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# THE saratogafalcon



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## ROBINSON RETIRING

SEARCH FOR NEW PRINCIPAL TO BEGIN SOON

**Bottom Left: Principal Paul Robinson** pictured at the annual Back to School Barbecue. **Middle: Robinson performs** in the Finding Nemo themed Homecoming teachers' quad day. **Top: Robinson speaks** at a Speak Up For Change assembly.

Courtesy of TALISMAN

BY AlexandraLi & AmyTang

On Jan. 29, principal Paul Robinson sent out an email titled "Special Message," announcing his plan to retire at the end of the 2018-2019 school year, after seven years as principal of Saratoga High and 40 years as an educator.

"It's just time," Robinson said. "It wasn't any one thing specifically, but it feels right. I've still got some living I want to do so this just gives me an opportunity to do it."

Looking into the future, Robinson,

62, said he doesn't have any clearly set plans, but he aims to partake in volunteer work or consulting work for schools and communities to continue his passion for helping young people grow and develop.

His wife, Robin, the principal of Springer Elementary in Los Altos, plans to continue her job for at least a couple more years, and Robinson sees himself spending a lot more time with family, especially in his role as grandfather. While he owns a home in San Diego,

>> **RETIREMENT** on pg. 5

## AP Tests increase to \$110, up from \$100 last year

BY EdwinChen & MichaelWong

The cost of annual AP tests administered by the school has increased to \$110 per test from \$100 last year due to an increased demand for proctors.

Although the number of students taking AP exams peaked four years ago and has decreased the last three years, the administration is expecting a spike in test takers this spring, assistant principal Brian Safine said. All told, the school could administer as many as 1,654 tests in May, he said.

In recent years, the base cost of the

exam has stayed constant, with \$94 going to College Board. The rest of the fee pays for the costs of administering the tests: the proctors who supervise the tests.

"Exam cost and the AP rules about proctoring ratios are the two most important factors in AP costs," Safine said. "Over the past few years, we have had three or four primary proctors plus volunteers and office staff (secretaries, administrators and counselors) who contribute to the exam administration."

Safine noted that prior to 2017, office staff did the majority of proctoring. However, the school found it more effective to

>> **AP TESTING** on pg. 7

## ICAC to perform comedy drama in annual show

BY MathewLuo

On chilly weekday evenings in the quad, lively music continues to play as late as 10 p.m., accompanied by the thud of moving feet. Groups of 20 to 30 dancers practice in formation day after day, night after night, in preparation for their Bombay in the Bay performances at the McAfee Center on Feb. 15 and Feb. 16.

Bombay in the Bay is hosted annually by the Indian Cultural Awareness Club (ICAC). The show will feature 10 acts, and be punctuated by short video skits. The entire performance will last roughly two hours, starting at 6 p.m. both days. Dinner will be provided for the Saturday show. Tickets for Friday cost \$12, while Saturday costs \$20.

Preparation for Bombay in the Bay ramped up in January and early February, with performers practicing over an hour and a half most days, ICAC officer Ronit Dey said. But planning for the event began in late October.

One of the first tasks the student-led ICAC executive committee did was to

choose a charity to donate to.

This year, they selected the Hi5 in India, which is dedicated to providing underprivileged kids with in-school basketball coaching with the goal of keeping them in school.

Because both this year's Bombay in the Bay movie theme and Hi5 are sports-related, ICAC officer Anika Seth said they picked "Bend it Like Beckham," a comedy-drama from 2003 about two young soccer players, as the overall theme.

"We chose 'Bend it Like Beckham' because it's the most famous Indian sports movie," Dey said. "It also has an American twist to make it more relatable."

With well over 200 participants annually, the ICAC leadership and BnB performers must plan and practice well in advance of their February deadline.

Any potential participants in Bombay in the Bay sign up for roles in the dances, which make up each act in the show. These dances include: Classical, Bhangra, Freshmen, Sophomore, Singing, Tamasha, Juniors, Seniors,

>> **ICAC** on pg. 5

### >> what'sinside

**OPINION**  
Optional finals

Teachers should offer optional finals to proficient students with sufficient grades. **pg. 9**

**SPORTS**  
Alumni wrestler

Olympic wrestler and alumna is now defeating opponents in the courtroom. **pg. 24**

news  
>> briefs**Dozens participate in prestigious math competition**

Approximately 70 students took Mathematics Association of America's (MAA) American Mathematics Competition (AMC) on Feb. 7 and 13 in the school library for a chance to qualify for the American Invitational Mathematics Exam (AIME).

In the AMC, students are given 75 minutes to solve 25 challenging problems. Each correctly answered question is worth six points, each unanswered question is worth 1.5 points and each wrongly answered question is worth no points. Those who score in the top 5 percent are invited to take the AIME, which will occur on March 13.

Two tests were administered on each day, and test-takers chose one depending their grade level: the underclassmen exclusive AMC 10 and AMC 12.

"It has very original problems compared to the problems given out in school because you need more creativity to solve the problems," said math club vice president Brandon Wang. "You need to connect ideas from across various areas of math."

Those who have a high enough combined AMC 10 or AMC 12 and AIME score will be eligible for the USA Junior Math Olympiad (USAJMO) or the USA Math Olympiad (USAMO). Those who score high in the USA(J)MO are invited to MOP.

SHS traditionally ranks high among all schools in the U.S. Last year, 34 students qualified for the AIME. Results for this year's two tests will come out in approximately three weeks.

