather than one who simply focuses on a 4.0+ GPA throughout high school."

According to assistant principal Brian Safine, the school's high GPA is not a symptom of grade inflation.

"There are so many factors behind student achievement and so many different ways to measure it," he said. "The average GPA is high at Saratoga High because we have an incredibly dedicated and motivated student, staff and parent population. There is no evidence to suggest there is grade inflation here because that implies grades are artificially high."

GPA by class
Here is the quick breakdown of average weighted GPAs of various classes from only first semester:

- Class of '14 (seniors): 3.77
- Class of '15 (juniors): 3.73
- Class of '16 (sophomores): 3.76
- Class of '17 (freshmen): 3.75

The similarity between the senior and freshman GPAs suggests that, though seniors take more APs and honors classes, seniors also get lower grades in those

AP classes (an A in an AP/Honor class yields a 5.0 while an A in a regular class yields a 4.0).

"I actually think it's better that the GPA remains relatively the same because that means you're catering properly to the skill-set of each grade level," senior My-Lan Le said. "I think that actually reflects well on the school because it would be worse if you started freshman year higher and just slowly died."

This trend — access to APs seems to have no effect on GPA — is reflected in the dip in junior GPA, which is the lowest of the four at 3.73. The second highest GPA is the sophomore GPA, which is 3.76. Still, it should be noted that these could be statistical aberrations in individual classes' academic prowess.

Senior Akshay Madhani believes the difficulty of the school's classes, regardless of average GPAs, is beneficial.

"If Saratoga's classes weren't so hard, I honestly believe that many people wouldn't work because they know they could easily get an A," Madhani said. "Success depends not so much on the college you go to but on what you do there, and a lot of that comes from how well your high school prepared you for your college." ♦

>> togatalks

Do you think Saratoga High's average GPA is too high or too low?

"Our GPA is too high; college prep courses give students random points that aren't earned, just gained."



junior Nishant Agrawal

"Personally, I don't think it matters because GPA is overrated, but 3.75 seems reasonable."



senior Vanessa Wang

WEATHER

Students raise awareness about drought

By Becky Hoag & Shreyaa Tumu

Despite some February rain, California might endure the driest winter season since 1850, according to the French Tribune. This crisis is becoming so urgent that Governor Jerry Brown declared a drought emergency on Jan. 17.

"I've called for a collaborative effort to restrain our water use," Brown said to NBC Southern California News. "This is a call to arms. This is not a partisan adversary, this is Mother Nature."

To help in preparing for the upcoming drought, the school's MAP department filmed a public service announcement urging the school to do its part in cutting down water usage.

We brought up the idea of using drought tolerable plants around school and that would save a ton of water.

>> senior Florence Wang

The PSA suggested taking 5-minute showers — instead of 10-minute showers — a change that can save up to 25 gallons of water.

The Green Commission also has ideas on how the school can cut down on water usage.

"We brought up the idea of using drought tolerable plants around school and that would save a ton of water," senior Florence Wang said.

California's drought also might result in water rationing this summer. But for now, Gov. Brown is asking residents of the Golden State to cut back water use by 20 percent. This is looking to be one of the driest winters in California in record. The water in the reservoirs is only 20 percent of the usual amount.

"I think we can all reduce our water usage if we put our minds to it and think of some creative ideas," said sophomore Michelle Shen, environmental club's co-president. ♦

SCHOOLS The two-year tenure rule: Should it be easier to fire bad teachers?

By Ashley Chen & Ariel Liu

Backed by a Silicon Valley tech magnate, nine Los Angeles students are looking to challenge California's tenure system. The students argue that their education is being infringed upon by job protections that make it difficult to fire bad instructors, according to The New York Times.

They are hoping to reform rules that grant permanent employment to teachers after 18 months on the job, require a lengthy procedure to dismiss a teacher and employ a seniority system in which the most recently hired are dismissed first in the event of layoffs.

The issue at hand: Should it be easier to fire bad teachers?

Tenure is granted to a teacher to signify that his or her position in the district is highly stable and they can't be fired at the whim of an administrator. Once tenured, it's far more difficult to fire a teacher, even during layoffs.

To achieve tenure, full-time teachers undergo a probationary period during their first two years in a district, and if the district decides to hire them for a third year, they are granted tenure automatically on their first day of their third year teaching. Teachers who are not tenured usually leave the district.

"During those first few years as a teacher, not only is the school deciding whether or not they want you to be

a permanent teacher with them," principal Paul Robinson said, "the teacher is deciding whether or not [he or she] wants to be a permanent teacher with [the school and] whether [teaching] is a real career [he or she] wants to devote his or her life to."

The current system treats incoming new and experienced teachers equally, according to Robinson.

"You can have a teacher who is very experienced [who] doesn't have tenure yet, but we know they're outstanding teachers and we hope they stay for many years," Robinson said.

At SHS, almost all teachers have tenure, Robinson said, with the exception of around 10 teachers who are either in their probationary years or are filling in for tenured teachers on leave.

Like others, Robinson sees some downsides to tenure.

"Sometimes a [tenured] teacher who has slowly digressed as a teacher, [and] not wanted to continually improve and just seems to be getting worse, can still maintain [his or her] job unless [someone] goes through the time and process of evaluating them out of the position," Robinson said.

According to Robinson, removing a tenured teacher from his or her position requires significant time and resources. If the teacher feels he or she is being unjustly dismissed, he or she can appeal the decision in court, a process that may take years. Last year, only 19

tenured teachers were fired in California, said Robinson. Fortunately, said Robinson, Saratoga High isn't affected by the tenure debate.

"Our teaching staff is just outstanding," Robinson said. "There are other high schools that are struggling with getting good teachers, [where] you find teachers with tenure who aren't really putting their all into their professions."

Overall, Robinson said, tenure is an important part of the education system, and one that he thinks has few negative effects at Saratoga High.

"Teachers who teach really well never, ever worry about tenure," Robinson said. "They'll be the first to tell you that if you got rid of tenure, it would make no difference in how they approach the classroom. [But for] those who struggle? Tenure makes a difference."

Math department head Debra Troxell thinks the state of California should extend the number of years it takes to get tenure from two to six.

"You don't really know [if someone's a good teacher] after two years," Troxell said.

Nevertheless, she is grateful. "Three years ago, the economy was really bad, and my husband lost his job because the company wasn't doing well," she said. "I'm really glad I don't have to worry about my job [as well as the] health benefits that go with it." ♦

ACADEMICS: GENDER ISSUES

Educators discuss lack of girls in STEM courses

by Ashley Chen & Dorrie Tang

Walk into Kirk Davis's first-period AP Physics class, and at first glance it seems to be a class like any other. Look more carefully, though, and realize something strange: Only seven of the students are girls.

With an overall ratio of one girl to every three boys, AP Physics seems to be an unpopular subject among the school's female population. On the other hand, college-prep physics, strangely enough, has almost a one-to-one ratio. Other class's gender ratios can also be surprising: AP Literature and Drama have around twice as many girls as boys, while AP Calculus BC, AP Computer Science and Introduction to Engineering and Design have around three times as many boys as girls.

In fact, the gender imbalance in many science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) fields has been around for many years.

As a chemical engineering major in college, Davis recalled that there was only one girl in a class of around 150 people. Even his son, as a Carnegie Mel-

lon computer science major, joked his class had "more Kevins than girls."

Similarly, AP Computer Science teacher Debra Troxell said she was frequently the only female — or one of two — in her higher-level engineering classes — a disparity that didn't bother her.

"If you are studying what you want to study, then why would it bother you?" Troxell said. "I was interested in engineering, and it did not bother me one bit that they were mostly guys."

Troxell said the gender gap may be caused by girls' lack of confidence or interest in STEM classes.

"I genuinely feel that there isn't any reason [for the lack of females in STEM fields]," Troxell said. "I don't know why the girls aren't interested because they are completely, 100 percent capable — just as much as the guys."

Davis also said these factors as well as peer pressure could contribute to the imbalance.

"I'm sure some girls feel they aren't good enough, but they're 50 percent of

the best students in science and math, and girls have half the best ideas," Davis said. "[It's also] partly interest, or maybe it's more OK for a boy to be nerdy than a girl, even in Saratoga."

Despite all this, society has been showing trends of increased female participation in various STEM fields. Compared to decades ago, the gender ratio in these traditionally male-dominated fields has improved dramatically.

According to Troxell, female enrollment in AP Computer Science has gone up in small amounts each year.

"Only about seven or eight years ago, there were only two to four girls in each [of my classes]," Troxell said. "Now, seven out of 27 [students] is the lowest percentage [in a class]. The trend is good, but I would love to see it 50-50."

Even so, there is still a long way to go before women are equally represented in STEM fields. AP Physics students Lauren Lin and Erica Tran, both seniors, have seen the gender differences.

"I think it mostly has to do with the careers that come from taking physics," said Lin, who took the course her junior year. "Most people who take AP Physics see themselves in a career that involves physics, and as for now those careers are dominated by males."

Strangely, AP Chemistry and AP Biology are not as impacted in terms of gender difference as AP Physics; AP Chemistry has an almost equal number of boys and girl this year while slightly more girls take AP Biology. There is almost an equal ratio in the former while the latter slightly favors girls, according to registrar Jeanne Jamieson.

Tran thinks some girls choose not to take certain classes because their friends do not, which exacerbates the disparity. Yet, despite the high percentage of boys in AP Physics classes, Lin and Tran both said they do not notice the lack of the female representation in their class.

"For me it has nothing to do with [the fact that] they're all guys, it just happens that [it is so]," Lin said.

Both Lin and Tran encourage other girls to take Physics in the future.

"Why not have more girls in Physics?" Tran said. ♦

Maybe it's more OK for a boy to be nerdy than a girl, even in Saratoga.

>> teacher Kirk Davis

DANCE TEAM



Team members Allison Chan (11), Caroline Li (9), Joy Tang (11), Madison Seagraves (11), Jenna Chen (10) and Chih-Hsuan Hsu (9) pose at their competition on Feb. 1.

Team competes in its first season competition

by Andrew Jiang

After practices since the beginning of the year, the newly created dance team had the chance to participate in its first dance competition in Fair Oaks, a city near Sacramento, on Feb. 1. The results of the competition weren't available when the Falcon went to press.

"I thought that the team did amazing for our first competition," junior co-captain Madison Seagraves said. "Everyone really stepped up, and worked hard the whole week [before the competition]."

The seven-member team performed the routine they have been practicing since the start of the year. Their routine is hip-hop themed and consists of various turns, leaps, tutting, tricks and big arm and leg movements. They dance to a mix that includes various hip-hop songs such as "Leader" by Nicki Minaj and "Summertime Sadness" by Lana del Rey.

The team, however, faced one main obstacle at the competition. During the performance, the DJ accidentally played an old mix instead of a newer

one. Because of this, the dancers were confused when in the middle of their routine, the beat of the mix changed into the beat of the old mix.

Luckily, the dancers soon realized that the mix was wrong, looked at one another and picked up from the same spot to finish the rest of the routine strongly.

"It was kind of embarrassing because we were sort of just standing there for five to ten seconds [when the old mix started playing]," freshman Caroline Li said.

Besides the group dance, Seagraves also performed a solo routine in a separate part of the competition. Seagraves said it was her first time performing that specific routine, and she was very nervous.

"[The gym floor] caused me to not nail all my turns, but now that I know that, I will be better prepared for the next competition," Seagraves said.

The team's second competition was on Feb. 8 at Monta Vista High School. The Falcons have a chance at qualifying for nationals depending on how they perform. ♦

FASHION SHOW

Benefit back after difficulties

by Sherrilyn Ling & Deepthi Sampathkumar

After dealing with numerous setbacks and a near cancellation of the event, a few students and Spanish teacher Rebecca Marshburn took up the challenge and started plans for the annual Benefit Fashion Show. It will take place on March 29 with the main theme Wish Upon a Star, and all proceeds will be donated to the Make a Wish Foundation.

In the past, preparation for the show began over the summer, allowing commissioners a full seven months to plan and organize. This year, however, the previous adviser stepped down, and it wasn't until late January that Marshburn took over, leaving commissions a mere two months to plan the show.

The Benefit commission originally planned to just hold a Benefit Casino due to the time shortage, but senior head Catherine Liu decided not to abandon the fashion show just yet.

"I talked to [Marshburn] and told her that [the show] is a tradition that's been here for years, and we shouldn't give up on it just because we have limited time. We should have faith that we can make it happen," Liu said.

Besides the short time frame for planning, the commissioners are also working with a smaller budget due to insufficient time to find more sponsors, technical issues and the plethora of legal documents they must sign to collaborate with the Make a Wish Foundation.

Marshburn has experience with fundraising for various organizations at her



Seniors Catherine Liu and Abigail Small discuss details for the fashion show.

previous schools.

"I'm used to raising money for different things and as a new member of the Falcon family, I wanted to help the students," Marshburn said. "When I found out that there was no adviser for Benefit I thought, 'Why not? I'm going to help them out.'"

Despite the several obstacles, there are many new additions to this year's show to look forward to.

"Benefit is really about connecting the entire school, so I created the new teacher section this year so that teachers can enjoy the fun with us," Liu said. "Also, the fashion club is having their own Future theme."

With the show coming up in two months, the commissioners are motivated to keep the tradition alive and conduct a successful show this year.

"It's all about bringing people together and giving back to the community. Even though things are stressful, I'm looking forward to making this show perfect," Liu said. ♦

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INTERNSHIPS

Competition for summer programs runs intense

by Rohan Hardikar & Bruce Lou

Letters of recommendation, lengthy essays, "reaches," "targets" and "safeties."

This sounds like a list in preparation for college applications, but it's actually for a competitive summer program. In fact, competition for these programs can get as intense as that for an Ivy League school. But what do these programs offer?

The prospect of attending prestigious summer programs at universities across the nation has become increasingly popular among rising juniors and seniors. SIMR (Stanford Institutes of Medicine Research), MIT's RSI (Research Science Institute) and Wharton's LBW (Leadership in the Business World) are just a few of these coveted programs that students believe will boost their resumes.

To gain an appreciation of how com-

petitive these programs are, let's look at just one: the Telluride Association Summer Program (TASP).

As part of the application process, students must write six 1,500-word essays. Once the application is turned in, students have little chance of getting in.

In 2012, TASP accepted 64 students out of 1,350 — a roughly 5 percent acceptance rate. That compares to the roughly 6 percent of students who were accepted into Harvard's freshman class that year.

Critics say many people apply to these prestigious programs solely because of the name of the program instead of a genuine interest in the subject.

Senior Anushree Dugar, who went to Stanford Institutes of Medicine Research, said that such programs are for those passionate about the subject who want to obtain real world experience, not for resume padding.

"I do think these programs look good on college applications but that's clearly

not the reason why I applied," Dugar said. "However, I do think colleges will like the experience [students] gain from these programs, but what you get out of it is much more important."

Senior Alvin Huang, who attended Wharton's Sports Business Program, also said he applied due to his passion for the subject.

"I wouldn't say it was as selective as other programs, but it was a good combination for me because I'm really interested in sports and I also wanted to learn more about business," Huang said. "I don't think necessarily it helped for college acceptances but the main reason why I went was to learn more about the foundations of business strategy and it was really fun because it incorporated my big passion for sports."

These programs allow students to acquire first-hand knowledge from site visits, speakers and lab research, which can help them gauge their actual interest

in the subject.

"We were taught by Wharton professors and guest speakers from different sports franchises," Huang said. "They were VPs, CEOs [and] marketing managers who talked to us about what they did on a daily basis."

Junior Agastya Gupta applied to TASP because his interest in tech startups, him the prospect of exploring one's interests in a summer program supercede any ulterior motives to apply.

Guidance counselor Frances Sa feels the same way about summer programs.

"One program cannot make or break a student's chances of getting into school," Saiki said. "While it can help a student's application, it is usually the determining factor that gets a student into college. Instead, what a student makes of an experience, any experience and how they can grow from it, in my opinion, is more valuable." ♦

FALCON FOCUS: MADY FAGAN

Top senior high jumper commits to Division I Georgia for track and field

by Miles Albert & Andrew Jiang

On Feb. 5, senior Mady Fagan committed to the University of Georgia, a Division I (D1) school, for track and field and became the first student to sign to a D1 school for a sport in years.

Fagan, who transferred to SHS from Los Gatos last year, has been high jumping competitively for only two years. She is ranked top 10 in the nation and top three in California.

"I found my niche [in high jumping] and stuck with it," Fagan said. "I fell in love with the idea of flying and that's what it feels like when you execute a perfect jump."

Fagan said she has big plans for her high jumping career, and strives to at-

tend the Olympics in the future as well as win a NCAA national title.

Last season, she jumped 5'10.75" while Olympians jump anywhere from 6'4" to 6'8".

"I have some work to do apparently, but that's exactly what I plan to do: work," Fagan said.

During the offseason, Fagan trains about 12 to 15 hours a week. But with school track starting, that number will most likely increase.

"I'm excited to have a successful season and to get to know the [SHS track] team," Fagan said.

At the University of Georgia, she plans on majoring in sports management.