— Howard Tang

**History Bowl's top team falls to Pi-oneers once again**

The History Bowl varsity A team placed second at this season's second regional tournament, hosted at Saratoga High on Feb. 10, finishing with a record of 7-1 after seeding first in the top eight teams. Once again, they lost their final round to the Pi-oneers, a homeschooled team and long-time rival.

Saratoga's varsity B team placed in the top eight with a record of 4-2, also losing their final round to the Pi-oneers. Varsity C and the JV teams did not make the playoffs, but Varsity C and JV D did qualify for nationals.

Senior Kiran Rachamalla and juniors Grant Chen and Jason Hong placed in the top 10 of History Bee after the preliminaries. Chen and Hong placed third and fourth respectively in History Bee finals.

This History Bowl tournament was larger than the previous regional, with newcomers such as Virgil Middle School and Davis Senior High School.

"Our JV teams were weaker at the beginning of the year since a lot last year's JV became juniors this year," Chen said. "But JV's doing well and definitely improving, while varsity is generally staying good."

Looking forward, Chen expects the team to improve with more practice before their last regional tournament in March and History Bowl nationals in late April. Hong and Rachamalla have compiled lists of history resources and provided coaching for their teammates during their weekly practices. For the most part, members improve simply by studying history with dedication.

"There's not too much strategy-wise besides buzzing for the correct answer," Chen said. "You can shift members around or get better at guessing names, but our wins will come from being better prepared than the other teams."

— Mathew Luo

## &gt;&gt; picturethis



FALCON // ASHLEY FENG

**Up and Away** >> Professional drone cinematographer Eddie Codel shares his experiences with flying and building drones with MAP students on Feb. 7 in the MAP annex.

## MAP Speaker Series: Drone expert shows potential of emerging field

BY Daniel Bessonov  
& Ashley Feng

On the evening of Feb. 7, students still loitering around campus could hear sporadic applause and a booming voice resonating through a microphone from the Media Arts Program Annex.

Inside the building, a crowd of students and parents watched as stunning drone shots of a lone surfer in the ocean played on the projector, the man behind the beautiful camera work beaming from behind a podium on stage.

Freelance videographer Eddie Codel told the audience he was inspired to venture into the world of drones by a friend's short film. The film incorporated advanced drone cinematography to portray a summer vacation experience.

Codel shared his journey with videography and photography with a crowded room of students and parents during the MAP Speaker Series that night. He focused specifically on drones: ways to use the technology, how to get into the hobby and his personal experiences with the devices.

"Drones are basically a tool for filmmakers — a flying camera in terms of cinematography," Codel

said. "In the same way you would use a ground based camera or a gimbal, think about how a drone would be useful for a shot."

For students looking to get into drone videography, Codel suggested a variety of ways to connect with other drone users for resources and advice.

"Connect with other groups of people who are doing it and try to meet up with them," Codel said. "Otherwise, look online, and find these groups where people are involved in recreational drone use and flying. Don't be afraid to ask questions. Most drone people are really friendly."

With the technology rapidly advancing, Codel sees a future for the industry with positive purposes such as search and rescue missions, combating deforestation and "empowering people who don't normally have a platform."

The event was organized by MAP Speaker Series and special events co-heads junior Krithi Sankar and senior Madeline Stuart.

"The best thing about this event was that we were really displaying that you can be innovative through so many different forms," Stuart said. "Whether it's through film, drones, or any kind of job,

creativity and innovation is the key to success and using those abilities to go about life with a really positive attitude will get you places."

The message struck home with students in the audience. Juniors Meghna Gupta and Rauna Zahabi left with a positive impression.

"I've been to a couple Speaker Series from this year and last year, but I liked that this one was related to the film industry and focused on how students can go into a career" Gupta said. "I thought that hearing all of this from someone who's done it was helpful."

Zahabi also found the talk valuable, saying it piqued her interest in drone technology.

"I think Eddie did a really a good job of talking about his career path," Zahabi said. "I know for me, I was never really interested in drones, but now after this talk, it looks like a lot of fun and really something I can utilize."

The MAP leadership team is already planning the next speaker series on April 18, which will consist of a speaker panel of four SHS MAP alumni currently working in the acting and film industries who will share advice and their experiences working in their respective fields. ♦

## Benefit show prepares for March showcase

BY Daniel Bessonov

Students sporting Louis Vuitton, khakis and everything in between will be walking down this year's Benefit Fashion Show runway on March 2 at 7 p.m. in the Large Gym.

This year, the organizers have opted to donate to the "Color a Classroom With Love" foundation — a charity that helps victims of October's Paradise Fire.

"We originally chose the Alzheimer's Foundation, but after (activities director Matt) Torrens told us of a teacher in Paradise who was holding classes in a warehouse, and who had relations to SHS, we definitely felt like the Paradise cause was the right choice to make," head senior commissioner Ines Picard said. "We wanted to be an additional source of support for them."

The benefit commission, in-

cluding Picard, consists of seniors Isabelle Rieken, Michelle Vu, Karen Chow, Janelle Jin, and junior Jeffrey Xu. Benefit is advised by Spanish teacher Stephany Marks.

Nearly 170 models have signed up across 11 themes, including Fun in the Sun, California Winter, Outdoors, Rock n Roll, Cultural, Country Club, BoHo, Bromance, First Date, Girls' Night Out, Prom and design your own.

Design your own is a theme that's only one year old, and has grown from three to nine people," Picard said. "I'm really excited to see what kind of unique designs they bring out."

Prior to the show, there will also be silent auction. According to Picard, the hardest part of running the Fashion Show is keeping momentum after a series of negative responses.