"I like that [sports medicine is] something I'll never lose interest in, and business," Fagan said. "I think it'll be a very

interesting choice of study."

Her parents fully support her high jumping, and often come to her events.

"I am so lucky to have parents who love track and field almost as much as I do," Fagan said. "They come to every meet they can."

Focusing on the near future, she will begin training with the University of Georgia's track and field team in the summer.

"High jumping is a very unique event. It combines speed with dynamic ability and explosiveness. There is so much thought that goes into each jump," Fagan said. "It has made me a better human being mentally, physically and emotionally. I am grateful for that." ♦



Senior Mady Fagan high jumps on May 12, 201

COURSES

AP Government may be added to senior curriculum next year

by Robert Eng

During the incoming senior course selection presentation, many juniors were surprised to hear of a new offering in the social studies department: AP Government. The class's addition, if it occurs, would join

the growing higher level classes in the liberal arts side of the school. But if there is not enough student interest, the class ultimately may not be offered.

Currently, all seniors are required to take a semester of Government and a semester of Economics. The proposed AP Government class would last a full year, combining both subjects into one curriculum.

"We're examining the model where AP Gov is a combination of Gov and Econ," history teacher Kirk Abe said. "It's still in its experimental stages."

After presenting the proposed AP Government class to the school board, Abe is hopeful it will be passed so he

can take steps forward toward the class's creation. Still, Abe said it's all up to the board's decision in the end.

"There is no set word on this stuff," Abe said. "It's not official unless it gets board approval."

Currently, U.S. history is taught in fifth, eighth and 11th grade. While these classes mainly focus on the history of the U.S., details on the government are still covered. Because elements like basic governmental structure and separation of powers are included in curricula, the seniors who take Government sometimes find the material redundant.

Abe hopes to deliver more challenging coursework for the students who call for less redundancy and new material.

"It goes more in depth and covers more topics," Abe said. "We have not had that for a required class at the senior level, only with AP Euro." ♦

"There is no set word on this stuff. It's not official unless it gets board approval."

>> history teacher Kirk Abe

HACKATHON

'Sleep is for the weak'

64 HOURS OF HACK, 4 HOURS OF SLEEP

by Shazia Gupta & Sweeya Raj

From Jan. 24-26, seniors Robert Eng and Matthew Lee and sophomores Aakash Thumaty and Spencer Yen participated in the Hacktech Hackathon at Cal Tech, an event in which students programmed nonstop for three days to create a project, like an app or game.

Yen, along with Thumaty, created an app that streams music via Bluetooth.

This was Yen's sixth hackathon, and his longest hackathon so far. Thumaty and Yen hacked for a combined 64 hours, and slept for only four hours.

Eng and Lee worked on a project that included taking Wikipedia articles and creating trivia questions from them.

The hackathon hosted around 1500 participants in total, including 30 other high schoolers from schools such as Monta Vista and Cupertino.

"In the past six months, there's been a huge college hackathon renaissance

where a bunch of colleges decide to have huge hackathons," Yen said.

The participants also got to meet founders of companies such as Snapchat, Tinder and Rap Genius.

Thumaty and Yen won second place for the Hackers Choice, an award which participants, in addition to judges, vote for the winner.

"By the end, you would expect us to feel tired, but we were still really excited that so many people like our app and we were ultimately kind of sad that it was all over," Thumaty said.

Eng said that though he can't back feeling "extremely sleep and tired," it was a memorable experience.

Eng had gone home with free food, drinks, nine T-shirts, three pairs of sunglasses, stickers, two free web domains, a yo-yo, an umbrella, five iPhone chargers, a cup, a can of blue Red Bull can of rocket fuel and two pens.

"It was like going on an adventure and coming back laden with the riches of free stuff," Eng joked. ♦

PHYSICS >> Course to become Honors

continued from pg. 1

lege Board's material for both years such as adding rotational mechanics and RC consonant circuits. He added that all Physics Honors students will be prepared to take both AP exams at the end of one year.

Although the class will no longer be called "AP" because it does not comply with the College Board standards for use of the trademark name, Davis said that it will still be highly challenging.

"It very well may deter people from taking it as it's not AP," Davis said, "but if you understand that the content is no different and as a matter of fact is going to be more rigorous because it's going to be done in one year rather than two; at the end of the day, what do you want: AP on your transcript or AP credit?"

While deliberating over the school's proposal to the board regarding the new physics class, Davis said they considered offering AP Physics C, which is calculus based but decided not to because of the prerequisites necessary to take it.

"We felt that if we teach the C based curriculum at Saratoga, it would have to be a second-year

course and we want to teach both mechanics and [electricity and magnetism in one year]," Davis said. "And even then you [wouldn't] get a complete physics education because you [won't] learn about thermodynamics, fluids or waves."

Other high schools, such as Monta Vista and Palo Alto, that offer Physics C only manage to get 35 to 40 students to enroll, and both have about 800 more students than Saratoga. As a result, Davis said he was concerned not enough people would be interested.

In addition, he said a three-tiered physics program may also create unnecessary complications, such as "more kids taking honors than should be."

Taking all these factors into consideration, Davis concluded that the Physics Honors alternative is the best way to approach the issue.

"I think in our heart of hearts, we really feel this is the best thing, even though it's not an AP. I think it is the best education for the kids," Davis said. "Then that way, we know you have been exposed to the full gamut of physics, and you will take engineering physics that is calculus based in college and you will be better off."

physics teacher Kirk Davis



physics teacher Kirk Davis

CYBERBULLYING >> Law targets online harassment

continued from pg. 1

ly impacting a school activity or school attendance.

"The safety and well-being of our students is our primary concern. We support changes in the law that support that mission," district superintendent Bob Mistele said.

Mistele said the district is working with the California School Boards Association to amend their policies to comply with this new law. Assistant principal Kevin Mount declined to comment on the school's plan to enforce the law because the school has not discussed the matter yet.

In addition to questions about enforcement, an area of controversy surrounding the legislation is infringement on student privacy and freedom of speech. Mistele said the district is expecting court cases and decisions to further clarify this aspect of the new law.

"We certainly support our students' fundamental First Amendment rights; we also support the right of every student to attend a school where they feel safe," Mistele said. "This will be done on a case-by-case basis, through diligent examination of the facts available, interpretation of the law and, when necessary, input from legal counsel."

Adam Goldstein, Attorney Advocate of the Student Press Law Center, a nonprofit legal assistance agency for student

journalists, said the new law does not affect the punishments for cyberbullying, but does change who has the power to do the disciplining.

"The types of speech the law would cover were already unprotected by the First Amendment," Goldstein said. "Before this law existed, the police could have arrested you for harassment. But now, the school can suspend you for it instead."

In theory, because the school can still only punish off-campus bullying if it is brought to its attention, the limits of the school's authority will not change with the new law. Yet, when the bill was first proposed, it gave schools much more power.

"When somebody first proposed this bill, it was supposedly going to allow schools to punish people for saying mean things online. And then someone reminded the author that there is a First Amendment and you can't really do that," Goldstein said.

As a result, Goldstein said they "watered down" the bill, at which point it was essentially the same as previous laws.

The version that passed requires that cyberbullying be "serious and pervasive enough" that it prevents the victim's access to education to warrant punishment.

"So if I go online and say, 'So-and-so who is my classmate is an idiot and the world

would be better off without them,' that's not enough," Goldstein said.

Even so, Goldstein said that some schools may end up infringing on students' First Amendment rights.

"Schools generally work under the assumption that they can do whatever they want whenever they want to. Most administrators don't know anything about the law," Goldstein said. "There are going to be schools who are going to use this to try and get more rights than they have."

Senior Gloria Liou supports the law because she believes it will prevent bullying in the modern technological era.

"Now with the Internet, it is much easier to bully someone [online] because it's not to face-to-face and you don't see their reaction," Liou said.

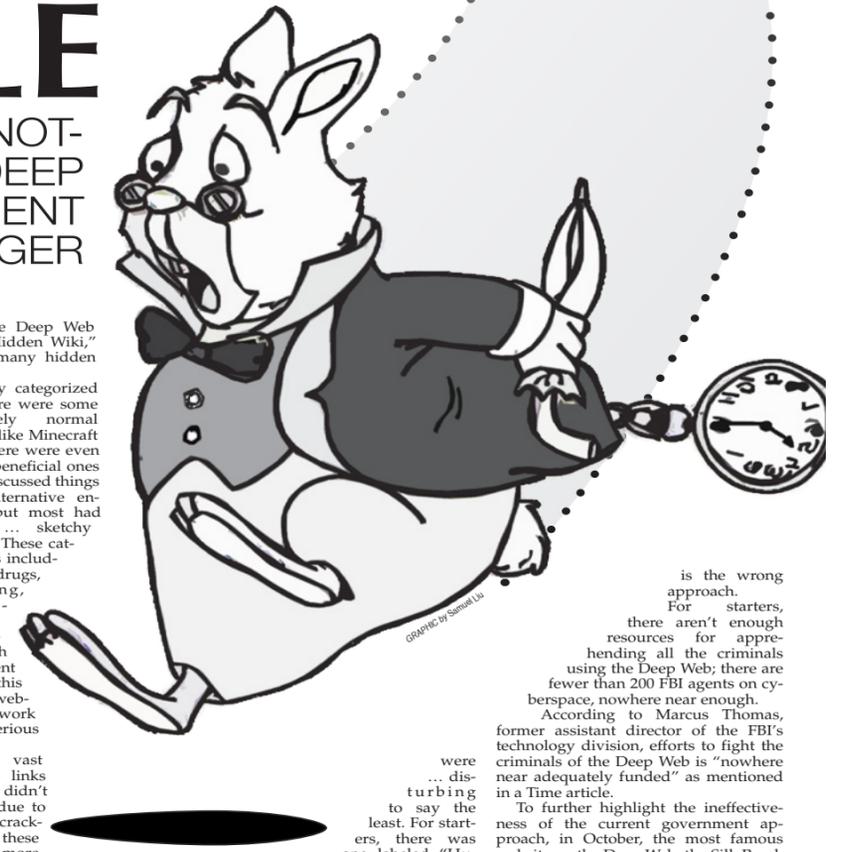
Liou added, however, that some people may feel that the law grants the school excessive power since a student's online activity is outside the school's domain.

"I guess it kind of infringes on privacy, but you have to consider [that] there are other rights, like right to happiness," Liou said. "So if someone is destroying the happiness of someone else, you have to weigh which right is more important." ♦

Editor's note: Refer to pg. 10 in the Opinion section for a staff editorial on AB 526.

Down THE RABBIT HOLE

EXPLORING THE NOT-SO-INNOCENT DEEP WEB, ONE STUDENT FINDS DANGER



The first thing I told myself was to resist the temptation to post "yoloswag" or something else stupid because I realized that I couldn't troll like I usually do on most websites.

This was serious business, and there was no room for jokes. One mistake and I could get in trouble. For the first time, I had to take everything on the Internet seriously.

I was exploring the "Deep Web."

For those who don't know, the Deep Web is a hidden section of the Internet that is completely anonymous.

It was originally created by the U.S. government in order to have a place for law enforcement or military personnel to discuss things in complete anonymity; ironically, this Deep Web is now notorious for illegal activities.

People use the secrecy of the Deep Web to participate in illegal activities including murder for hire, drug sales, weapon sales, money laundering and child pornography.

The worst part is that anyone can download the software to access this part of the Internet.

I decided to see if it was really the huge blackmarket that people claimed it to be. In 2011, U.S. Senators Joe Machin and Charles Schumer sent a letter to the attorney general urging him to shut it down, which clearly did not happen. I wanted to see if it really needed to be shut down.

In order to access the Deep Web, I had to download the "tor" browser, which would allow for complete anonymity by doing some black magic with my IP address that I am too lazy to bother comprehending. After booting it up, my first thought was "Don't do anything stupid," followed by "Why is this browser so slow?"

You would think that a browser frequented by criminals and the leaders of the cyber blackmarket would be faster, but I guess not.

At any rate, I decided to start looking for all the sketchy websites filled with illegal activity, a task that I felt would consume hours. I had no idea how wrong I was.

Alarmingly enough, within 5 minutes, I had found over 100 websites only

available on the Deep Web through "The Hidden Wiki," a directory of many hidden websites.

This directory categorized all of them; there were some relatively normal topics like Minecraft and there were even some beneficial ones that discussed things like alternative energy, but most had some... sketchy labels. These categories included drugs, banking, occultism and erotica.

If a 17-year-old average high school student could find this many sketchy websites, this network had some serious problems.

Strangely, a vast majority of the links on the directory didn't work, possibly due to the government cracking down on these sites or, even more likely, due to the browser being too

slow.

A drug addict might be willing to wait an hour for a drug market website to load, but I have better things to do with my time.

Even though most of the links didn't load for me, I still found many sites full of illicit activity.

One of the sites had counterfeit U.S. bills for sale in exchange for Bitcoins, the virtual currency of the Deep Web. Some sites sold fake IDs and passports. Others had firearms for sale and perhaps the most intimidating ones were the contract killing websites. Not a place to post "yoloswag." After all, I only live once.

And, of course, a huge number of sites had drugs for sale. Once again, I was astounded that I had so easily found these websites out in the open, but then again they didn't have to worry about being caught.

Finally, I decided to approach the forums. Some seemed normal, but others

is the wrong approach.

For starters, there aren't enough resources for apprehending all the criminals using the Deep Web; there are fewer than 200 FBI agents on cyberspace, nowhere near enough.

According to Marcus Thomas, former assistant director of the FBI's technology division, efforts to fight the criminals of the Deep Web is "nowhere near adequately funded" as mentioned in a Time article.

To further highlight the ineffectiveness of the current government approach, in October, the most famous website on the Deep Web, the Silk Road, was shut down, after an arrest of the suspected mastermind, Ross Ulbricht.

Unfortunately, this victory was short-lived.

In November, just one month after the arrest, there were reports of a Silk Road 2.0 coming out, clearly showing that the current government approach isn't effective; apprehending criminals isn't enough.

There needs to be a full shutdown of the network.

Even though it may have its uses, when it's to the point that any person with a computer and Internet can get on the cyber black market, the hidden web has gone too far.

Perhaps the government could make a new network, one that a 6-year-old with a keyboard couldn't get onto.

At any rate, it should be painfully obvious that this part of the Internet is too dangerous and full of far too much illegal activity.

For now, I'll stick with Reddit. ♦

CITY

Residents fight against expansion of State Route 85

by Michelle Leung

Some city residents are fighting the possible expansion of State Route 85.

At the Saratoga City Council meeting on Feb. 5, Saratoga, at least 20 community members spoke up against the project, which would add two lanes to 85 and change the carpool lane into an express lane.

Chief among the objections at the meeting was that when former Saratoga mayor Joyce Hlava signed the 1989 Performance Agreement between the city of Saratoga and Measure A, now Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority, (VTA) promising among other things that State Route 85 would remain a six-lane road, she believed the agreement was lasting. The freeway added noise, but it also took away traffic from Saratoga-Sunnyvale Road in Saratoga.

The agreement indicates that parts of Route 85 will be reserved for a light rail. But now that population and job growth have soared, the VTA hopes to add another lane instead to each side of the highway.

"I'm very upset because I negotiated the agreement in good faith and thought that they were negotiating the agreement also in good faith," Hlava said.

The VTA and the State of California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) are in charge of the Route 85 Express Lanes Project, which is estimated to cost \$170 million a year.

The VTA planned to complete the project approvals and environmental documents during the spring of 2013.

Current funding for the environmental clearance phase is being covered by a federal grant and local money. \$4 million has been spent on the environmental phase. A final decision will be made this summer, with two years to design.

In addition to adding one lane to each side of 85, the project will also convert 27 miles of existing High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes to Express Lanes, which will allow solo-drivers to use the lanes for a fee. Toll rates will vary, depending on congestion conditions.

For example, in heavy traffic, toll rates will be higher than in light traffic. Solo-drivers will be charged electronically through an electronic toll collection system. Carpools, motorcycles, buses and clean air vehicles can still use the lane, and trucks will not be allowed on the State Route.

According to John Ristow, the VTA Chief Congestion Management Agency Officer, the goal of the project is to relieve traffic congestion along the route. The project, Ristow said, will not only increase the efficiency of the roadway, but will also provide revenue to further improve roadways.

The impact of the expansion would not solve all problems, Risto said. The most severely congested lanes at Interstate 280 and State Route 85 South at

Highway 17 would continue to be problems.

The bottleneck on the section of 85 to Mountain View, where Google, Microsoft and Intuit headquarters are located, will continue even after the project.

Environmental issues came up frequently at the meeting. Although the VTA has conducted an Initial Study, or Environmental Assessment and Proposed Negative Declaration, it has not performed a full environmental impact report.

One community member brought up problems associated with toll roads at the council meeting, claiming that toll roads are discriminatory.

Residents argued that instead of adding lanes that will increase noise, VTA should be repaving the freeway to decrease current noise levels. Several also expressed

concerns that few people in Saratoga are aware of the expansion project.

At the council meeting, the five council members unanimously decided to write a letter to VTA that conveys concerns regarding the lack of environmental analysis.

The main issues were conflicting projections of noise increases, conflicting projections of traffic study and violations of the 1989 performance agreement.

Although many drivers, especially

commuters to Mountain View who travel north longer, are happy with the addition, many residents of Saratoga are not.

Junior Minda Lee lives on the west side of 85 between Saratoga Avenue and Winchester Boulevard.

"I live close enough that you can hear the cars when you go outside," Lee said. "So the construction noise would be really disruptive and also wouldn't it block the roads for a while? And that would cause a lot more traffic."

According to the VTA, there will be no serious lasting environmental effects.

The study also recommends further investigation of potential hazardous materials sites because of potential presence of petroleum hydrocarbons, solvents and ADI in soil and groundwater.

Students who live near the freeway do not look forward to any possible increase of noise.

Freshman Kyle Seid Phan, who lives on the east side of 85 between De Anza Boulevard and Saratoga Avenue, agrees that there are negative as well as positive effects of highway expansion.

"It's good in some ways because there's not as much traffic but if you add more lanes, it'll cause more pollution," Seid Phan said.

After all comments are made, Caltrans will make a final decision on which alternative to take: expanding 85, converting HOV lanes to express lanes or doing nothing.

There will be a meeting hosted by residents to further discuss these issues on Feb. 25 in the community room of the Saratoga library from 7-9 p.m. ♦

>> thebigidea

Highway 85 Project

What could change
One lane will be added to each side of the highway, and 27 miles of existing HOV lanes will be converted to Express Lanes.

Goals of the project
The project is aiming to relieve traffic congestions along the route.

Opposition's arguments
There would be an increase in pollution and noise.

FOURTH PERIOD

STAFF POLICY

The Saratoga Falcon is published 12 times per year by the Advanced Journalism classes of Saratoga High School, 20300 Heriman Ave., Saratoga, CA 95070. Views expressed in The Saratoga Falcon are those of the writers and do not necessarily represent the opinions of the administration, faculty or school district.

MISSION STATEMENT

The staff of The Saratoga Falcon is committed to objectively and accurately representing the diverse talents, cultures and viewpoints of the Saratoga High School community.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Saratoga Falcon welcomes all signed letters of opinion, which are subject to editing for length, accuracy and grammar. Please send them to editors@saratogafalco.org. For ad information, phone (408) 867-3411, ext. 222.

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Cyberbullying law sends right message, but should not be abused

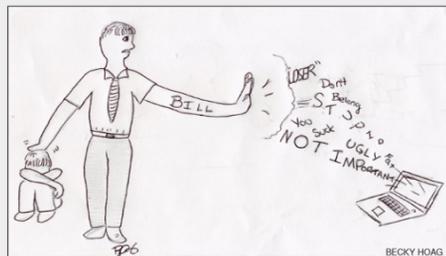
The nature of cyberbullying is that almost all of it occurs off campus. In the past, school officials felt limited in their ability to discipline off-campus harassment unless there was a direct tie to events at school. Lacking that tie, the harassment too often continued, and schools essentially looked the other way.

This has changed. Assembly Bill 256, which took effect on Jan. 1 in California, allows administrators to punish students for off-campus cyberbullying. Punishing and cracking down on cyberbullying is necessary, and administrators should be given the right to punish students who abuse social media. Cyberbullies should learn that their online actions are not only documented but also punishable by expulsion. Every student has a right to feel safe among their peers, whether at school or online.

Having said that, it is crucial that the law is not abused. The bill defines bullying as "any severe or pervasive physical or verbal conduct" that can be "reasonably predicted" to harm student academic performance, health, ability to benefit from student activities and to cause a student to fear that harm may come to their person, another student or property.

Since the definition of "severe or pervasive" is ambiguous, the law could be twisted to fit cases that should not constitute bullying. This law was meant to counteract continued, on-going harassment of a student, not to combat one-time petty comments, though the severity of the comment must also be taken into account. Yes, offensive comments that, say, express unpopular views might hurt feelings. However, spending time intervening within these situations detracts from attention paid to actual bullying, and administrators should look to find the balance between student hypersensitivity and actual bullying.

>> candid caricatures



BECKY HOAG

Another issue is that of sarcastic comments or attempts at humor. Administrators should be cautious in monitoring students' comments that may simply be attempts at satire. At some point, of course, sarcasm — especially when directed at one group or person — can cross into malice. Such malicious sarcasm can be even worse than normal, straight-

forward bullying. On the issue of free speech, this law is unlikely to infringe on any student rights. If a student wants to exercise his political freedoms and declare that a teacher, needs to do a better job teaching his class, this is not bullying. These freedoms of political speech are well protected; there is a stark difference between harassment and political speech, even speech with meanness. This law really just allows schools to punish for harassment rather than just leaving discipline it to law enforcement. The result is more watching eyes trained on harassers. Most importantly, students must know it's OK to report cases of cyberbullying, even when one is not the target. On the flip side, potential cyberbullies need to understand that their abusive actions can be and will be reported by fellow students. With the new law, cyberbullying isn't as risk-free as it used to be. ♦

Opinion of the Falcon Editorial Board

Editors-in-Chief Sarah Finley Samuel Liu
Opinion Editor Sanj Nalwa
Reporter Samuel Liu

The Saratoga Falcon staff voted 18-3 in support of editorial.



Commercialization of Valentine's Day unnecessary, sends wrong message

by Dorrie Tang

At this time of year, many stores across the nation suddenly transform into venues filled with pink and red roses, heart-shaped chocolates, greeting cards and decorations for the upcoming Valentine's Day.

According to the National Retail Foundation, the average American spent nearly \$130 last year celebrating Valentine's Day, making it almost a \$16 billion industry. On top of this, approximately 142 million Valentine's Day cards were exchanged, making Valentine's Day the holiday that gives the second largest number of greeting cards, after Christmas.

Unfortunately, much of the money spent on this minor holiday is not really worth it.

Looking back into the origins of Valentine's Day, it is surprising that it came to become a well-known holiday. The name is said to be derived from that of a priest who was imprisoned for administering forbidden marriages in ancient Rome, but no historical sources confirm links between the priest and romantic love. The idea only came around in one of English poet Geoffrey Chaucer's poems where he briefly mentioned "Saint Valentine's Day".

Considering this background infor-

mation, it is hard to understand why people spend so much money each year on such an unimportant day. Valentine's Day is not an official federal holiday that commemorates a historically or traditionally significant event; it was made up simply for commercialization purposes — to extract money from people's wallets.

Valentine's Day causes unnecessary stress, too — it creates high expectations for gifts and celebrations and sets the scene for heartbreak and disappointment.

Valentine's Day has transformed itself into such a massive "holiday" that it is causing society to forget about its true point of a relationship. Just I cause someone does not buy flowers and other presents for his or her partner on Valentine's Day does not mean that he or she does not love anymore.

In fact, the value of Valentine's Day lessons as a relationship lengthens. People get tired of the same supply of roses and chocolates each year, and these repetitive and predictable activities strip the meaning of a relationship. Do the same thing that everyone else does on Valentine's Day does not prove that they are special to you and instead demonstrates the opposite.

Companies across the nation have tricked us into spending so much of our precious time and money on an official, obscure holiday that sends wrong messages about true love.

In the end, only true lovers won't be tricked by Valentine's Day. ♦

All the commercialization of Valentine's Day pressures people into buying pricey materials that probably will not make much of a difference in their lives after the day is over.

JBK guest speakers miss the point

by Ashley Chen & Kelly Xiao

"Follow your heart over your head!" Speaker Jason Hewlett twists his features into various expressions ranging from comical to downright off-putting. In the audience, the students' faces reflect different forms of shock and fascinated disgust.

On the whole, it's not the kind of heartwarming material one would expect from an inspirational speech.

Hewlett was this year's Speak Up for Change speaker. This assembly is part of the school's effort to spur students to make the school a kinder, better place. But Hewlett, like all hired speakers, was an outsider to the community, unable to truly understand Saratoga's culture.

At best, guest speakers like Hewlett are unmemorable. At worst, the message is off the mark. This year, the message is focused on Jason Hewlett's personal journey to becoming an entertainer.

In fact, Hewlett, who was paid \$2,000 for the speech, is not even an inspirational speaker. His website calls him an "entertainer" and boasts he has performed in every major casino in Las Vegas. Near the end, Hewlett's "motivational" speech disintegrated into self-advertisement with the catchphrase "heart over

head" thrown in as an afterthought.

Even from the very beginning, Hewlett's words were laced with offensive stereotypes targeting certain social groups.

For instance, when Hewlett was describing his childhood experience, he implied that jokes are dull and then plastered on an unpleasant expression, saying it was the "face that all jokes have." How is stereotyping supposed to make Saratoga more inclusive?

Then, to end his speech with a flourish, he encouraged students to like his Facebook page and follow him on Twitter, not even bothering to disguise his disgusting self-advertisement as improving Saratoga culture.

Though the speaker choice was unfortunate, the school deserves credit for its effort.

At the same time, the student and teacher speakers at the Friday assembly were far more inspiring.

Academic pressure, sibling rivalry, stress from home — the student speakers spoke about experiences that the student body shares. And when they told their stories, they did so with far more conviction and meaning than any professional speaker ever could.

Unfortunately, though, many students listened to their peers' stories one January morning and then returned to

their classrooms with the same attitudes they had before. Change takes time, and the seed that Speak Up for Change tries to plant in students fails to take root because there is no follow-up.

In fact, by only promoting these messages during one week a year, Speak Up for Change unwittingly encourages students to compartmentalize "kindness," instead of seeing it as a defining aspect of their personalities. It reinforces ideas such as, "I'll talk to the kid who always sits alone during lunch — after finals."

Speak Up for Change doesn't need more paid assemblies. If the school truly wants to teach students to just be kind, what it needs to do is bring up this topic on a regular basis, integrate it with the school culture and make it just as much part of a Saratoga student's experience as cramming for the SAT or studying for AP Exams.

For example, the classroom discussions held during Speak Up for Change week can be extended to happen on a bi-monthly basis.

Sleep and course selection are important issues that can be expounded upon,

>> candid caricatures



KELLY XIAO

and other subjects can be explored, too, like family stress. What if we devoted some time each month to Socratic seminars on Saratoga issues?

In short, hiring paid speakers for all-school assemblies isn't the best approach. Saratoga doesn't need so-called "inspirational" speakers like Jason Hewlett and last year's Scott Backovich — save the money the school is paying for them and give it towards worthy causes.

At the same time, the school needs to do a more thorough and complete job of insisting on and living the kindness that the Speak Up for Change movement calls for. ♦

>> togatalks

What did you think about the guest speaker Jason Hewlett?

He was really entertaining, but he never got the message across about what JBK was all about.



junior Amanda Le

It was good that he wasn't just shouting his message, but instead incorporating it in a fun way.



junior Anisha Nagarajan

He was definitely fit for Las Vegas, but not so fit for being an inspiring speaker.



sophomore Chester Leung

LETTERS TO THE EDITORS: >> Reactions to JBK Week

Let's Not Lose Our Heads

Dear Editors,

Whoever thought that it was a good idea to hire a Las Vegas entertainer to teach teenagers life lessons is lost on me. After Jason Hewlett popped up out of nowhere during Speak Up For Change week, made some faces, and told some stories dripping with entitlement, I stomped out of the gym, unnerved and disillusioned by the organizers of such a fiasco.

Essentially, he espoused on his philosophy of forgoing social boundaries that the mind sets in place and to instead tap into the heart, to say hello to each and every person on the street without worrying about self-image.

To an extent, this is valid. It's nice to go out of your way to say hi, but this is not something everyone can or should feel obligated to do. Putting yourself out there is a privilege, and siding with the heart entirely is a dangerous one yet.

For Hewlett, a big ex-football player, being overbearingly outgoing is easy. For a young, vulnerable girl who may feel antagonized by stray, smiling eyes? Not so much.

You cannot positive-think your way out of pre-existing social power dynamics.

Yes, teenagers have feelings, and yes, sometimes it can be sublime to translate the good ones into the hearts of those around us. But when some detached comedian flies in (literally) to



Troyer

encourage a bunch of teenagers to release all their inhibitions, he's inviting a whole lot of chaos that he won't have to deal with.

Without basic practical thought, it's too easy to confuse the message in our hearts with the message in our pants. We shouldn't have to choose between exercising judgmental social restraint and showing our joy in other people's faces without thinking empathetically (maybe some people just don't want to interact with humans at the moment).

Rather, it is in the best interest of our student body to nourish a mutual relationship between mindfulness and emotion.

There are consequences when people act on impulse alone. We know this to be true.

I am shocked that our school has paid an entertainer to avoid that truth and encourage a room full of hormonal students to ignore what their mind is telling them.

I am shocked to have been forced to sit through a comedian parading as a motivational speaker, a show complete with the guy bragging about how he "got" his "beautiful wife."

I expected an assembly attempting to inspire respect for everyone, but I left feeling repulsed, let down, and marginalized.

Let's not lose our heads, especially when we're in a position of power to do so. Some people simply do not have that privilege.

— Amelia Troyer

Overlooked benefits of JBK week

Dear Editors,

After Speak Up for Change (SUFC) week, I heard a lot of feedback, some positive, some negative. The two comments that always got me though, were "It was a waste of time" and "It's only a one-time event."

Even if we had the absolute worst speakers, assemblies and class lessons, SUFC would still be worth it. We have 1,400 students at this school, and there is only one time we come together as one school — during SUFC. There is something worthwhile in packing the entire student body into the same gym so we can for an hour be one school. Laughing and groaning at the same jokes, rolling our eyes and sidetalking, but nevertheless sharing the same experience.

These are the type of events that make us feel a connection to our school, even if we don't realize it.

Furthermore, no one is naive enough to believe we can change the school overnight with wish granting and student speakers. But by simply taking the time to say, "Hey, our school culture needs to change," we're sending the message that the stress and judgment at Saratoga is not ok.

As subsequent freshman classes enter to a campus with that attitude, I am optimistic our culture can improve.

SUFC week is a once a year event, true. But there are many other ways its message spreads throughout the entire



Werner

year. One of the criticisms of SUFC is that it's hard to send a powerful message to a large group, which is why the rest of the year we spread JBK more discretely.

Just because you don't realize it's happening doesn't mean other students and teachers aren't feeling the effects.

In planning for SUFC, Leadership students met with teachers throughout fall and engaged in discussions on school culture and how we can create a more supportive community. Wishes were granted all through winter for individual students, reminding them that there are people at school looking out for them.

After SUFC week, many teachers received thank you notes and messages for supporting us. We passed out free hot chocolate one Wednesday morning before school at the top of the quad steps in cups with encouraging, handwritten messages.

Sure you may have thought that it was weird when a random blonde girl whom you didn't know was enthusiastically waving at you when you entered the campus, but one person told me that my morning greeting to them made their day and for me. That's all I need.

We aren't expecting SUFC to be a panacea for every problem on campus, but if our efforts can help even a few students feel a connection to campus and bring a little happiness into their day then I think the hours of work are all worth it.

— Jennie Werner

In defense of Tiger Mom's newest book

by Ashley Chen & Kelly Xiao

"Some groups in America do better than others."

Does this sound like the kind of statement that would instigate rage, accusations of racism and hatred? Of course not. That hasn't stopped the online community from drawing parallels between Amy Chua and her husband, Jed Rubenfeld's newest book, the source of the above quote, and Nazism.

Chua, or "Tiger Mom," became famous after she published "Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother," the 2011 book that provoked controversy by advocating a stricter, more "Chinese"-style upbringing. On Feb. 4, she and Rubenfeld published "The Triple Package: Why Groups Rise and Fall in America." The book describes three primary characteristics that mark a successful ethnic or cultural group and then names eight groups they believe have excelled in those areas.

Racist? Hardly. However, due to Chua's history of advocating certain cultures over others, Chua is now the main target for baseless and extreme accusations of racism. Chua's critics have clearly overlooked the fact that her book makes an intelligent argument supported by her own experiences.

Chua's argument is not that certain cultures are superior, but that some groups have been more successful in implementing the "Triple Package" of success. This "Triple Package" is composed of three primary characteristics that mark a successful ethnic or cultural group: "a superiority complex, insecurity, and impulse control."

In addition, Chua explains how her book does not advocate racism by writ-

ing that in immigrant groups, the "Triple Package" effect "dissipates by the third generation — puncturing the notion of innate group differences."

In other words, if the "Triple Package" effect was genetically based, the differences in success would not be gone in just three generations, hereby proving that Chua's argument does not favor inherent racial superiority.

If one culture places more emphasis on education than another culture, it will prosper.

This does not mean one group is inherently inferior. After all, the lesser-performing culture can adopt the methods of the first group in order to maximize success.

Chua is not asking people to be ashamed of their race or to throw away their identities; she is simply suggesting that some cultures have more effective strategies that are worthy of adopting.

Chua's ideas speak purely of the advantages of the attitudes of various cultures. A focus on race isn't Chua's intention. Yes, she said that some cultures are better at grooming their children for success. Yes, she said that some cultures have less productive education methods. But in no way did she ever say that one culture is inherently better than the other.