"As a commission, we're contacting maybe 10 stores a day, and

a lot of them are saying no due to their large corporation status," Picard said. "For those that do respond, a lot of them end up dropping out, or simply respond once and then forget about us."

Still, with persistence and hard work, the Benefit commission believes the event will succeed.

"I'm really looking forward to seeing it all come together," Picard said. "Right now, it's just a lot of spreadsheets and emails, but once the stage is set up, the lights are on, and the models start walking — we'll all finally feel accomplished."

General admission tickets cost \$25, while students and staff will pay \$15. VIP seating is priced at \$45.

Those who purchase VIP tickets will have exclusive front row seating, as well as several treats and offers. Tickets can be purchased on the school's online store or from the Activities Office. ♦

## &gt;&gt; falcononline

**Top Story**

Principal Paul Robinson announces he will retire in June. Search for his successor begins soon.

**Top Photo**

Junior Connor Oaklander speaks about his experiences at SUFC.



To use: cover the QR codes except for the one you would like to scan, then use a QR scanning app (i.e., Snapchat by long press).

# FIRST Robotics Challenge build season in full swing

BY Rohan Kumar

The build season of the FIRST Robotics Challenge (FRC), which kicked off on Jan. 5, will come to a close on Feb. 19.

Ever since the early-January release, team members have been working to finish building their robot, Nigiri. Since the team's name is MSET Fish, the name of the robot was chosen to be a type of sushi made from raw fish over vinegared rice.

This year's challenge involves creating a robot to place panels and store balls in slots of varying heights. Points can also be scored by climbing onto platforms of varying heights.

Once the build season is over, the team will no longer be allowed to access their competition robot. As such, the team has simultaneously been building a duplicate robot to use for code testing after the build season is complete. The remaining time before their first regional competition at San Francisco, which will take place from March 14-17, will be spent programming the robot to complete various tasks.

In the ensuing four weeks before the actual competition, all programming, tuning and testing of robot code on the duplicate robot will have to be completed. Important tasks for the team include implementing an autonomous routine, adding more controls for the robot drivers, and calibrating important sensors.

Although the tasks that the team must design their robot to complete are relatively simple compared to previous years, according to club president senior Bassil Shama, the platform climbing poses a challenging obstacle. The climb itself appears difficult based on current prototyping efforts but at the same time yields massive point benefits.

"There's always a climb aspect, but this time it is hard and important; oftentimes it's only one of the two," Shama said. "I think it'll definitely be the distinguishing factor between good teams."

In order to stand a better chance at mastering the tasks of this year's game, the robotics team has implemented various changes.

Specifically, a larger emphasis has been put on being involved during the season, with attendance being taken at every meeting to determine eligibility for going to tournaments. Getting more team members involved in the robot design ultimately allows for a more effective club environment.

"We want to make sure people who come and represent our club and school at competition are knowledgeable about our robot," Shama said.

Another change has been to prototype various designs for different robot components at once. Groups of three or four team members were assigned specific designs to prototype and test, allowing the team to experiment with various options and choose



FALCON // EDWIN CHEN

The Robotics team works to build a robot called Nigiri before their Feb. 19 deadline closes.

the most effective one.

Documentation has also become increasingly important, with notes being taken on every aspect of the design process, from prototyping to vision (detecting targets with a camera).

Many seniors this year had experience in lead positions in previous years: Shama, for example, was the software lead last year. In

2016, the robotics team was in a similar situation when many experienced seniors and ultimately created a robot that performed extremely well at competitions, allowing the team to place higher than in other years.

"[The seniors] get to apply all that stuff we learned last year," Shama said, "so I feel like our team is definitely really strong this year." ♦

# Science teachers restrict number of summer rec letters

BY Neeti Badve & Kaitlyn Tsai

With summer fast approaching, dozens of students are scrambling to submit summer program applications. In the meantime, many teachers, especially STEM teachers, are drowning in a massive influx of recommendation letter requests and some say they can't handle it anymore.

The frenzy to attend popular programs such as COSMOS appears to be a rising trend. Just last year, the science department alone wrote letters for approximately 85 students, according to physics teacher Kirk Davis. These 85 students applied for an average of three programs per student, and seven asked for two recommendation letters, adding to a total of 92 letters.

In the end, he said 53 students did not attend any programs. Consequently, many science teachers have established policies for summer recommendation letters. Chemistry teacher Kathryn Nakamatsu restricts the number of letters for each program to 10 students, while Davis is only writing letters for internships or jobs.

"Of the 85, two-thirds, there's no feedback; there's nothing," Davis said. "They may not even be going! So what's the point of doing it?"

On its website, COSMOS announced that

it would not be requiring recommendation letters for this application season due to the "evolving labor dispute in a number of California school districts"; however, the burden of writing letters for many other programs, like the Research Science Institute (RSI), the Stanford Institutes of Medicine Summer Research Program (SIMR) and pre-medical programs at colleges like the University of Irvine, remains.

"Being swamped with rec letters feels overwhelming, especially when I've just finished college letters," Nakamatsu said. "It feels like I end up writing letters all year. I don't think students realize how bad it is."

Typically, recommendation letters for STEM programs require teachers to fill out questionnaires regarding a student's ability in STEM-related topics. Additionally, most expect the teacher to provide more insight as to what kind of person the student is.