Chua even says, "The real promise of a Triple Package America is the promise of a day when there are no longer any successful groups in the United States — only successful individuals." As one can see, she is bringing the discussion away from race and culture and towards real people.

Some might argue that if Chua was truly not promoting racist ideas, she would not mention specific ethnic

>> candidcaricatures



groups. It's all too coincidental, they say, that Chua and her husband have named their own cultures as part of the superior eight.

While such concerns are reasonable, this is no different than a Californian noting that the Silicon Valley is the United States' most successful tech hub and the qualities that have made it so.

It would be unreasonable to ban Chua from considering her own culture as successful merely because she has lived according to its values.

Still, others add that Chua's definition of success is too limited, as she only mentions "income, occupational status, [and] test scores." Such critics argue that test scores are by no means a guarantee of achievement.

Yet, test scores are how the government measures a school's success and

America's success when compared to other nations.

Even if some individuals don't agree that test scores are an accurate portrait, the fact remains that they are an integral measurement of education.

It would be impossible to include factors such as personality or creativity, as it is impossible to measure them objectively.

The truth is that the backlash against Chua's book is a misunderstanding of Chua's intentions.

"The Triple Package" isn't a slight on American culture; it's "a set of values and beliefs, habits and practices, that individuals from any background can make a part of their lives or their children's lives," according to Chua. On the whole, Chua's critics are just readers interpreting words too rashly. ♦

Test reviews essential

by Michelle Leung & Kelly Xiao

After consulting Aeries, sophomore Amy Zhang slumps in her seat, disappointed. Once again, her score is far lower than expected.

She mentally reviews a list in her head. The study guide? Check. The textbook? Check. The old homework problems? Check. So what went wrong?

She is one of the many students who are sometimes left with questions after seeing their test scores. But for one reason or another, she and other students don't get the chance to see the questions they missed.

The truth is, reviewing tests should not be regarded lightly because it is crucial to students' understanding of the material.

According to Dr. Gary Brosvic of Rider University, one of the inventors of the Instant Feedback Assessment Technique (IF-AT), test feedback is a key element of a student's learning.

"When you work with children, particularly children with disabilities, one of the best things you can do is give them immediate feedback on what they're doing," Brosvic told www.ep-steineducation.com.

The worst thing of all is if teachers keep tests locked away and never give students the chance to look at them again.

Failing to review tests prevents students from learning from their mistakes in time for the next test or quiz.

If a student thinks she did well, but in reality scored poorly because she

misunderstood a concept, then it is of utmost importance that she be given the opportunity to learn from her mistakes.

This problem is compounded when students are not allowed to look at their final, as their lack of mastery over one course's concepts will cause them to struggle in the next level.

Students who otherwise would have had a smooth transition will instead suffer the consequences of last year.

The idea of the test review is the same principle that students use to study for tests: reviewing information makes material stick.

The best solution for everyone is a combined effort. Most students would prefer to review tests during allotted class time.

But many teachers say they can't afford to sacrifice class time when they need to keep going through the curriculum.

Students and teachers need to make sure tests are reviewed — teachers by trying to go over commonly missed problems and students by making time to go in during tutorial to review tests.

Reviewing tests reflects the concept of mastery learning, where students keep working on certain concepts until they completely understand the material.

One problem in many schools is that teachers keep moving on regardless of whether students understand the concepts being taught.

By going over tests, students can see what they missed and do better the next time — ensuring that learning really happens. ♦

The case for teaching more nonfiction works

by Ashley Chen

Remember the last time you read a nonfiction book for school? I can't, either. Last year, as a freshman, I read a collection of short stories, "Of Mice and Men," "Romeo and Juliet," "Great Expectations" and "Cyrano de Bergerac." Zero nonfiction. Why?

Think about why we assign reading to children — to learn to empathize with a variety of personalities, to broaden their horizons by immersing themselves in the lives of people from different backgrounds and time periods and to practice critical thinking and analysis.

Nonfiction is just as good at accomplishing those goals, and schools make a huge mistake when they fail to emphasize it as much as they do fiction.

According to Slate magazine, one Maryland private school asked students to use "The Help" by Kathryn Stockett to discuss the civil rights struggle.

Yet not only is "The Help" written by a white woman, told primarily through a white woman's perspective and centered on how she helped overcome racism in her town, it is not even historically accurate.

Why choose "The Help" over real histories of the civil rights movement? For example, excerpts of "Parting the Waters" by Taylor Branch, a Pulitzer Prize-winning book, have far more potential to inspire students.

Unlike Stockett, who never mentions any real person involved in the struggle, Branch's book details key figures such as Martin Luther King, Jr. Schools could kill two birds with one stone: teach students literature and interest in actual history.

According to the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 9.8 percent of books in first-grade class-

rooms were nonfiction. Even those who claim fiction is a more valuable resource than nonfiction cannot justify a 9:1 ratio.

What many fail to realize is that nonfiction has powerful themes, too. "The Glass Castle" by Jeannette Walls, for instance, is a story of how a young girl rose from a neglected childhood to achieve self-sufficiency and nonconformity.

Nonfiction isn't limited to just historical accounts and reflective essays — it can also include literary criticism, one of the major emphases in the high school curriculum.

In addition, by exposing kids to well-written articles, teachers can impart lessons like how to write strong persuasive essays, creative and literary nonfiction and more.

With the introduction of Common Core, which requires that 70 percent of 12th grade literature be nonfiction, I hope this imbalance will disappear.

After all, some part of our curriculum needs to go to teaching students to analyze present-day news or write argumentative essays on real-life issues.

Novels like "The Scarlet Letter" and plays like "Oedipus Rex" aren't wrong, or unhelpful, nor they should they be removed from the curriculum. But at the same time, students need balance.

Thousands of nonfiction books and articles are out there, covering a huge variety of material. Want to teach kids about the effects of war on young people? Choose "Night" by Elie Wiesel. A story of discrimination? Maya Angelou's "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings."

There is no excuse to ignore this treasure trove. With any luck, someday in the near future, if you ask a student what the last nonfiction book they read was, they'll be able to say "Parting the Waters" or "The Glass Castle." ♦

Say cheese! The Melt makes classic a tasteful delight

REVIEWER QUESTIONS RESTAURANT'S ABILITY TO SUPPORT ITSELF WITH ONE STYLE OF SANDWICH

by Deepti Kannan

As a child, I would always look forward to the one meal guaranteed to appear on the kids' menu of any American restaurant: the classic grilled cheese sandwich. The simple combination of bread and cheese was mouth-watering and destined to satisfy my taste buds.

So when I discovered that a new restaurant, The Melt, had opened up in San Jose and specialized in the grilled cheese sandwiches, I was ecstatic. But I was also puzzled at how such a simple entree could occupy an entire menu.

Situated in the El Paseo De Saratoga near AMC 14 theaters, The Melt exudes bright orange and shiny white. With its simplistic design and bold font, the restaurant attracts significant traffic. A steady stream of students, business people and shoppers line up to order their melts.

The first thing I saw on my way to the cash register were the large words printed on the side wall, advertising fresh bread and natural ingredients. Dainty booths with white, but dirty tables fill the space, creating a fast casual atmosphere suitable for a quick bite to eat at lunch or breakfast.

Behind the cash register are fancy grills and a myriad of sandwich ingredients, waiting to be assembled into

delicious meals. According to the company's website, all breads are baked fresh from artisan bakeries and soups and sandwich ingredients are crafted with fresh produce.

The menu boasts a variety of mouth-watering melts, including The Italian (fontina and provolone on garlic bread), The 'Shroom (aged swiss, portobello, grilled onions on sourdough) and The Mac Daddy (aged cheddar, macaroni on artisan white). Surprised by the number of vegetarian options, I ended up opting for The Mission (pepper jack with jalapeno sourdough).

Within minutes of ordering, an appetizing sandwich arrived in a small plastic basket, ready to be devoured. The sourdough bread was seasoned and grilled to a crisp and the melted pepper jack cheese oozed out, forming a tasteful arrangement complemented by the spicy jalapenos. Priced at a reasonable \$4.95, the meal was certainly a good value, especially considering that toppings of tomatoes, jalapenos and grilled onions were free.

In addition to sandwiches, the restaurant serves seasonal soups and salads as well as soft serve ice cream for dessert. To supplement the meal, cookies, fruits and sodas are also available for sale.

Aside from its unique menu, the Melt uses location-based mobile technology



Junior Deepti Kannan ate "The Mission," with Pepper Jack cheese and jalapeños.

The Melt

(OUT OF FIVE)

Where: 1410 El Paseo De Saratoga San Jose
 Type of Food: American
 Price range: \$ (out of three)
 Reporter's Favorite: "The Mission"

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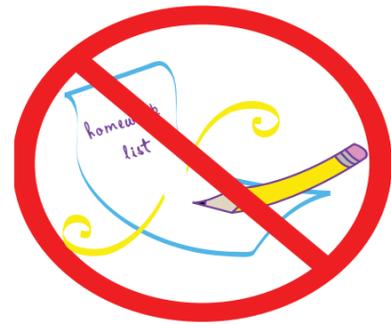
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Claire Strickland, 11

February 14, 2014

SENIORITIS



GRAPHICS BY CAROLYN SUN

THE SEMESTER SENIORS HAVE BEEN WAITING FOR SINCE THEIR FRESHMAN YEAR HAS FINALLY COME

A guide to lazing around by a second-semester senior

Say you're the average, hard-working junior buried in an SAT book, stuck in a cycle of automaton-esque work. Then, the year blurs by and — what — suddenly you've been notified of your college acceptance, you've lost all motivation for homework (have fun listening to underclassmen worry about grades), you go home and you have absolutely, nothing to do but sit around and watch the paint peel.

It is beauty incarnate. For a while, at least.

But after the paint has peeled and you've discovered the number of tiles on your roof numbers exactly 145 and a half (counted thrice) and you've watched "Game of Thrones" three times through and every new TV show requires 45 minutes of attention to the pilot which you really don't have...

Without further ado, here are the several stages of a second-semester senior:

- 1. Attempt to do fun things with friends.** You've got plans to go to the beach, to frolic in the winter sun (bring an overcoat) and gaze out at the beautiful, raging sea (WHAT DID YOU SAY? SORRY I CAN'T HEAR YOU OVER THE SOUND OF WATER SMASHING INTO SAND AT ALARMING SPEEDS). But, inevitably, That Guy in your friend group is busy. Usually it's the music students, who have their competitions conveniently scheduled at the time when people are having fun.
- 2. Awareness** You slowly become aware of your sluggishness. Your parents exist again. "HOW DO YOU THINK YOU ARE GOING TO DO FIRST SEMESTER IN COLLEGE?" they ask. Apparently the key to being heard over ear phones is repeating what you say, but when that doesn't work parents can get physical and rip earphones from ear. "DID YOU HEAR ME? HEY — DID YOU HEAR ME, YOU LAZY PIG?" How rude and insulting. To pigs, growls, "Son, you're wasting your life." Then he turns into a hotpocket and jumps into your mouth.
- 3. Struggle** Eventually, the existential questions come: Why have I played video games for the past 10 hours? Or, more so: Why can't I feel my butt anymore? Did my fingers always taste like Cheetos? I should get more Cheetos.
- 4. Revelation** In your class-fueled sleep, you dream lucidly. You see your future falling away under laziness, that bright goal onto which you had poured your years, disintegrating into dust. You see a microwave. You enter the microwave, into Narnia. In the words of a redditor: "The lion, the witch, and the hotpocket."
- 5. Awakening** You awaken gasping for air. You realize this is because you were sleeping on your arm and constricting your lungs. Your teacher is looking at you. "Son, you better get your act together."
- 6. Awakening part two** You, drooling on your keyboard by the fluorescent light of your computer screen — it's 5 a.m. — awaken for real this time. You decide to get your life together, to pull yourself up "by the bootstraps." So, hurried by fear you start working, start drinking coffee and listening in class.
- 7. Nothing is forever** It's a Sunday morning and a book beckons to you. Ah, homework, you say. But, you think, you deserve a break. And reading is like learning, right? The book falls into your lap and you disappear for a few hours.



SAMUEL LIU
Chairman Smao

>> lowdown

The best excursions for second-semester senior year

Carmel Beach
Logistics: 1.5 hour drive; around \$30 per person
What to do there: Watch the sunset; have a bonfire; walk along the beach; visit the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary

Six Flags Vallejo
Logistics: 30 minute drive; \$45 per person
What to do there: Ride on roller coasters; go on water rides and carousels; look at animal attractions (seals, tigers, sharks, elephants)

San Francisco
Logistics: 1 hour drive; around \$50 per person
What to do there: Walk down Pier 39; run on the Golden Gate Bridge; shop in Union Square; drive down Lombard Street

Alumni recount their senioritis experiences

Every year, as second semester rolls around, most high school seniors come down with a wretched disease: senioritis.

For 2013 alumnus Rohil Taggarsi, who now attends UC Berkeley, his experience with senioritis was nothing short of memorable.

"I met with my friends almost every night without getting sick or bored of them," Taggarsi said. "I also tried hard to spend more time with my family by going on a lot more trips with them."

One of Taggarsi's close friends, 2013 alumnus Shreyas Doshi remembers second semester fondly as well.

"We would watch 'The Walking Dead' marathons and stay up well into the night with food," Doshi said. "When we would run out of food, my mom would ask what Rohil and I would like from the grocery store almost as if we were brothers."

Doshi and Taggarsi believe that their experiences during their second semester senior year have helped them become much closer as friends.

"We still have each other's backs and talk often online," Doshi said. "Whenever I see him on breaks now, we always hang out the same way we hung out during second semester."

However, second semester senior year isn't all fun and games. Taggarsi also spent a lot of time maintaining a solid work ethic in school.

"My motivation level to study and work stayed relatively the same because a minimum GPA for a university must be met or you might be rescinded," Taggarsi said. "However, I did procrastinate a little more."

Taggarsi used his second semester free time to practice for Bombay in the Bay and to try new clubs such as National Honor Society and Raising Cancer Awareness Club.

"I became friends with people I had never thought of meeting before," Taggarsi said. "Even with all the work and studying, me, my new friends and my old friends still put into school, we were able to balance it with fun hangouts."

Taggarsi said he has positive memories of second semester senior year.

"It was a time in my life when I was able to step out of everyday high school life and be a little more carefree and adventurous," Taggarsi said. "It lived up to my expectations and was definitely worth the wait." ♦



Courtesy of ROHIL TAGGARS



Courtesy of TOOD NGUYEN

Clockwise from top: Alumnus Rohil Taggarsi and his friends pose at Lake Tahoe on their senior trip. Taggarsi performs the drums at the Senior Talent Show on April 9. Taggarsi went on a family vacation in May.

Current second-semester seniors stay focused but relaxed

After the endless worrying and studying that the first semester of senior year entails, it is no surprise that many seniors are now reveling in their free time and shrugging off the heavy cloak of stress that once weighed upon their thoughts.

Senior Priyanka Krishnamurthi is one such example.

"Normally, when I used to get home, I would be like, 'OK, I have so much homework, I have to get all my homework done,'" Krishnamurthi said. "Now, I go on YouTube sometimes [to] browse [for] random videos. I [also] spend a lot of time on Netflix catching up on TV shows [such as] 'Psych' and 'White Collar,' and watching movies [like] 'Les Miserables.'"

For others, second semester motivates them to finish their homework faster so they can have more free time for leisure activities.

"I've got this all brilliantly planned out," senior Wesley Chaffin said. "I do all my physics homework during calculus and all my calculus homework during economics class, and then I just go home and play video games."

To Chaffin, second semester senior year seems "like the light at the end of the tunnel," which propels him to complete his homework faster.

However, many seniors are finding it much harder to maintain the same level of motivation as they had first semester when there is now less pressure to maintain their grades.

"Senioritis is a thing," senior Justin Liu said. "Homework assignments are like 'whatever' now. When I miss one, I used to be worried about offending teachers, but now it's like, 'Well, we're not going to really know each other in a few weeks.' Once you're a senior, you don't really care anymore."

Yet according to Liu, the academic pressure and expectations from their teachers have not changed.

"Most of my teachers, especially my senior teachers, have made it a point to tell us that they don't owe us anything, that this semester isn't supposed to be easier," Liu said.

In addition, students say that because of the rigorous schedule AP classes must adhere to and the upcoming AP tests in May, teachers cannot afford to allow their students to slack off.

"We haven't really changed what we're doing; it's just that everyone is a lot more relaxed," Krishnamurthi said. "It's not the curriculum that changed; it's just that everyone's attitude towards the curriculum changed."

However, second semester still presents the perfect opportunity to explore what seniors previously had no time for.

Liu, for instance, plans to attend Magic card tournaments at local centers and is taking full advantage of his additional time on weekdays.

"Since most of [my friends and I] can legally drive each other, we'll go out for dinner or eat out together," Liu said. "Most of [my] free time is spent on my computer, like a lot more YouTube. I'm actually thinking about starting video games that I have been hitting on for four years." ♦

A sophomore's guide to binge-watching

Welcome to the new and improved way of watching TV: binge watching.