One recommendation letter can take significant time to draft and finalize, since they often require teachers to detail specific

interactions with the student and anecdotes indicative to the student's character. As a result, members of the science department require students who request letters to fill out an online questionnaire to assist with this process. Questions range from "Why do you want to participate in this particular program?" to "Give at least one lab/project/discussion question that you think really made you stand out from the rest of the students in your class."

From the students' perspective, these recommendation letter restrictions could force them to rework summer plans, which may have already been set for months.

Sophomore Ritika Garg faced this dilemma after finding out she would not be able to get a recommendation letter.

"Restricting letters makes sense in the teachers' perspective because they have to do a bunch of different things and write letters," Garg said. "But in terms of my perspective, I thought it was really unfair because I had to completely change everything, and on top of that, all the other parts of writing summer apps can be really stressful."

To come to a compromise between

teachers and students, Garg suggested that if a teacher does reject a student, they provide or guide the student to an alternative and help them figure out their options. Sophomore Adithya Nair has another solution altogether: getting letters of recommendation from people who are not science teachers at all.

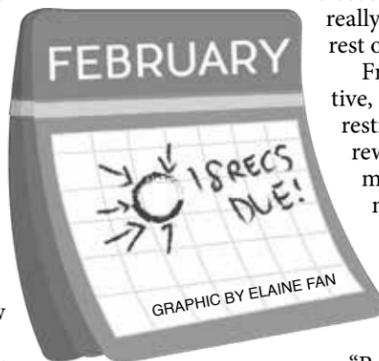
Through Global Health club, Nair and other members go on international trips to Ecuador or China through a program called CFHI, and the program can help alleviate the recommendation letter workload for both students and teachers.

"Through programs like these, you can get letters from doctors at Stanford or international coordinators," Nair said.

However, instead of only doing summer programs, both Davis and Nakamatsu urge students to consider experiences such as working at a job.

They encourage students to go out and do something for the experience, not just for the sake of putting a prestigious name on their college applications.

"I think kids would get so much more experience if they actually went out and worked for a summer," Davis said. "You'd have some spending money, you'd learn what happens to taxes, and you could write about your experience working and how much you learned about people." ♦



# Students revive Artificial Intelligence club with new project

BY Howard Tang

The Artificial Intelligence (AI) club was founded three years ago by three alumni: Keshav Narayan and Mayank Pandey, both from the Class of 2017, and Aayush Gupta, from the Class of 2016.

Their goal was to educate members on various topics such as reinforcement learning for games, one of many areas of specialty in the emerging field.

"We thought that Computer Science club was too restricted to algorithms and more theoretical concepts," Pandey said, "so it made sense for there to exist something that did this stuff."

Since its founding, the club's focus has shifted from a solely lecture-based setting to

a more interactive one. Several weeks ago, the officers of the club, president Arian Raje and vice president Christina Xiao, led members in a project involving heart disease. The project tried to predict the likelihood of a patient developing cardiac illnesses based on having certain characteristics.

This shift in methodology has led to a revived interest in the club. In its early years, the club consisted of approximately 10 members, whereas now, around 15 people regularly show up in computer science teacher Thomas Wang's room for meetings at lunch on Fridays.

Both officers of the club became interested in artificial intelligence after attending summer programs. Xiao, a junior, attended the MIT Beaver Works Summer Institute, a program con-

cerning new technologies in engineering fields, where she took a course on artificial intelligence and cognitive learning. Raje, a senior, participated in bioinformatics research at UC Irvine and is now working in the Kundaje Lab of Stanford Medical School. He works on models to predict the interactions between proteins and the substructures that are likely to be involved.

The two want to spread knowledge about AI because it's such a hot area. According to Raje, almost every major technology company is employing it to some degree. Currently, Raje plans on majoring in computer science in college, while still working on AI-related projects.

Although the club is still relatively new,

its future is uncertain. They have begun hopping from project to project that they feel is interesting, such as facial recognition or bioinformatics.

"We might start introducing more difficult projects, maybe projects that can be used in machine learning competitions right now," Raje said.

The officers hope that other members of their club will take inspiration from the projects they are introduced to and learn to apply these skills to projects of their own.

"I really hope the club gains traction, though I am not really sure what to expect," Raje said. "But I definitely think we're more proactive in trying to structure projects than in the past, so hopefully that will help us." ♦



Xiao



Raje

# Beyond books, local library unifies community

BY Anna Novoselov  
& Emilie Zhou

The Saratoga Library has served as a focal point for the community since the first version of it was established in 1914.

It is a place where people of all ages and backgrounds come together to study, collaborate and immerse themselves in knowledge.

However, the library also hosts a variety of events, including club meetings, presentations and discussion sessions, to facilitate strong relationships among community members and help residents explore their passions, engage in learning and connect with their others.

For example, the library offers a number of events designed to help teens develop a wide array of skills and strong ties with their community.

Library board members present ideas to the Teen Advisory Board, who then work with the staff to organize events to benefit Saratoga teens.

“The staff develops and presents programs that provide information, learning, and entertainment,” teen librarian Birgit Spring said. “For example, programming is an integral component of library service that expands the library’s role as a community resource.”

Some of the teen events include the Teen Coffeehouse, free ACT/SAT practice tests and the CoderDojo club.

The Teen Coffeehouse is a bi-yearly event organized by the library and Teen Advisory Board and allows students to showcase their talents, whether it be singing, dancing, playing an instrument, performing comedic pieces, reading poetry or presenting artwork. It is held after school on a Friday and approximately 50 teens attend in total.

“Teens can show their talents in a friend-

ly atmosphere among their peers while enjoying good food,” Spring said. “This event helps to showcase the artistic talents of Saratoga teens and gives teens an opportunity to perform.”