To be honest, I've never followed or finished any TV shows before this year — the closest I came was making disparaging remarks about the Chinese soap operas my parents adore. Last December, though, I finally decided to watch a Nickelodeon cartoon my friends have long lauded as "more than just for kids" — "Avatar: The Last Airbender" (ATLA).

Sixty-one episodes, two weeks and almost 24 hours of showtime later ... here it is: the definite guide (not really) to binge-watching.

Stock up on junk food and get cozy

Leaving your room for any reason is not preferable during a binge-watching session. To avoid starvation, keep a collection of food in your room.

Pringles, pretzels, BBQ Lays, Sour Punch, M&Ms, Ghirardelli chocolate ... whatever you prefer.

Water is crucial, too, because a person cannot solely survive on salty snacks. That way, when you have to eat dinner with your family, you won't be very hungry and can return to your room (and your beloved show) as soon as possible.

If your parents are like mine and don't like using the heater, you'll also need blankets. Unfortunately, fangirling, no matter how intense, doesn't produce any actual warmth.

Suggestions: blankets, sweatpants, oversized jackets and beanies, Winnie-the-Pooh socks you're too embarrassed to wear to school, etc. Keep in mind that you will want to move as little as possible when you start watching.

Let yourself go (mostly)

Don't worry about being productive during this period. You won't be. No matter how hard you try, thoughts of your show will creep into your brain and you'll be unable to concentrate on anything else. Instead, focus on finishing your show as soon as possible so that you can return to your normal schedule of studying.

This is why it's so important to begin binge-watching during a break, when you don't really need to get anything done.

Try to stay with your daily routines, though. If you've been practicing piano for an hour every day since you were ten, don't let binge-watching ruin your streak. Think of the big picture (and then return to your show).

The only thing that you should still be careful about is your eyes. You can do your math homework later, but ruining your eyes is permanent.

Between episodes, take a five-minute break. Close your eyes, or practice distance vision by looking at faraway trees. It's hard to convince yourself to do at the time, but binge-watching pain is temporary. Eyes are forever.

Tell your family

The truth is, you'll be irritated when your parents ask you to stop watching your beloved show, no matter how reasonable their argument is.

You will also be emotionally on edge because of what's happening in the show.

Every minute you have to be outside your room is a moment that your precious characters are lying in limbo, perhaps with a knife to their throats, and here you are in stupid, boring reality, unable to discover their fate. It's a funny thing to be so attached to a fictional world, but binge-watching, by nature, intensifies your feelings.

Basically, so that your family doesn't worry too much about your strange habits of alternatively crying and laughing, let them know. It's no different from warning them that you'll be on edge because of finals week or AP testing ... right?

Post binge-watching depression

Let's face it: You're going to be sad when your mini-marathon is over.

Unlike running a real marathon, spending over 10 or 20 hours watching TV leaves you with a strong sense of guilt for wasting so much time, and also nostalgia for your favorite characters. You can never re-experience watching a show for the first time.

You may be tempted to sate your obsession with reading fanfiction (especially if your favorite couple didn't get together in the end) or looking at fanart on sites like fanfiction.net, deviantart or Tumblr (resistance of this urge, in my case, was futile).

You need to leave a buffer of at least five days of planned unproductivity between you finishing your show and school starting. That being said, the sooner that you return to your normal life, the better.

Sure, binge-watching can be unhealthy. But it is the easiest, drug-free way to escape into another universe, and that experience is more than worth a few extra pounds and some

eyestrain. "Sherlock," anyone? ♦



GRAPHIC BY CAROLYN SUN

Snapchat: Are your photos really private?

by Miles Albert & Andrew Jiang

On Jan. 1, Snapchat, a popular photo messaging app, was hacked. The hackers released usernames and phone numbers of approximately 4.6 million members onto the website SnapchatDB.info.

This security breach happened just a few days after Snapchat acknowledged a possible security vulnerability in which someone could potentially compile a database of Snapchat usernames and phone numbers. The anonymous hackers said the hack was intended to urge Snapchat to tighten its security measures.

About a week later, Snapchat posted an official apology and released an update that aims to protect the phone numbers and usernames of Snapchat users.

Still, users are now questioning the security of their private information on Snapchat, a company that has promised to ensure protection and privacy. Since the hack, the photo-messaging service has added a new verification system in an effort to ensure that people who sign up for Snapchat are humans, and not computers. In this system, the user is given multiple pictures, and is asked to identify pictures of a Snapchat's ghost logo.

Is this system working? Apparently not as well as intended. According to CNET.com, one man named Steve Hickson hacked the image verification system in under an hour, writing a code that allows his computer to immediately recognize the ghost. Although the company's attempted security upgrade was a creative effort, this system of verification is a failure and further shows Snapchat's vulnerability.

Snapchat has had several other privacy issues in the past that make it harder and harder for users to trust the com-

pany. For example, the main reason Snapchat became so popular was that users believed that photos could only be viewed for a limited number of seconds. But, according to Snapchat's privacy policy, the company temporarily stores the contents of the Snap on the devices of recipients.

The company then deletes the Snap from the recipients' phones. Of course, Snapchat cannot guarantee the deletion always occurs and cannot prevent others from making copies of Snaps, as stated on its website.

Although the company promises to delete every photo after a few seconds, there are multiple apps, such as "SnapHack," that allow users to hack their Snapchat and save every photo they receive to their camera roll. Snapchat alerts a user when someone has screenshot a photo, but SnapHack automatically saves a photo without alerting the sender.

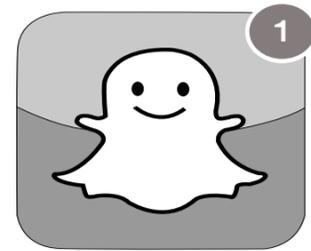
Many users do not realize the danger in sending embarrassing photos to their friends. Snapchat cannot guarantee the deletion of these photos and every photo can easily be screenshot or saved through apps like "SnapHack." And in several cases, embarrassing photos can be posted online for the whole world to see.

For example, the website "Snapchat Leaked," which was created in May 2013, posts nude Snapchat photos without the user's knowledge.

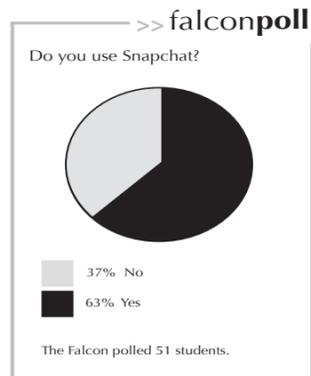
The website gets these photos because users send in screenshots or saved Snapchat photos to the website to be uploaded.

Although Snapchat promises to destroy every photo, there are flaws in the company's security and multiple ways to hack an account to automatically save

every photo. The bottom line is to avoid sending any photo you're uncomfortable having on the web — and knowing that it could be online forever. ♦



GRAPHIC BY KELLY XIAO



Im a panda

Courtesy of RAHIL KHASGIWALE



Twins

Courtesy of ARIEL LIU

Top: Junior Michael Ong disguises himself as a panda with a Snapchat illustration.

Bottom: Sophomore Michelle Wang mocks Miley Cyrus's "Wrecking Ball" music video.

'Community' takes a turn for the worse

I can still recall the week two years ago when I binge-watched three seasons of "Community" online through Putlocker links. Unlike many other so-called comedy shows, "Community" struck me as genuinely witty with original humor.

The show is about a diverse community college study group that was brought together through their Spanish 101 class. The group includes Jeff, an arrogant lawyer who practiced without a law degree and is forced to go back to school after his employer discovers the truth; Annie, a straight-"A" student who ended up going to community college after having a nervous breakdown and drug addiction in high school; Abed, a pop-culture aficionado who is extremely socially awkward; Troy, previously a jock in high school who is not too bright, but is converted into a geek after befriending Abed; Shirley, a single African-American mother who aspires to market her baked goods; and Pierce, a racist, old tycoon.

But after watching the first few episodes of the fifth season this year, I've found that as the show progresses it is only getting worse.



JAY MULVEY
Juicy Jay

A show that was once brilliantly written has now transitioned into a series of extremely dull and unamusing episodes.

In terms of plot, this season is different from the previous ones because it takes place three years after the study group graduated.

Jeff comes back as a teacher instead of a student and the other main characters, with the exception of Pierce, come back to pursue new degrees after failing to fulfill their post-college aspirations.

Since the show seemed complete after everyone's graduation at the end of the fourth season, this season comes off as forced and unnatural. The plot and jokes are no longer smooth.

This season heavily relies on previous inside jokes, which are no longer exceptionally funny. They are following a similar path to "How I Met Your Mother," in which writers resort to using inside jokes because they aren't clever enough to come up with new ones.

But my biggest concern for this season is that Pierce, the oldest of

the study group, has departed from the show. Despite popular opinion, I believe that Pierce was the biggest comical contributor to the show.

His racism, ignorance and immaturity at an old

age made all of his lines golden. Who doesn't enjoy his Freudian slips and imbecilic remarks?

What's even worse is that Pierce has been replaced in the study group by another old man, Professor Buzz Hickey. He is stern and never causes any laughs — he adds no value to the group and is a waste of a character.

In this season, and even last season, Abed's once-lovable personality has become irritating.

In early years, he was intriguing with his pop culture references in addition to his relatable social awkwardness. But now, Abed's quirkiness has become creepy and his scenes are almost too embarrassing to watch. His obsessiveness with pop culture have become too extreme and weird for my liking.

But despite the changes in characters and forced jokes, I am still watching. "Community" out of pure loyalty to the show. I'm hoping to get a few laughs here and there as I continue watching to the end of this season.

Then, perhaps, it's time to put this old dog to sleep. ♦



community

GRAPHIC BY JANE PARK

Freshman photographer holds shoots for charity

by Ariel Liu & Sweeya Raj

"Tilt your head down a little, and look slightly to the left. Okay, now relax ... relax a little more. Now, smile! You look great!" freshman Nimisha Devanagondi says with a grin as she snaps a photo of her friend, freshman Rachel Zhang.

Zhang is one of the many students at SES who has had a photoshoot from Devanagondi.

Some of the pictures Devanagondi takes during photoshoots can be viewed on her Facebook page, "A Thousand Pixels," which currently has over 200 likes.

"I never even dreamed about having 100 likes yet 200," she said. "I was even good enough to have my own page but this reassured me."

Her passion for photography was influenced by her father, an avid landscape photographer.

Three years ago during a trip to India, Devanagondi found herself sitting around with nothing to do, so her father gave her an old point-and-shoot camera.

"He put me on a website called the 365 Project, where I took a photo every single day (an album created by compiling photos you upload)," Devanagondi said. "I kept getting better and better."

When she first started, Devanagondi only shot photographs of her sister for fun, but she later began to take photos of her friend, freshman Mitali Shanbhag. Over the past five months, Devanagondi has started shooting photos for anyone who has asked.

"I realized I should take photos for other people because they started asking me to, and now it's my first

priority during the weekends because it's nice to have two days to focus on doing what you love," Devanagondi said.

Nearly every weekend, she holds photoshoots with friends in various locations around the South Bay. She takes the money that she earns, around \$10 per photoshoot, and donates it to a different charity each month.

In January, she donated her earnings to the American Cancer Society, an organization dedicated to fighting and preventing cancer through research, and before that she donated to the No Kill Nation, an organization focused on stopping the killing of treatable and healthy animals in shelters.

"I donate to charities because I have everything I could ever want," Devanagondi said. "It's also nice to know that you've helped someone else out and encouraged other people to do the same."

According to the subjects of her photography, Devanagondi's passion for photography is evident during photoshoots.

"You could see her enthusiasm and how much she loves what she does," freshman Spring Ma said. "She was always smiling behind the camera and always found ways to make me laugh."

Zhang said that Devanagondi takes her time during photoshoots to get the best results, making sure details like lighting and background are perfect in every shot.

Devanagondi aspires to keep photography as a hobby and to open a studio when she is older.

"[Photography] is a way to look at things in a different point of view," Devanagondi said. "It's a way to communicate and to look at different parts of the world." ♦

'The Wolf of Wall Street'

A MUST-SEE — JUST DON'T BRING ALONG ANY PARENTS, GRANDPARENTS OR SIBLINGS

I don't go to the movies often. In fact, the last time I went to the movies was freshman year. That's because they typically bore me, but I must admit that Martin Scorsese's "The Wolf of Wall Street," starring Leonardo DiCaprio, was the most enthralling movie I've seen in awhile.

My greatest concern before watching the movie was that I wouldn't understand the financial terms and references. I had little to worry about.

The film's narrator and protagonist, Jordan Belfort, assuaged that fear by explaining the financial world in great detail. He talked about IPOs and blue-chip stocks and how stockbrokers make money, making it an educational lesson about a world I had no previous exposure to.

The main attraction of the film, however, was the totally excessive and over-the-top everything. The movie does absolutely nothing in moderation, and revels in it.

While other movies include moderate swearing, "The Wolf of Wall Street" has more f-bombs than "Huck Finn" has n-words — so many, in fact, that it holds the record for most f-bombs in a movie ever.

Belfort blows millions of dollars and hundreds of lines of cocaine in a single week-end without batting an eyelash. Handfuls of hundred-dollar bills literally are poured onto totally naked women that Belfort and his associates bought, effectively giving viewers a sense for the crazy and immoral life of

Wall Street men.

This movie has so much sex and nudity that it borders on pornography. My advice: Don't bring a younger sibling and don't go to it with your grandma.

The total debauchery of Belfort's bachelor party bacchanale and the chaos of the trading floor make for an almost unbelievable story of living on the edge. During the movie, I thought that Scorsese had pushed the limits of film with his depiction of almost-comical excess. I never thought anyone could live like that. So I was shocked to discover at the end of the movie that it was based on a real story, that a real Jordan Belfort existed and lived a life full of scandal and money.

I simply couldn't believe that someone could possibly live the way Belfort's lifestyle had been depicted in the movie, and to think there actually was someone who lived his daily life doing

Quaaludes — a sleeping pill that becomes Belfort's drug of choice — and yelling obscenities at a business meeting while making a million dollars a week, blew my mind.

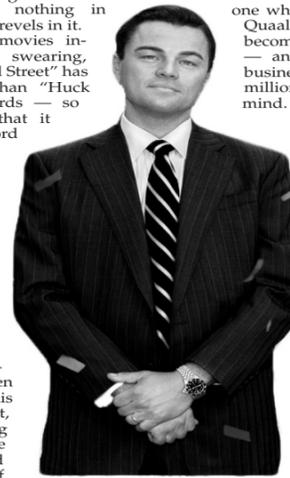
Though I wouldn't watch "The Wolf of Wall Street" with my parents, grandparents or any family member for that matter, I'm glad I watched this movie.

It takes a great film to capture my attention, not to mention for three whole hours. But it takes a fantastic movie to teach me about something I know nothing about and keep me laughing at the same time.

And it's given me an idea. Given the obscene amount of money Wall Street brokers make, maybe one day I'll be on Wall Street too — just without Belfort's lifestyle. ♦



BRUCE LOU
Bruce Almighty



SOURCE: www.collier.com

Academic Culture: The Great AP Debate



FALCON // SABRINA CHEN

Students weigh benefits and downfalls of more AP offerings at local schools

by Amy Lin & Ariel Liu

Algebra 2 Trig Honors, English Honors, Physics Honors, and World History Honors. These are all classes that were on the freshman schedule of current Harker junior Ashwini Iyer.

Harker is a private high school that offers 29 AP classes, compared to the 17 that Saratoga High offers. Archbishop Mitty, Lynbrook and Monta Vista all have more APs than SHS.

This leads to the question: Should the school offer more APs? Should SHS risk adding to its already stressed out environment?

At Mitty, students have the option of taking up to eight classes at a time. Some take as many APs as possible, overloading their schedules.

"Some people stack their schedules with AP classes and take seven or eight classes, sacrificing their off periods,"

Mitty junior Leslie Cheng said. "[The administrators] tell us to pick classes we're interested in, but everyone just does it for the GPA boost."

Unlike Mitty, Harker's advanced placement courses are mostly electives.

"I don't think anyone is that pressured to take APs by their peer's decisions," Harker senior Jennifer Dai said. "It's mostly your own decision; however, some AP classes are more common than others so people feel more competition taking them."

In a Falcon poll of 100 students of all grade levels, 61 percent of students disagreed with the policy of limiting AP classes.

Senior Jennie Werner agrees that some students' rush to take APs is a little over the top, but doesn't think that limiting the number of AP and Honors classes would solve the problem.

"Students will always find a way to take the classes at community colleges

and to overload themselves and I don't think that by changing the course offerings this will be fixed," Werner said.

She said there needs to be a cultural shift and students must realize that classes are not for simply boosting their GPA. At the same time, Werner thinks that having the option to take more AP classes would have benefited her.

"If I had the option to take more AP classes, I might've been able to take the AP classes I was truly interested in," Werner said. "I felt the pressure to take APUSH even though I'm not that interested in history, I think maybe I could've taken another AP class."