Nabeha Barkatullah, the co-president of the Teen Advisory Board, said the Teen Coffeehouse allows students to express themselves and exhibit talents that they wouldn’t usually get to share.

“It’s a fun way that students can come together, watch performances, relax, and socialize,” she said.

On the academic side, the CoderDojo Club is a monthly event dedicated to helping teens improve their coding skills with the guidance of adult mentors. The library partners with CoderDojo Silicon Valley to host a collaboration environment where teens can work on a personal project or collaborate with others to learn a new coding language.

An ACT/SAT practice test is organized by the test prep company Flex College Prep, which administers a full-length exam in the library community room two to three times per year. Afterward, a results seminar is also held for students to review their individual results and receive test-taking strategies. About 70 students attend each time.

**The money raised totals about \$140,000 to 150,000 per year and contributes to help fund the library.**

Aside from these teen-oriented events, the library also hosts the occasional talks with authors, cultural events such as Chi-



COURTESY OF LIBRARYTHING.COM

The Saratoga Library hosts a variety of events, such as discussion sessions and coding events.

nese brush painting and a quarterly paperback book sale.

Four times a year, the Friends of the Saratoga Library — a volunteer organization that raises money for the library — hosts a paperback book sale in the Community Room.

The books come in through a variety of ways, such as through donation slots in the library next to the book return area and through the Book-Go-Round bookstore in downtown Saratoga.

The Book-Go-Round served as one of Saratoga’s original libraries and was only taken over by the Friends of the Saratoga Library when the present library was built in 1978.

“People donate books sometimes in bulk. They just bring in boxes,” said Liz Guy, the vice president of the Friends of the Saratoga Library Board. “Our goal is to recycle the books and make sure they find a home again.”

Bal said that the sale helps people give books to people who would want them instead of throwing them away while at the same time helping the library.

Each sale lasts two days and raises approximately \$3,000 throughout the year. As part of the Santa Clara County Library District, the library is primarily funded by property taxes paid by residents living in the nine cities the County Library District serves, but the money raised through memberships, donations and retail sales — which includes the paperback sales, the Book-Go-Round and the library cafe — totals about \$140,000 to 150,000 per year and also contributes to help fund the library in buying bestsellers, programs and special projects.

“I love the library,” Guy said. “When I first moved to Saratoga, it was one of the first places that I found a community with my young children. I think it’s just a really important institution in a community and it’s a great group.” ♦

## English teachers test out online grammar system

BY Aaria Thomas

Students sit in class, pulling out thick, red and yellow grammar books and flipping through the pages. Pencils scratch against the paper as students underline the text and write answers in the book. Pages turn, the red titles and borders contrasting the blocks of black text.

For years, freshmen and sophomores at the school have used the Glencoe Language Arts Grammar and Language Workbook. The publishing company is now discontinuing the book, and the English department has started looking for an alternative grammar program. As a result of the discontinuation, the department decided to move to an online model for teaching grammar. Currently some teachers are testing a site called NoRedInk.

The hope is that it would be easier and better for students as well as cheaper for the school. According to English 10 teacher Ken Nguyen, moving grammar to an online platform means the lessons will be kept more up to date, and students will not have to carry the workbooks around.

“In terms of funding for that program, we as a district or as a school, are looking to move away from [the workbooks], since it can be quite expensive,” Nguyen said. “We want to move into something that’s a little more collapsible, and a little more flexible.”

Since grammar is only taught to underclassmen using the workbooks, some freshman and sophomore classes are currently testing the new program. The English teachers participating in NoRedInk’s testing include Meg Battey, Suzanne Herzman, Nguyen and Susanna Ryan.

According to Ryan, NoRedInk person-

alizes the lessons for students based on what they are interested in. Students can choose a story like “Harry Potter” and characters will show up in the example sentences. There are also a variety of activities to help students to learn grammar.

“It’s a way to get students potentially more interested, but it doesn’t work for everyone,” Ryan said. “Some students find the new format distracting while others appreciate it.”

Despite the distractions, many students find that the website helps them improve their grammar skills.

“It’s nice to have something where it tells you what mistake you’ve made immediately,” freshman Nikhil Kapasi said.

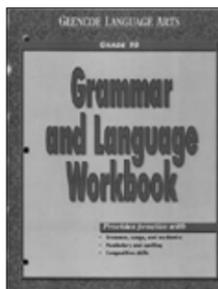
Testing for this new grammar website took place throughout first semester and will continue through second semester as well. The English department wants to ensure that the grammar platform is a good fit for the school, and that it covers all the topics in depth that students need to know.

At this point into the trial, teachers still don’t have all the information about how the site works, and do not want to make any conclusive judgments about it.

“I’m hesitant to offer an opinion, because I don’t have all the information,” Nguyen said. “We are in the data collection stage at this point, so I don’t have anything to offer in the way of observations until I’m done collecting the information.”

The English department will continue to explore and evaluate the website, in hopes of landing on an optimal grammar program.

“I think that the idea of an online program is very smart,” Ryan said. “I think if we have the right one it will be user-friendly and students would get more out of it.” ♦



Courtesy of GLENCOE

## Winter Guard kicks off season with new shows

BY Sofia Jones  
& Connie Liang

The doors to the music building open to the scene of 16 students practicing on a large black practice floor spread across the entire band floor. A somber poem is recited with piano music as the varsity team spins flags and tosses rifles, all while keeping up with the tempo. This is a sure sign that a new Winter Guard season is underway.