Even though the addition of more AP courses may have helped Werner, she also noted that for some it would just result in students overloading themselves on too many AP classes.

"There's more to high school than which college it gets you to," Werner said. ♦

>> falconfigures

- 16 Number of APs offered at Saratoga.
- 17 Number of APs offered at Lynbrook.
- 29 Number of APs offered at Harker.
- 34 Total number of AP courses offered by College Board.

Compiled from online course selection guides and from www.collegeboard.org

Does limiting APs hurt seniors' college chances?

by Ashley Chen & Devin Zhao

The Falcon posed the following question to several college admissions officers and counselors: If a school limits the number of APs taken by students, can the student be handicapped in college admissions?

Joann Schaper, an adviser working for a college counseling service called College Bound, said that in terms of competitiveness for college admissions, there is no substitute for success in rigorous courses.

According to Schaper, administrators who choose to limit AP options or set a maximum number should consider the impact their decision will have on students' college opportunities.

"At conferences I often hear the question 'Is it better to get an A in a regular class or a B in an AP course?'" Schaper said. "The answer is always the same. 'It is better to get an A in an AP course.'"

Students who are limited in APs will be forced to take a less academically demanding curriculum, which might hurt their ability to compete for college admissions and in college.

Schaper recommends that incoming freshmen who do not have access to AP classes take the most challenging courses they can. They can also supplement those with additional coursework from other sources like community college classes and online courses from Stanford, Cornell, the UC system and more.

"For those students who truly enjoy and thrive on academic challenge, there are many amazing opportunities to supplement and explore their interests far beyond what may be offered in their

own high school," Schaper said. According to Schaper, administrators need to consider that students can sometimes skip certain college classes with qualifying scores on the AP tests.

"[This] can also help [students] avoid taking five years or more to graduate — [or] graduate early — as well as [give them] more time to pursue their broad interests through minors and concentrations," Schaper said.

But, according to Peter Newcomb, a Brown University admissions officer, colleges recognize that often a student's ability to take AP classes is out of his control.

"Sometimes [schools limit] APs [because] of the budget, or [a lack of] qualified teachers available, but [it is] nothing that could or should be held against students," he said. "Other schools [limit]

APs to [reduce] stress on students and [keep] homework loads from reaching an unreasonable level."

Brown University wants students to "have balance between challenging academics, extracurricular activities, and still have time for sleep, family and friends," Newcomb said.

Kathy Phillips, associate director of Duke Undergraduate Admissions, said students are considered "in the context of his or her school" and students will not be penalized as a result.

At the same time, Phillips stressed that successful applicants take a "strong roster of AP classes" in addition to extracurricular activities. She recommends students who are limited in their choice of APs take as many as they can.

"Students [can] petition the school to allow them to exceed the maximum based on special talent or interest, or study for AP exams on their own," Phillips said. ♦

SARATOGA COMPETITION >> Is it all just an endless race?

continued from pg. 1

over the brains of American students, or "the future of America" (though take one close look at us and you might want to flee).

Pope, a Stanford lecturer and the author of "Doing School" (she recently visited the McAfee for "OMG! I forgot to apply to Harvard!"), argues that academic pressure over-stresses students, leading to a loss of integrity and true learning. Saratoga faculty, and many students, have echoed Pope's concerns. A few notable examples of this philosophy at work: (1) The creation of the Media Arts Program, with its emphasis on group projects; (2) limiting AP courses taken by underclassmen; and (3) The Wall of Rejection, on which students can anonymously post college rejection letters.

This is all in contrast to, say, China where test scores are posted next to names and a poor test score means a stern call home. Competition is maximized, and if another's test score makes you feel worse, you put your head down and study until you beat that person. Or, you fold under pressure. The Chinese system isn't very forgiving.

The practice of limiting AP classes is an important point in this debate. Senior Robert Eng, science club president, who competes in competitive science competitions, said that Saratoga's policies actually handicap science teams — limiting APs in turn limits the knowledge the science-hungry students can acquire.

"By the time we can get good at the more advanced sciences,

we're already seniors, so competing versus students with more education is difficult," said Eng.

Likewise, some argue, a student at The Harker School, a private school in San Jose, can take AP English classes and AP Chemistry sophomore year, making his transcript look far more "academically rigorous" than a Saratoga student's on the college application. The line of thinking is: School should challenge students. Why are we so scared of doing that?

However, one has to wonder if at times the cry for more APs is naught but the cry of the elite, wanting more to distinguish themselves from their "less-worthy" peers.

The problem is that if AP classes are added, students will feel compelled to take them. Colleges look at students based on what they were allowed to

School is about learning. Getting into college is about beating your peers.

take — a college won't penalize a student for not taking AP Government if the school doesn't offer it. By, for example, adding AP World History, a large portion of sophomores will feel compelled to take the class simply because they don't want to seem less able or ambitious.

It's a case of competitive coercion: By offering the class, the school effectively forces students to take the class or take a perceived hit on their college applications.

So, should the school add more AP classes? Perhaps the better question is: Is the school prepared to force some students

to take harder classes, in exchange for giving some students additional, perhaps needed options? Simply put, adding APs will increase options, but will also force some to take classes in which they have no interest.

The fundamental contradiction with our system of education is that colleges will always rank, will always compare students side-by-side, will always create competition. The feeling of competing with peers is never more evident than in college application season, causing the question "What does she have that I don't have?" For all that the school might try to de-emphasize competition, competition exists and pervades our

very culture, as too many view college as the end-all be-all for their high school education.

"Take classes that you are capable of taking." This advice, while sound, will never truly take root in many a student's mind because of college. School is about learning. Getting into college is about beating your peers.

The debate between the Chua-ites and Pope-ites hinges on this contradiction. As the Chua-ites know, the bitter truth is that going to school simply "to learn" doesn't always impress colleges. Taking Physics instead of AP Physics (with an AP tutor) doesn't reflect positively on



GRAPHIC BY SAMUEL LIU

Amy Chua, the famous "tiger mother," and Denise Pope author of "Doing School."

your college application. Spending your time playing an instrument instead of in test preparation is unlikely to help you unless you're a spectacular musician. Taking a lighter schedule because you value your health means handicapping yourself for college admissions.

Colleges want to see that students are "challenging themselves." They could care less about the consequences, because there's no convenient notch for someone's health.

The contradictions are many, and our culture is flawed. Our society tells us: "He went to a good college, be like him." Is anyone surprised when the student treats high school as a mere stepping stone?

For the Chua-ites, it's simply strategic, smart, to improve a student's chances at colleges, because this is the achievement our culture values. The Pope-ites will inevitably fall behind in this "race," because the emphasis on "learning for learning" doesn't work with college.

So here's where you expect me to point out the solution.

You want me to say that we shouldn't be obsessed with college. We should be learning for the sake of learning.

And so I said it. But I don't believe it. Truly, I hate the way Saratoga academics can divide us at times. I hate the way students feel compelled to take on harder schedules to just feel "smart." Yet I also recognize that the dreams of college drive so much learning, so much struggling and fighting and succeeding, that it feels wrong to just disparage them. Competition is a necessary fuel, and in the "real world" competition can be much more intense.

Perhaps, in this sense, Saratoga High has the best of both worlds, precisely because neither side is happy. The two cultures balance each other out — our school is neither a "slacker" school nor one in which competition is overly vicious. (See: China. It could be far worse.) Of course, this equilibrium might shift, but not without outrage on one side or the other.

Move either way, and the pitchforks come out. ♦

Guidance combats students' overambitious mindset

by Dorrie Tang & Kelly Xiao

It's a common scenario: After enrolling in multiple AP classes and thinking that he'll "find a way," an ambitious junior realizes that the workload is just too much. His eyes bear the dark circles from fighting back sleep, the fear of losing the GPA war, the disheartenment from bombing tests. After a whole semester of frazzled nerves and sleepless nights, he only has a transcript chock full of D's to show for it.



Allen

This situation is all too familiar for many students. For years, some students have been taking more AP classes than reasonable, and often the choice comes at a cost.

Pressure and health consequences

Counselor Eileen Allen believes that AP courses are both a blessing and a curse.

"AP classes are a really great way for students to challenge themselves in areas that they're passionate about and have enough time to pursue," Allen said. "However, there are many students who feel pressure from their peers to take too many AP classes and get themselves into a really bad situation."

Allen often sees students who sign up for more than they bargained for and then "rush to drop advanced courses because they know they can't [handle them]."

Allen said dropping early is better than hanging on until it's too late.

"There are students who don't figure out [that they cannot handle the class] until the middle of the semester," Allen said. "Then they're kind of stuck somewhere unless they want to take a withdrawal or fail for that course."

In addition, Allen has noticed that many students are not getting enough sleep due to their heavy workload.

"I have students who just are so freaked out that they're getting only four or five hours of sleep a night when they should be getting eight to nine hours of sleep per night," Allen said. "[Students are] still growing and [their] brains are still developing, [which is] something [they] need to consider. [Personally,] I think that health is more important than getting into any college."

So what exactly causes students to put themselves under such strain? According to Allen, it is usually the allure of college competition as well as encouragement from peers and family. Despite this, Allen believes that it is not necessary for students to overload their schedules in order to enter a good college.

"We have lot of data that supports the idea that there are still students who don't overdo [AP classes] or aren't necessarily taking super advanced math as freshmen, who are still getting into prestigious universities," Allen said.

Another argument students bring up for heavy course loads, according to assistant principal Brian Safine, is that rigorous schedules are good practice for college academics — an idea Safine thinks is wrong.

"It's very likely that you would average around four classes for each college

semester or quarter," Safine said. "And based on the college schedule and extracurriculars in college, you're likely to have a lot more free time. Doing six or seven AP classes in high school would be more than what a student is doing for college."

The timetable

To counter the growing problem of students taking more AP classes than they can handle, the guidance department is working on a timetable form that all students will be required to fill out in future years. The form allows students to fill out how many total classes they are expecting to take, how many AP classes they are expecting to take and how many extracurricular activities they are expecting to do.

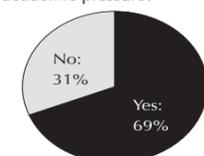
The timetable then requires students to calculate how much time all these activities will take per day — 30 minutes for a normal college prep class, an additional 30 minutes for an AP or Honors class, plus the amount of hours per day for each extracurricular, as well as eight hours of sleep — to help students realize whether or not their planned schedule is reasonable or not.

Both Allen and Safine believe that the form will help students visualize how many hours each class consumes and clear up any misconceptions of the workload.

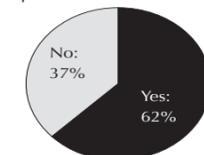
"I think students should have the option to pursue courses based on their interests and their skills," Safine said. "But we want to make sure that students make appropriate choices and keep their lives in balance. It's not appropriate to take advanced courses in every subject area simply because they exist." ♦

>> falconpoll

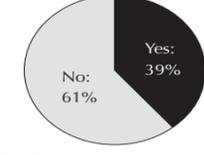
Do you feel overwhelmed by academic pressure?



Does the school place too much emphasis on academics?



Do you approve of limiting the number of AP classes students take?



The Falcon polled 100 students.

A student's quest for a meaningful senior portrait

by SherrilynLing

As senior Jennie Werner was taking her long-awaited senior portrait on July 1 at Now & Forever Studios in Los Gatos, a string of boring, traditional photos of herself were projected onto a screen before her. "Just do a silly one," her mom suggested, so Werner casually stuck her thumbs up, opened her mouth into a wide smile and the flash went off.

After seeing the result, Werner, who happens also to be one of the three editors-in-chief of the 2014 Talisman yearbook along with seniors Lauren M. Lin and Jason Li, was determined to print her portrait in the yearbook because she was pleased with the way it portrayed her personality. But she was discouraged to hear that it was against the rules to have her hands showing in the portrait.

"From the get-go I was really driven to fix this because I wanted my senior portrait to reflect who I felt like I am," Werner said. "[Those] other ones — they're boring, they're formal, they're stiff — that's not who I am."

Werner, unsatisfied with accepting a photo that didn't illustrate her character, took on a three-month quest to get the photo she wanted.

Determined, Werner asked the front desk worker whom she could speak to about the issue. She was surprised and pleased to hear that she could go to her yearbook adviser, Mike Tyler. But Werner received yet another no from Tyler. "The one concern that I had was that



Senior Jennie Werner poses in her traditional senior portrait and in her silly, thumbs-up photo. She chose the latter to print in the yearbook because it expressed her personality.



Courtesy of NOW & FOREVER STUDIOS

it would set a bad precedent," Tyler said. "Long before I was the adviser, the school has preferred that students look uniform in these photos for the yearbook, putting their best face forward, so to speak."

Still, Werner believes that the school's senior portraits are in need of some modification.

"Right now, senior portraits are very limited in their forms of expression. You can choose how to do your hair, makeup and that's about it," Werner said. "Senior portraits where students wear their own clothes are much more authentic and personable. The drape and tux are

traditional, but they don't represent students' personalities."

The other concern was that printing the photo could be interpreted as Werner giving herself preferential treatment, since she is a yearbook editor. But Werner disagreed, arguing that other students have also made similar requests for special arrangements to their senior portraits.

"We had a student ask if they could have their quote printed upside down. We're doing that. We had a student ask if she could have music notes next to her quote. We're doing that," Werner said.

"So if other students ask 'Hey can I do this?' we try to accommodate them."

After a month of listening to Werner's repetitive asking, Tyler decided to take the issue to the administration. In speaking with Werner, assistant principal Kerry Mohnike raised the same issues of preferential treatment and setting a precedent for future years.

Contemplating these concerns, Werner realized that perhaps students should have more opportunities to express themselves.

"Then I thought, 'Well, maybe a precedent isn't always bad,'" Werner said. "What if the precedent is that our senior portraits look more like us and the senior section reflects us instead of being formal drape, cap and gown?"

In the end, Mohnike left the decision up to Werner. Werner was given the night to think about it, and eventually made up her mind to choose the thumbs-up photo.

"[Werner is] a responsible person and she has the right, ultimately, to make the decision herself," Mohnike said. "It's not an issue of disruptive behavior, it's not anything that the administration would typically get involved with. These are style choices for the yearbook."

After all of Werner's struggles, Mohnike and Tyler agreed to let Now & Forever Studios send the thumbs-up photo.

"In the end I wanted to use the picture simply because I thought it was a better reflection of who I am," Werner said. ♦

ASB advisory opinion gives students say in school policies

by ShaziaGupta

After trudging through her three long periods on Friday, junior Dani Bruno sighs, realizing that her day is only half over. Due to the school's current schedule, she has to rush to softball practice and then return home to complete seven classes' worth of homework, which are all due Monday.

"I don't think students were really informed or had a say in the full block schedule," Bruno said. "I don't think teachers realize how busy we are on weekends and how much homework we end up having to do because all our classes were on Monday."

Last year, a full block schedule was proposed for the school, but some do not think students had enough influence in the decision.

Student representation and student say in administrative decisions, such as implementing a full block schedule, have been recurring issues at the school.

"I wish students had more say because the students are the majority of the school," Bruno said. "They are the ones it affects the most, which is why they should have had a bigger say in the final

decision."

To combat this lack of student representation, ASB members have formed the ASB advisory opinion, a forum for talking about issues that revolve around contemporary issues on campus.

In December of last year, senior Samuel Liu came up with the idea for the advisory opinion, in which a group of elected officials at ASB meetings (roughly 30 or so students) vote on contemporary issues.

The resulting, written and nuanced "Advisory Opinion" is presented to the administration. The goal is, according to the school's revised constitution, to contribute "Added discourse ... the ASB — the students' voice — resolves to positively contribute to this dialogue ... to formulate the best, most-educated decisions."

"We saw this as an opportunity [to] get student opinion from the student council and present an official student stance on the issue," senior ASB treasurer Robert Eng said. "The administration would make decisions and we saw these decisions had no organized, formal student input."

Recently, the advisory opinion tackled

the issue of whether to mention honors and very high honors next to the names of accomplished seniors on the graduation programs.

"It's important because this is about what students feel comfortable with, and how they want to be represented on their graduation day," senior ASB board representative Desai said. "It's wonderful that [principal Paul] Robinson listened to our pleas for more student opinion on school matters and immediately gave us something to work on."

Last graduation, Robinson said he decided that honors and very high honors would not be mentioned on the programs in order to promote a more positive environment at graduation time and to "celebrate everyone's accomplishment." The decision was controversial.

"I've had parents contact me that they didn't like my decision, and I've had many contact me that they agreed with it," Robinson said.

This year, Robinson has left the choice up to the ASB, since it is the seniors that will be graduating. As a result, the advisory opinion group has decided to omit any mention of honors on this year's program.

"We don't want students to feel bummed on their graduation day because their name isn't in 'very high honors,'" Desai said.

Eng added that one of the main goals of this new advisory is "to formally voice the opinion of the student body to the administration who hold the real power to implement change on campus."

For example, last year April 8, 55 percent of the school staff voted to not establish a newly proposed full block



Eating Cheerios from a box, senior ASB president Nikhil Goel discusses student proposals with his fellow officers on Feb. 3.

FALCON // SMI SHIVASTAVA

schedule. This left many students unhappy and caused them to reflect on whether they were getting enough representation in administration policies.

"Students had almost no say in the full block schedule discussion," Eng said. "The vote was totally carried out by the staff in Ms. Patel's room and the only student participation came second hand when teachers informally asked their students what they thought."

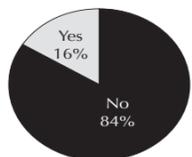
In response, the school staff and about 600 students took the School Site Council survey on whether the schedule should be changed to a full block.

More than half of the students, 53 percent to be exact, favored changing the schedule. Although the survey reflected the student body's opinion, it came far too late, for the decision had already been made.

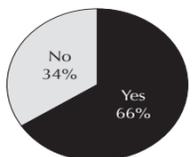
By forming the new advisory opinion, the ASB hopes to increase its communication with the school administration and try to stop similar problems from occurring again in the future.

"I think it gives all student governments more purpose and responsibility, which is what all the students signing up for student government are really looking for," Desai said. ♦

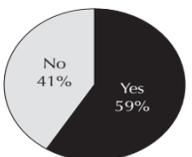
>> falconpoll



Do students have enough say in administrative policies?



Are you in favor of the full block schedule?



Should honors be mentioned on the graduation programs?

The Falcon polled 100 students.

Students cheer on Bay Area Sochi Winter Olympic skater

by MichelleLeung

If you have walked into the Logitech Sharks Ice at San Jose ice arena, chances are you will have seen Archbishop Mitty sophomore and 2014 Sochi figure skater Polina Edmunds practicing in the public skating rink.

Edmunds, who has grown up in skates, was the 2013 National Champion at the junior level last year. This year she will be competing in the 2014 Winter Olympics, which began Feb. 7 and will end Feb. 23.

Edmunds will have some tough competition. Russia, Japan and Korea will be sending strong competitors, including 15-year-old 2014 European champion Julia Lipnitskaia, 2010 Olympic champion Yuna Kim and 2010 Olympic silver medalist Mao Asada.

The American Olympic team also includes National champion Gracie Gold and former National champion Ashley Wagner.

At 15, Edmunds will be trying to follow in the footsteps of 1998 U.S. Olympic champion Tara Lipinski, the youngest female figure skater to win Olympic gold.

Edmunds will also be the first Olympic figure skater from San Jose since Kristi Yamaguchi in 1992, as well as the first National winner from San Jose since Rudy Galindo in 1996.

Galindo, who choreographs Edmunds's show programs, believes that Edmunds will do well for her age and skill level at the Olympics.

"I think Polina will skate well and I predict top 10 for her, which is amazing considering the strong field," Galindo said.

Junior Arathi Sabada watches figure skating all year.

"I think that [Edmunds] skated really



Courtesy of POLINA EDMUNDS

Archbishop Mitty sophomore Polina Edmunds skated and placed second in Ladies Short Program competition at the U.S. Figure Skating Championships in Boston on Jan. 9.

well at Nationals and that she'll do well at the Olympics," Sabada said. "I like her jumps. She gets a lot of height."

It is definitely true that Edmunds gets a lot of height when jumping. I've been skating for more than 10 years, and I have never seen any other skater jump with such ease.

She's also incredibly determined and aggressive in skating. During freestyle sessions, she is the one skater gliding circles around everyone else.

When I used to skate on the afternoon freestyle sessions at Logitech, Polina and either her mother Nina Edmunds or her coach David Glynn was always there. Her coach yells at her frequently and loudly, but not nearly as much as her mother scolds her. And the unique thing about

Polina is that she yells right back.

With the amount of time Polina spends on ice, it isn't surprising that she has made it to the Olympics. It is amazing that she has time to go to school, unlike many other skaters, who are homeschooled in order to spend more time practicing.

It is also fitting that she will be competing in the Sochi Olympics in her mother's home country, Russia.

I think Polina will do well at the Olympics. Her jumps and spins are incredibly consistent, and she has proven herself good at performing under pressure. No matter what place she gets at Sochi, she will have accomplished a fantastic feat: she will be an Olympian at age 15. ♦

— Becky Hoag contributed to this story.

Soccer teams participate in mandatory sportsmanship seminar in library

by MinuPalaniappan & JibauYu

During the last 10 minutes of the game against Silver Creek High School on Dec. 2, the boys' varsity soccer team was down 1-0. When the ball seemingly went out of bounds, a Silver Creek forward brought it back to play and put the ball past senior goalie Bobak Tooyserkani and into the back of the net. The goal was awarded, and Tooyserkani was furious. He shouted

at the referee, using an obscenity in the process. The referee responded with a red card — an automatic ejection.

"I really regret losing my temper," Tooyserkani said. "I was close to losing my starting spot."

As a result of the incident and other concerns, all soccer teams attended a meeting on Jan. 7 about proper leadership on team sports and how to behave on the field. Athletic director Tim Lugo and principal Paul Robinson organized the meeting in corroboration with the 1440 Foundation, which paid for the three seminars.

Joe Thomas, the speaker at the event, talked to the athletes primarily about the difference between talent and hard work.

"The seminar changed me in the way I think about things now," Tooyserkani said. "I realize that not only by losing my temper, I almost lost my spot, but also it affected the team as well. It just reminded me that I can't do selfish things like that anymore, that I have to play for my team."

The meeting was set up in part because this year, CCS wants teams to focus on sportsmanship.

"What I got out of it was to get you to strive to be better in sports," said senior Will Guy. "To take them more seriously and to be leaders on the field and to really improve yourself and not take sports as an extracurricular, but as something you do day in day out."

Lugo decided to have the seminar for boys' and girls' soccer because of the consistent ejections that occurred in previous seasons.

"We decided to focus on boys' and girls' soccer because they tend to get the most ejections whether intentional or unintentional," said Lugo.

For the spring, Lugo hasn't decided who the seminar will be given to, but he said he would like to host one for parents.

Lugo thinks it would be good to get a parent perspective on the seminar.

"So far the response has been great and it might be something that we might do for the future," Lugo said. ♦

>>> falconfigures

2 Years until the school rotates the teams that will attend the seminar

3 Seminars were organized for this school year

2 Sports — football and soccer — that have already attended a seminar

75 Approximate number of athletes who attended the latest meeting on Jan. 7

3 Ejections in boys' soccer in the past three years was one of the factors that led to seminars for the soccer

BOYS' BASKETBALL

Undersized squad faces challenging losses

by Andrew Jiang

With the season coming to a close in a few weeks, the undersized boys' varsity basketball team has continued to struggle in the De Anza League, compiling a league record of 1-7, last in the league, as of Feb. 5.

The team fell to Los Gatos at an away game 51-55 on Jan. 31, even as junior guard Michael Cole led the team with 21 points. Junior guard Alvin Kim came away disappointed with the loss.

"We played hard every minute and we can't really be unsatisfied with the outcome because we put 100 percent on the court," Kim said. "I'm not happy with the loss, of course, but there's only so much you can do."

According to Kim, the Falcons kept

their composure despite the noise from the loud Los Gatos crowd. But Kim feels the team can improve on passing the ball around more.

Earlier, the Falcons won 59-53 against Mountain View on Jan. 29. It was a close game throughout, but the Falcons emerged victorious at the end.

"We pulled this win out as a team and it took the whole team to win the game," senior power forward Brian Chun said.

Right now, the Falcons hope to avoid finishing last in the league. The last place team out of the seven teams in the league gets relegated to the lower league next season.

"I think we can achieve the goals [of not getting relegated, winning the rest of our games and improving as a team] if we stay dedicated and constantly put in the time and effort to improve as a whole," Kim said. ♦



Junior guard Michael Cole attacks the Spartan defense at a home game on Jan. 29.

FALCON // SHAZIA GUPTA

I'm not happy with the loss, but there's only so much you can do.

>> junior Alvin Kim

GIRLS' BASKETBALL

Led by seniors, team continues win streak

by Tiffany Zheng

After a key 45-33 win over the Los Altos Eagles on Feb. 7, the Falcons are in first place in the El Camino division with an 8-1 league record. Junior forward Mikayla Davis believes that the team is in the running for CCS and has a good chance of winning the league.

"Our overall team goal is to make it into the semifinals of CCS which I think is a very practical goal for us with leaders on the team like [senior] Dharini Ramaswamy," Davis said.

For the past four games, the Falcons have dominated the court. On Jan. 31, they defeated Cupertino 62-38. They beat Monta Vista in a close game 49-40 on Jan. 28. The team was once again victorious against rival Los Gatos with a score of 66-58 on Jan. 25. On Feb. 7, the Falcons took on Los Altos, winning 45-33. They will play Fremont on Feb. 11.

"Our team has tremendously improved from the start of the season to now," said Ramaswamy. "The underclassmen have really stepped up, and we have become a better defensive team." ♦

because this was our second time playing this team," Norris said. "And the first time playing them it was a pretty close game, but this time we came together and had a great win."

Coach Mike Davey attributes the Monta Vista win to the team's strong defense.

"We outplayed [Monta Vista] at the start of the game," Davey said. "The girls prepared well and our defensive pressure hurt them."

Davis said each player of the team has contributed a part to each game.

"We all get along and play with each other really well and everyone on the team has found their certain niche, which helps pick other people up on the court," Davis said.

Ramaswamy credits Davis and senior point guard Trishika Shetty for the team's strong showings in the past few games.

"Our team has tremendously improved from the start of the season to now," said Ramaswamy. "The underclassmen have really stepped up, and we have become a better defensive team." ♦

Our overall team goal is to make it into the semifinals of CCS.

>> junior Mikayla Davis

WRESTLING

Decrease in numbers leads to difficult matches, defeats

by Michelle Leung & Kelly Xiao

The Falcon wrestling team has some big stars but not many of them.

This is what contributed to a difficult loss against Fremont on Jan. 30, although several wrestlers won in their individual matches.

Senior Graham Grant won at 220 pounds, junior Christian Murabito won at 182 pounds, senior Mike Fitzsimmons won at 185 pounds and senior Isaac Tung won at 132 pounds.

"We played a tough team," Murabito said. "Most of our guys wrestled ranked wrestlers, and they wrestled hard, but it wasn't necessarily a good day for most people."

The wrestling team competed, but lost in meets on Jan. 24, Jan. 17 and Jan. 19, against Palo Alto, Gunn and Monta Vista respectively.

Fitzsimmons and Murabito won their last matches against Monta Vista. Junior Vince Rositano also won a close match against a highly ranked opponent.

The biggest challenge so far has been the lack of wrestlers on the team. Last

year, 15 athletes wrestled; this year only eight are still on the team. One key loss was junior Araad Sarraim who transferred to Bellarmine.

"We didn't have as many guys as [Monta Vista] so we lost by quite a bit," Grant said. "But there are a few weight classes that we've won in consistently — 182s, 220s and 285s."

The wrestling season was scheduled to close with the Santa Clara Valley Athletic League championships on Feb. 8-9 at Homestead, the Central Coast Section (CCS) tournaments on Feb. 28 and March 1 at Independence and the CIF State championships on March 1 and March 2 at Bakersfield.

Last season, Grant won the League and CCS championships at 220 pounds. Grant said he's hoping to place at the state tournament and, despite being a team that can't fill all weight classes, sees reasons to be positive.

Grant is satisfied with the team's record this season.

"[The season] is going pretty well so far," Grant said. "The big ones [League, CCS and State] are coming up. I think we'll do pretty well." ♦

Most of our guys wrestled ranked wrestlers, and they wrestled hard.

>> junior Christian Murabito

GIRLS' SOCCER

Falcons suffer defeat to Los Gatos 2-1

by Sabrina Chen & Deepthi Kannan

Despite dominating the scoreboard for the majority of the game, the girls' soccer team was unable to pull out a win on Jan. 31 against their rival, Los Gatos, losing 2-1.

Senior center midfielder and captain Stephanie Ho put the team ahead with a goal scored with a free kick from around 30 yards out, six minutes into the start of the game. However, Los Gatos was able to score twice within the last 15 minutes.

"The girls gave absolutely everything, and I was very proud of them," coach Ben Maxwell said.

Due to Los Gatos's reputation for a strong offense, the Falcons played with a new formation of four defenders, five midfielders and one forward.

"When you play a team like Los Gatos, you have to recognize and respect that they have better players than we do," Maxwell said. "So what [we did] is play with more defenders. [We tried to] make ourselves harder to break down."

Ho said the reason that the team lost was that toward the end of the game, "the amount of energy we had left was dwindling, so we had a few more gaps

and lapses."

The team's current record through Jan. 31 is 7-5-2. They are now fifth in their DeAnza league, behind Los Gatos, Mountain View, Los Altos and Palo Alto, all of which have rosters of 24-25 players, compared to Saratoga's 18.

While only the top three teams are guaranteed to make CCS, the fourth and fifth teams make CCS as well if they have a winning record and their power points are high. The team gains power points when they beat high-ranking teams, such as league champions.

"We don't have that many people who want to play, so we are always punching above our weight," Maxwell said. "The fact that we are even talking about CCS and power points shows how far we have come."

On Jan. 29, the Falcons defeated Homestead with a score of 1-0.

"We outplayed them, we outworked them. We created more chances," Maxwell said. "We should probably have had more than one goal, but at the end of the day, we needed to win the game, and we've done that."

This victory was preceded with a devastating defeat to Mountain View on Jan. 27. Despite their good preparation and confidence, the team lost 4-0, their biggest defeat in two years.

We don't have that many people who want to play, so we are always punching above our weight.

>> coach Ben Maxwell



Freshman Nicole Lin controls the ball on the field in the game against Palo Alto on Feb. 5.

FALCON // SIMI SRIVASTAVA

"It's not what we didn't do, it's what Mountain View did. They scored four good goals, goals we couldn't stop," Maxwell said. "The overall balance of the game was very, very even, but they were frighteningly good in front of the goal."

To prevent future defeats, Maxwell said the team needs to be a little more careful.

"Next time, our willingness to play soccer the way we want, and our willingness to press needs to be accompanied by just a little bit more focus so that we don't get punished," Maxwell said.

The team had its senior night at home against Monta Vista on Feb. 12, and is looking forward to another tough showdown next week against Mountain View, who is currently second in the league. ♦

BOYS' SOCCER

Team faces difficulties in the De Anza League

by Catherine Tang & Anant Rajeev

The boys' soccer team has faced some difficult losses so far in the De Anza League, currently holding a record of 1-5-2.

They lost matches to Mountain View on Jan. 27, Santa Clara on Jan. 22, Los Altos on Jan. 17 and Los Gatos on Jan. 10.

The team concluded the first half of the season with an important 3-0 win at Fremont High and a 4-0 loss against Los Gatos.

Although the score of the Los Gatos game might seem like a rout for the Wildcats, junior forward Samuel Breck begs to differ.

Breck said it was the Wildcats' offense that was able to convert its opportunities into goals while the Falcons squandered their opportunities.

"It was highly emotional and even pretty intense at times," Breck said. "It was a physical affair that ended in several injured Los Gatos players."

Despite the tough season that the team has had, freshman defender Kevin Yu believes the team had the ability to beat many of their opponents.

"We've played teams that are

tough, but we've also dropped points against teams that were easily beatable," Yu said.

Yu also believes that the team can improve its record in the last remaining games.

"As long as we plan to stick together, play as a team, and help each other out, we'll definitely win more matches," Yu said.

The team grabbed its first league victory on Jan. 29 in a 3-0 shutout win against Fremont.

Senior forward Andrew Firth scored two goals and center back Will Guy, a senior who is one of the team's co-captain, scored a goal from midfield.

"We executed several passes in the midfield to get our forwards more chances to score," junior midfielder Kushol Bhat-tarjee said. "Our team's chemistry has definitely improved since the beginning of the season."

According to coach Adam Clarke, the team can still survive in the league with the few games that remain.