In the fall, Color Guard members rehearsed and performed the marching band show “A Dream Within.”

Now, only a few months later, they are starting rehearsals for Winter Guard, which is indoors and solely focuses on the choreography of the Color Guard members.

Varsity and JV teams have separate themes: JV’s show is entitled “Walking on Sunshine,” and varsity’s show is entitled “I Heard a Fly Buzz.”

The varsity team’s show revolves around rediscovering the life and works of poet Emily Dickinson — who gradually became a social recluse later in her life, wishing for her pieces to stay hidden after her death. Specifically, the show will be based on “I heard a Fly buzz—when I died,” one of Dickinson’s best known poems.

Senior Guard member Hillary Zhou was initially surprised by the theme, which was chosen by Guard staff Jazz Legaspi, Gustavo Morales and Brittany Bennett.

“When I first heard this theme, I was like ‘We’re doing a poem. I’ve done this in English. Do I need to do it again?’ But I think it’s taking a different approach,” Zhou said.

Unlike previous years, Zhou describes the theme as “seeking someone else out” whereas previous shows were more concrete, focusing on love, reaching goals and

other clear-to-follow topics.

This year’s show leaves more to the imagination of those who watch because it represents the ambiguity in Dickinson’s own life.

To convey the more serious tone, the main colors of the show are black and blue. Props include a plexi-glass door with a wooden frame, a chair and a desk.

On the other hand, the JV theme is more lighthearted, centering around the song, “Walking on Sunshine” by Katrina & The Waves. The uniforms will be yellow and navy, and the show will reuse equipment from the fall marching band show.

Sophomore Grace Wang said in order to create a cohesive group performance, the JV team must learn how to focus during practice. She also believes the JV team will have to step it up this season.

“This year’s JV is being challenged more,” Wang said. “I remember last year we had a lot more new people. We got really easy flag choreography, but this year, the instructor is trying to host longer practices and more complex routines.”

Their first competitive show was on Jan. 26 at James Logan High School in Union City. The varsity team placed second out of four teams while JV placed second out of 15 teams.

Their second show was on Feb. 9 at Independence High School in San Jose. The varsity team again placed second, but won in the equipment and movement category.

Members are optimistic about the season, which will lead up to another trip in March to the Winter Guard International World Championship in Dayton, Ohio, where they also went last year.

Senior Alex Ruemmler said, “It’s bitter-sweet knowing that this is my last season, but we have a great team this year and we’re all really close, so I can’t wait for whatever will happen throughout the season.” ♦

# Speech and debate to compete in four major tournaments

BY Edwin Chen & Siva Sambasivam

Despite a coaching change early in the year, the speech and debate team is entering the qualifying season on an unprecedented run of success, and will look to have its most successful season in recent years, with a string of good performances in the upcoming months.

The four major national tournaments that will be held during May and June all have their qualifiers in the next month.

The team had success at all four tournaments, with alumni Ayush Aggarwal and Arun Ramakrishna making octafinals at both the TOC and the State Championship, while current senior Arian Raje made finals at the NSDA National Tournament.

At the NCFL tournament in Sacramento on Jan 26-27, the debate team qualified one team to the NCFL Grand National Tournament, while the speech team qualified two students. The Grand

National Tournament will be held in Milwaukee on the weekend of May 25.

Junior Adhit Sankaran and junior Ronak Pai went 4-0 and qualified in Public Forum debate. Meanwhile, junior Siva Sambasivam and junior Ashwin Ramakrishna got first alternate to the tournament.

Meanwhile in speech, junior Anishi Patel placed second in Original Oratory and qualified to grand nationals, while freshman Harshini Velchamy placed fourth and qualified.

Junior Connie Liang placed fifth and became first alternate for OO.

Despite being the smallest school at the tournament, the team's presence didn't fail to be known.

The team also had top two seeds for the elimination rounds in debate, with Sankaran and Pai getting first seed after going 4-0, and Sambasivam and Ramakrishna getting the second seed based on

speaker points.

Sambasivam took the first overall speaker award with Ramakrishna following behind at third. Sophomore Neil Shah and Sankaran also placed highly, getting fourth and fifth speaker respectively.

At the UNLV tournament, Saratoga teams also prevailed in their respective events.

Sankaran and Pai received TOC Gold bids, while sophomore Neil Shah and freshman Sajiv Shah received TOC silver bids.

Junior Ujjwal Krishnamurti broke to octofinals in LD, while senior David Koh broke to double-octos.

The team attributes this to improvement throughout the course of the season, especially with the younger teams getting more experienced during the second half of the season.

"Being able to attend so many tournaments has done wonders for us," said junior Vice President Adhit Sankaran. "We've improved



Courtesy of SHS Speech and Debate Booster Club Facebook Group

The team competes at the NCFL qualifiers in Sacramento on Jan. 26-27 and many members qualify for the NCFL Grand National Tournament.

so much. In this semester alone, our team has received 1 gold bid and 3 silvers."

The debate team believes that this improvement over the course of the year will materialize into success at the major national tournaments coming up.

"This has been one of the best seasons in recent memory. We are in a better position than we were last year, in terms of teams qualifying for National Tournaments, and we still have a couple tournaments to go," said junior Public Forum captain Ronak Pai. ♦

## ICAC

continued from pg. 1

the All Males' Dance (AMD) and All Girls' Dance (AGD).

To perform in Bhangra, Tamsa, Singing, Classical, AMD or AGD requires an audition or prior experience, but grade-level dances are open to all participants.

After the auditions, the executive committee writes the script, while student volunteers choreograph the dances, choose music and order costumes.

The background music for each dance is not limited to the movie's soundtrack and is chosen from a mix of American and Indian songs.

For example, the Bhangra group



Courtesy of TALISMAN

Class of 2018 alumna Ishana Narayan dances in the classical act during the 2018 Bombay in the Bay performance. ICAC's last showcase raised over \$10,000 for the ABC project by the Tamil Nadu Foundation.

mixed "All the Way" and a couple other songs for its soundtrack.

"It'd be hard to get the soundtrack only from the movie,

because some movies don't have such great soundtracks," Dey said. "Bhangra is my favorite dance style — it's really energy focused. You'll feel the energy transfer from stage to audience."

Because performance preparation for Bombay in the Bay this year began early, performers are feeling more confident, Dey said. In particular, performers for AGD began practicing in early November, compared to the more common practice of starting practice late winter.

"We started practicing for all our most important dances early this year, like AGD and AMD and Bhangra," Seth said. "Even with the weather, we've tried to get wherever is available to us at the time. I think these dances will all

be very impressive this year."

Due to complications from winter weather, Bombay in the Bay performers sometimes struggled to practice and used any indoor spaces such as the Large Gym or students' houses. The lack of adult supervision and the size of indoor spaces have also hindered this practice.

With help from parents and their adviser, teacher Hana Chen, they are setting up the McAfee for the shows.

"Preparation for the show takes up almost half the school year," Dey said. "Nearing performance day is the time of the year when I'm most excited. At the performance, you'll see the togetherness of the crowd and performers and just have a blast." ♦

## RETIREMENT

continued from pg. 1

where he spent most of his career, he plans to live in the local area for the foreseeable future.

"This school has become my home in many ways, and I enjoy it too much and it's a big part of my life," Robinson said. "I still plan to pop in whenever they need help with anything and come to events and concerts and plays and games because it'd be hard to cut that off and go cold turkey."

Throughout his years in education, Robinson says that he's gained a better perspective and understanding of the younger generation. Rather than seeing teenagers as rebellious spirits who are overly attached to their cell phones, he sees "tremendous heart and potential." He believes that today's youth are capable of fixing many problems and admires their passion for serving the community.

"What I've always been encouraged by is the human spirit and the ability to come together and make really good things happen," Robinson said. "I hope I've left behind the idea that my generation will hopefully continue to support your dreams and make sure that those dreams happen."

According to junior George Bian, Robinson has done just that for the school, carrying "positive vibes [that can] brighten any student's day. As a leader, he empowers and inspires students to strive for their best."

Reminiscing on Robinson's appearances at school events such as football games or Movember, even after just having had back surgery two years ago, Bian said that Robinson has shown him what true leadership means, and that he'd one day like to be a

leader in the mold of the principal.

Kerry Mohnike, a longtime English teacher at the school, became an assistant principal in 2012 in the same year Robinson came on board at the school. She said that his qualities of kindness and patience along with his ability to lead by example have contributed to his talent for dealing with complicated situations.

"When emotions get high, you can always rely on him to keep balance and go back to the core belief that people are good," Mohnike said. "Knowing that all people have values and that all people are worthy of goodness helps us know that even if someone is misbehaving, it's probably coming from some other place, so we try help people through that kind of thing."

Specifically, Mohnike recalls Robinson's first year, when the school endured the suicide of a sophomore girl named Audrie Pott and related national news coverage about the events that contributed to her death.

During this challenging time, Mohnike said that Robinson was an "experienced, guiding hand" who helped keep the school on track.

### Supporting the school

Mohnike is grateful for the support and teaching she received from Robinson as a role model when he hired her in June of 2012 to move from teaching to administration for the 2012-2013 school year.

"For him, it's not just a job, and you can appreciate the amount of time and energy and angst that goes into that kind of work," Mohnike said.

Physics teacher Kirk Davis praised Robinson for encouraging teachers to try new things in the classroom by providing necessary resources or money, and also for acting

as a kind of buffer between teachers and occasionally disgruntled parents.

"He's defended teachers really well against parents, and he's been a good advocate for teachers in general," Davis said. "He is very reasonable and hears both sides of the argument."

In addition, Robinson frequently volunteers to join field trips as a chaperone.

Chemistry and AP Biology teacher Cheryl Lenz recalls his support in making a field trip to Catalina happen. He was the sole male chaperone, and Lenz believes that his involvement allowed the trip to become an annual event. Robinson has always been active in the community, and Mohnike said that the community and students respect his involvement and his passion for fostering young people into exceptional adults.

"He wants to have a dance even if only 50 kids show up because he thinks those 50 kids need a place to be, and I think that's an important aspect of who he is and what I've learned about him," Mohnike said.

English 11 teacher Natasha Ritchie said Robinson is the most empathetic principal she has ever worked with, offering unwavering support through staff members' personal struggles.

"I've always appreciated how he's a human being and how he's a person aside from all his administrative duties," Ritchie said. "I think one of his absolute best qualities is that he legitimately cares."

Although his retirement begins in June, Robinson said that he and the administration still have a lot to accomplish in the upcoming weeks and hope to set things in place by finishing strong. His main focus is finishing the construction of a student center in the 800 wing and finding ways to make it impactful for students.