"We just need to be mean and nasty from the beginning onwards," coach Adam Clarke said, "CCS playoffs this year is still a possibility." ♦

>> falconfigures

- 2 Winning games needed to avoid relegation
- 3 Games left in the season
- 6 Current standing in the De Anza League
- 5 Losses in the De Anza League



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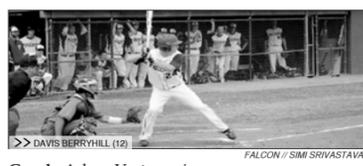
BOYS' TRACK

Coach: Archie Ljepava
Last season's record: 0-6
Last season's recap: Faced with tough competition, the team lost every meet they participated in last season.
Star athletes: Kevin Duong-Le (10), Steven Sum (11), Austin Du (12), Sam Guy (12), Will Guy (12), Clark Wang (12), Eric Ringsrud (12)
Key additions: Nicholas Sum (9)
Key matchups: Fremont, Wilcox, Cupertino

“We've had guys start training already and I've seen some of the heptathletes and sprinters also working out.”

 junior Steven Sum

BASEBALL



Coach: Adam Varteressian
Last season's record: 22-9
Last season's recap: Key senior talent fueled a De Anza League Championship win.
Star athletes: outfielder Davis Berryhill (12), catcher Derek Sun (12), outfielder Jacob Marr (12), pitcher Thomas Alexander (12)
Key additions: Catcher Evan Lindeman (11), third-baseman Billy Vithanage (11)
Key matchups: Los Gatos, Palo Alto, Wilcox

GIRLS' LACROSSE

Coach: Eric Wong
Last season's record: Overall 13-8; League 9-6
Last season's recap: Last season, the team made it to playoffs for the first time. They went to SCVAL semifinals, but lost to Palo Alto 15-8.
Star athletes: Lena Jewler (12), Jennie Werner (12), Ingrid Hong (12), Cassidy Williams (12)
Key additions: Iva Glumac (10), Jade Bisht (11), Casey Takahashi (12)
Key matchups: Los Gatos, St. Francis, Gunn, Palo Alto

“We had four girls play club all summer and fall and had tons of girls showing up for off season workouts and captain practices.”
 >> senior Jennie Werner

BOYS' LACROSSE

Coach: Bill Kurtz
Last season's record: 5-13
Last season's recap: The new coach Kurtz, the former assistant coach, should provide a change of pace this season since he was unable to achieve his goals as assistant coach last year.
Star athletes: Tony Capek (12), Holden Peake (12)
Key additions: Quincy Owyang (10), Liam Kaiser (10)
Key matchups: Los Altos, Carlmont

“Our goal for this season is to beat Gunn High School. We lost to them last year, and their team is really bad.”
 >> senior Clark Rothenburg

GIRLS' SWIMMING

Coach: Kristen Thomson
Last season's record: 1-5
Last season's recap: Juniors Yayla Sezginer and Madison Gress, and seniors Janey Heyman and Nikki de Roos all made CCS.
Star athletes: Yayla Sezginer (11), Madison Gress (11), Janey Heyman (12) Nikki de Roos (12)
Key additions: Stefanie Ting (9), Anna Zhou (9), Gillian Grant (9)
Key matchups: Los Altos, Monta Vista

“I think our relay team will be really competitive this year and we should have a lot of girls going to CCS.”

 junior Yayla Sezginer

BADMINTON



Coach: Alex Chan
Last season's record: 7-5
Last season's recap: The team placed third in the Santa Clara Valley Athletics League.
Star athletes: Michael Owyang (10), Junna Shimokawa (11), Bryan Chow (12), Evans Ding (12)
Key additions: Josh Li (9)
Key matchups: Monta Vista

SPRING SPORTS PREVIEWS

BOYS' SWIMMING

Coach: Christian Bonner
Last season's record: 3-3
Last season's recap: The team did well in the De Anza League and at CCS with sophomore Bradley Newton and senior Cameron Borch placing 11th and 14th in the 500-yard freestyle.
Star athletes: Bradley Newton (10), Lukas Anderson (10), Cameron Borch (12), Sasha Samoilov (12)
Key additions: Harrison Yang (10), Brian Lew (11)

“We have a solid team this year but the competition is really tough so we'll have to work hard each and every day.”
 >> sophomore Harrison Yang

GIRLS' TRACK

Coach: Archie Ljepava
Last season's record: 0-6
Star athletes: Lauren Casey-Clyde (12) (heptathlete), Puck de Roos (11) (heptathlete), Allison Chan (11) (sprinter), Laura Cummins (11) (sprinter), Kimberly Chen (10) (sprinter)
Key additions: Alice Bian (9) (distance runner), Madeline Fagan (12) (high jumper)
Key Matchups: Homestead, Santa Clara, Fremont, Wilcox, Cupertino

“Because we are a smaller school, it will be better to compete against schools we have a chance of beating.”

 junior Puck de Roos

BOYS' GOLF



Coach: Dave Gragnola
Last season's record: 12-0
Last season's recap: The team won the El Camino division championships. The team made it to the first round of CCS but didn't advance.
Star athletes: Christian Galvin (12), Robby Gragnola (11), Arman Vaziri (11)
Key additions: Nathan Shang (9)
Key matchups: Los Gatos, Palo Alto

BOYS' TENNIS

Coach: Florin Marica
Last season's record: 9-3 league, 12-4 overall
Last season's recap: The team finished third in the De Anza league last year and reached the semifinals of CCS because of strong underclassmen players.
Star athletes: Neel Bedekar (11), Zach Hewlin (12), Karthik Padmanabhan (10)
Key additions: Andre Xiao (9), Kailas Shekar (9)
Key matchups: Monta Vista

“I think with the addition of the freshmen, we should be able to win the league and make a run deep into CCS.”
 >> senior Zachary Hewlin

BOYS' VOLLEYBALL

Coach: Jason Cardoso
Last season's record: 8-6
Last season's recap: The team was young, placing fourth in the El Camino League.
Star athletes: Outside hitter Michael Cole (11), setter Chester Leung (10), middle blocker Philip Cai (12), right side hitter Hareet Jhutti (12)
Key additions: outside hitter Joel Schneidmiller (9)
Key matchups: Los Altos

“We missed CCS last year by one point, and this year, we plan on breaking streak and making CCS.”

 senior Kevin Tran

SOFTBALL

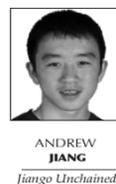


Coach: Joseph Medeiros
Last season's record: 24-5
Last season's recap: The team were El Camino league champions, moving to the upper league.
Star athletes: Pitcher Hera Tang (12), shortstop Mandy Lee (12), catcher Tivoli Sisco (12), pitcher Analisa Ruff (11)
Key additions: “I don't want to speculate,” said Coach Medeiros.
Key matchups: Milpitas

WINTER SPORTS SKILLS CHALLENGE

Sophomore works to improve basketball skills

Every year around the middle of February, I sit down and watch the NBA All-Star weekend. Out of all the events during the weekend, my favorite is the skills challenge where players have to shoot layups, dribble past obstacles, make difficult passes and make a 3-pointer.
 As a result, when I was offered the chance to participate in a replica of the NBA skills challenge for newspaper (with alterations in equipment, of course, because we can't afford all the fancy stuff), I immediately agreed.
 The plan was that I would go through the challenge once and see how I did. Then Michael Cole, a star junior on the varsity basketball team, would mentor me and I would try to improve



ANDREW JIANG
Jiang Unchained

my time on the course the second time.
 To complete the course, I first had to make a lay-up; dribble around three cones; make a bounce pass, a chest pass, a 3-pointer and a long-pass; dribble around three cones; and then finally make another lay-up. To modify the equipment from the real NBA skills challenge, we used cones instead of life-size player obstacles for the zigzag, dribbling portion, and we had one person simulate a pass-basket by making a circle with his/her arms.
 Even though the course didn't sound too challenging, I wasn't very confident of my basketball abilities. You see, I am a water polo player, and the last time I played basketball for



Sophomore Andrew Jiang shoots a 3-pointer for the basketball skills challenge.

Results

Basketball Challenge

Initial Time
2:02

The Tips
Keep your elbow in when shooting, step into passes and put the ball in front of you when dribbling.

Final Time
1:13

Michael's Time
0:57

The first time I went through the course, I'll be honest, I was not bad. Although I missed simple lay-ups, it took me only around three tries to make each of the passes. I made the 3-point shot on my second attempt, which came as a total shock to me, considering that I haven't shot a basketball in around two years. I finished with a decent time of 2:02, but there was definitely room for improvement.
 Now it was time for Michael to share his secrets and tricks with me to cut my time. My technique and fundamentals were decent, but Michael helped me refine them a little. He told me, among other things, to keep my elbow in when I

shot, and step into my passes. I practiced those skills a few times, and then I was ready for my final go at the course.
 With all these new skills acquired, I was pumped to have a second shot at the course and I liked my chances of improving my time. The moment the timer said start, I was off to the races. I made the layup on the first try and my passes were on point. Sadly, it took me five tries to make the 3-pointer this time; ironically, worse than before. But I still finished with a respectable time of 1:13.
 I've got to say, I was really proud of myself afterwards. I improved by almost

50 seconds and felt like I could go pro. Then Michael tried the challenge and finished it in under a minute without even breaking a sweat. What a show-off.
 In all seriousness, I gained a lot of respect for basketball players and land sport athletes in general. Before this experience, I believed water polo was the hardest sport to play by far. But I was reminded how every sport is demanding in its own way.
 Now that I've conquered the skills challenge, does anyone want to play one-on-one? ♦

Junior tries her foot at playing soccer, faces difficulties

Upon hearing that there was a winter sports challenge this issue for newspaper, I enthusiastically signed up, but that excitement only lasted a brief moment. Later that day, when I found out that my winter sport challenge was for soccer, excitement quickly turned into panic.
 I tried to recall the times I “played” soccer in middle school, hoping to revive some lost memories of the sport. The last time I ever touched a soccer ball was during eighth-grade PE, and I spent more time jogging aimlessly on grass than actually “playing.”
 For the soccer challenge, I had to first take the pre-test, which involved being timed doing various challenges, such as dribbling. Then, a varsity soccer player coached me to help improve my time. Finally, I took the test again.
 For the pre-test, I was told to dribble through cones, juggle 10 times and hit



CATHERINE TANG
Tango

the crossbar from 30 yards away.
 My first question was, “What is a crossbar?” My second was “Do I have to do this?”
 As I walked back to the 30-yard line to practice for the pre-test, the goal seemed to be miles away.
 On my first attempt (if it can be called an attempt), the ball barely rose off the ground and I watched it slowly roll toward the goal and stop well before the goal line. Falcon sports editor Jay Mulye was probably thinking the same thing as me: I will never be able to hit the crossbar from 30 yards away.
 Jay moved me up to the 18-yard line and I attempted to hit the crossbar again. This time my attempt was much more successful. It turned out to be beginner's luck, though.
 My next few tries were utter failures as the balls were going left and right, so I eventually got disqualified from the crossbar challenge. Instead of the crossbar challenge, I now had to do the side-netting challenge, which required me to kick the ball into the side net of the goal from 18 yards away.
 The side-netting challenge went much more smoothly, so we decided to begin the pre-test for real. The timer started and I began to dribble the ball through the cones, alternating right and left foot, which I later learned was a big mistake because the alternating foot significantly slowed me down.



Junior Catherine Tang juggles on the Benny Pierce Field for the soccer skills challenge.

Results

Soccer Challenge

Initial Time
1:51 (disqualified from juggling portion)

The Tips
Dribble with one foot, tap the ball lightly when dribbling and shoot the ball with the side of your foot.

Final Time
0:32 (disqualified from juggling portion)

Then I attempted to juggle. Every time I tried, the ball went flying away from me. Eventually after about a dozen tries, I got disqualified from that challenge too.
 I finally moved on to my last challenge, side-netting, which was surprisingly smooth as I got it on my second attempt. My total time, without juggling, came out to be one minute and 51 seconds.
 My friend, varsity center defender Anisha Nagara-jan, came to the rescue and coached me after the pre-test. She gave pointers, especially for dribbling. She told me to use one foot, which is much faster.

When I went back for my final test, the dribbling section went much better because instead of trying to tap the ball diagonally, I tapped it forward and sideways. I was ready to conquer juggling; however, I got disqualified again after numerous tries, but this time I reached four juggles in a row, which was a lot better than before. Although I failed at juggling, Iaced side-netting, achieving it on my first attempt.
 My total time, not including juggling, was 32 seconds, which was over a minute improvement. I owe much of my success to my friend Anisha for giving me good advice, especially on dribbling, which cut down my time the most. After this challenge, I truly realized how difficult soccer is and how much skill is required, even for seemingly simple tasks, such as dribbling. ♦

“I truly realized how difficult soccer is and how much skill is required, even for seemingly simple tasks.”

>> snapshots



FALCON // ANDREW JIANG

PARKING: The construction for the new Sports Plaza began on Feb. 6, resulting in the closing of the far parking lot.

MAKING HISTORY: The History Bowl team poses after a Jan. 26 home tournament where they beat the reigning national champion.

LEADERSHIP: Anshika Maheshwari (11) serves hot chocolate to a group of eager students.

CHOIR: Choir director Andrew Ford leads the cantante chorus.



Courtesy of NICK CHOW



FALCON // SIMI SRIVASTAVA



FALCON // SIMI SRIVASTAVA

Sophomore faces 'flappy' obsession

FLYING ADDICTIONS, DIRE PREDICTIONS

I have a new addiction and I'm not too flappy about it.

Recently, I've been staying up until midnight, not because of homework, but because I've been playing the insanely addictive new cell-phone app Flappy Bird, a game that half the school seems to be addicted to.

The objective is pretty simple; tap on the screen to flap your wings and fly but avoid pipe obstacles.

Although its instructions are straightforward, playing the game is not. The game is insanely hard to master. The first time I tried playing it, I got past the first pipe ... and that was it. My grand total score? One.

I figured I got such a low score because I wasn't really paying attention to the game. Then I played again and again, but the result was the same: a score of one.

After those first few attempts, I was frustrated to the point where I slammed my phone on the ground and declared this game was stupid. I mean, how hard could it be to navigate a flapping bird through some spaces between stupid pipes? Wanting to prove to myself that I wasn't an idiot, I unknowingly spent the next two hours locked in my room playing Flappy Bird.

Finally, after I had emerged from my room, I had what I thought at the time was a decent high score of 24. I was content with myself and didn't touch the game for the rest of the day.

The next day, I was ready to give up Flappy Bird. It had already lost its new game appeal and I was about to delete the app. But then I saw my friend, sophomore Arjun Ramanathan, play. His high score: 42. Even though his high score wasn't that much higher, I absolutely hate losing and I couldn't stand having a worse score than Arjun. Immediately, I started playing again.

This time, it was different. I wasn't playing because the game was fun, I was playing because I had a mission. A mis-

sion to have a higher score than Arjun, a mission to defeat evil and see good triumph, a mission to flap my wings like no other bird before me.

This was the point when I truly became addicted to Flappy Bird. When I woke up in the morning, I started playing until I absolutely had to leave for school. During lunch, I ate as fast as I could in an effort to start playing Flappy Bird. After school, I played the game for hours before starting my homework.

After two days, I was ready to boast to Arjun about my new high score of 97. I casually walked up to him and asked, "Hey bud, how's Flappy Bird going? What's your high score now?"

He merely shrugged his soldiers and said 121 as if it wasn't a big deal. I think I cried a little on the inside when he said that.

Even though I'm not even sure I enjoy playing Flappy Bird, I still can't stop.

Whether it's because I want to have a higher score than Arjun or because I just like procrastinating, I have a problem. ♦



ANDREW JIANG

Jungo Unchained

I mean, how hard could it be to navigate a flapping bird through some stupid spaces between stupid pipes?



FALCON // MINU PALANIAPPAN

Sophomore Andrew Jiang concentrates on playing the mobile game Flappy Bird in his quest to beat his friend, fellow sophomore Arjun Ramanathan.

buzzworthy >> YouTube star

BY Sherrilyn Ling

As 2013 alumnus Joanna Lee viewed the water show "World of Color" at Disneyland over winter break, musical numbers from the animated film "Frozen" were projected before her. Captivated by the music, she visited a movie theatre soon after to see the award-winning film.

Immediately after seeing the movie, Lee rushed back to her dorm at USC and purchased the soundtrack on iTunes. She soon decided to cover several of the songs with her viola and post them on her YouTube channel, xclassicalcatx, which has over 27,000 subscribers and nearly 2 million cumulative views.

"I fell in love with the soundtrack because it has such a Broadway-esque undertone," Lee said, "and after weeks of obsessively memorizing lyrics and melodies of the soundtrack, I wanted to cover my favorite songs from the film."

Lee covered three tracks from the movie — "Let It Go," "Do You Want to Build a Snowman?" and "For the First Time in Forever," each collecting approximately 220,000 views, 95,000 views and 40,000 views



YOUTUBE

Alumnus Joanna Lee plays the song "Let it Go" on her viola.

respectively.

"After a certain amount of time of being on YouTube, you get the general idea of what's 'in' in terms of viewership," Lee said. "Because 'Frozen' is a popular movie, it was only natural for fans of the movie to search up covers."

Depending on the song she's covering, it typically takes Lee about a day to learn the song by ear and then another two to three hours to get a good take. Despite the strenuous process, Lee finds posting these covers rewarding.

"I really enjoy interacting with all of my listeners from around the world. I think it's incredible how universal music is, and how I've met so many amazing people and musicians through YouTube," Lee said. ♦



>> topten

PICK-UP LINES

- 10 Did you fall from heaven, cause you must have landed on your face. It's really messed up.
- 9 You may fall from the sky, you may fall from a tree, but the best way to fall... is in love with me.
- 8 Are you a Sharpie? Cause you are fineee.
- 7 Is your name Wifi? Cause I'm feeling the connection.
- 6 Do you have a band-aid? Because I just scraped my knee falling for you.
- 5 You're trash, can I take you out?
- 4 On a scale from 1-10, you're a 9 because I'm the 1 you need.
- 3 Would you grab my arm so I could tell my friends that I've been touched by an angel?
- 2 I thought happiness started with an H, but mine starts with U.
- 1 Do you believe in love at first sight, or do I have to walk by you again?

>> Helen Chen and Andrew Jiang