### Past accomplishments

During his time as principal, Robinson

has worked with architects and construction workers, spending about once a week in construction meetings since 2015 to complete multiple major construction projects, such as the making of the sports plaza entrance that leads into Benny Pierce Field, reroofing numerous fields, redoing the school's Wi-Fi, reroofing some areas and completing the multimillion-dollar, state-of-the-art music building that was the centerpiece of the Measure E bond.

He also hopes to complete some curriculum changes, introducing classes like AP Art History and bringing back creative writing to accommodate changing student interest in electives. During his time here, Robinson has focused heavily on helping students succeed both academically and personally, implementing numerous support systems for students such as CASSY, the tutoring center, the SEL program, and soon, the new student center.

"We've still got some things we're hoping to work on so we're not shutting down. We're not stopping. We're still moving," Robinson said. Robinson assumes the process to select the next principal will be similar to his own experience.

The district board will send out inquires across the nation to garner interest and bring in top candidates to be interviewed. Robinson also recalls how members of the school community visited him in San Diego where he was working as a principal and talked with people there to get a better idea of who he was.

Robinson is excited to see what the next principal can offer to the school.

"I think I've gone about as far as I can, and now somebody with a new energy and a different view of things can come in and build on that and go the next step further," Robinson said. "The person that takes this position next is really going to be able to do some incredible things with this school." ♦

# New grading scale not universally embraced

BY Anishi Patel  
& Kaitlyn Tsai

When the Class of 2019 graduates this spring, the pluses and minuses grading system will graduate along with it.

Beginning with the Class of 2020, the school implemented a grading system in which pluses and minuses do not factor into students' GPAs, but may appear on transcripts at individual teachers' discretion.

This means that teachers may choose to report all grades having redacted pluses and minuses, or they may choose to include pluses and minuses; however, regardless of the choice they make, the school will continue to calculate GPAs solely based on a scale with no pluses or minuses.

Either way, GPA is calculated without factoring pluses and minuses, even if they show up on students' transcripts. Per this system, it is possible that classes in which students receive plus grades do not appear with pluses on transcripts, whereas classes in which students received minus grades may appear with minuses. As a result, many

students remain confused and conflicted about the new grading scale.

According to assistant principal Brian Safine, the school eliminated pluses and minuses because students are more likely to score a minus grade than a plus grade, which harms their GPAs. By disregarding pluses and minuses, overall student GPAs increase.

"Even our sister school Los Gatos doesn't factor pluses and minuses into GPA, so it's an effort to try to be on a more similar grading scale," guidance counselor Monique Young said. "At the time we changed the grading scale three years ago, we were trying to encourage students to make good choices, be more balanced and not so worried about their grades."

Although some teachers enter pluses and minuses into the Canvas grading program, all A's are worth four points and all B's are worth three points, in terms of GPA calculation. (Honors and AP classes received an additional grade-point boost.)

Junior Sanmati Nakil said she supports the new system. "At first I was sad that my

B+ in Chemistry honors was shown as a B, but then I realized that's way better than getting a B- in something," Nakil said. "The new grading scale is a really nice safety — in Chem last year I could afford to focus on other finals because I only needed to aim for a 90."

**"It harms students whose grades are high A's who are putting in the work and not getting the recognition for it."**

SOPHOMORE Aindri Patra

Based on this new system, the criteria for valedictorian and salutatorian have changed.

For the Class of 2020 onward, it will be possible that there will be multiple valedictorians, as it is now more likely that students earned equally high grades in their

AP and Honors classes, according to Safine.

Although criteria in this regard have loosened, some students fear they will not receive the credit they deserve when colleges look at their grades.

And although, according to Young, most colleges do not take pluses and minuses into account, some students prefer the previous system.

"It harms students whose grades are high A's who are putting in the work and not getting the recognition for it," sophomore Aindri Patra said. "It's also bad for students who have borderline grades because if they don't do as well on the final, their grades can drop a whole letter."

Although the school implemented the new grading scale in part to urge students to stress less about their grades, Patra brings up a possible downside to the system: the grading system could discourage some students from working as hard.

"If there's no distinction between a plus and a minus, people don't really have the motivation to work for those top grades," she said. ♦

# School improvement: WASC accreditation process begins

BY Jun Lee  
& Nitya Marimuthu

With the school's accreditation from the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) ending in March of next year, the process for re-accreditation has already begun.

The accreditation, which is included on students' transcripts, essentially verifies that the school is providing an adequate education to students and provides a road map for the school's improvement.

In order for the school to receive a full accreditation, students, teachers and community members must set educational and academic goals every few years and then implement systems that help to achieve them. If a school fully succeeds, the accreditation lasts for a six-year term.

"Essentially, the school takes stock of the profile of our entire student body and community," said English teacher Amy Keys, who is coordinating the school's WASC effort. "Who goes to our school? What are their needs? What do they want? What are they doing in the school and what are they doing after they leave the school?"

After taking this profile, teachers, students, parents, administrators and other staff members meet in teams and talk about how they can improve the school.

Juniors Risa Carter and Emma Hsu are

leading the student side of these teams. Carter thinks they were chosen due to the diverse perspectives they provide, being part of school activities such as orchestra and the Media Arts Program.

Carter and Hsu are helping lead two groups, one focused on justice and the other on education. Carter said that she expects the groups to talk about their experiences and make improvements based on those.

"We are making a blueprint for the school to become a better place in the future," Carter said.

**"We are making a blueprint for the school to become a better place."**



JUNIOR Risa Carter

There are two types of teams for participants: home teams and focus groups. The home teams are divided by department, with teachers from each subject meeting together.

For example, the guidance department meets as a home team, and the English department as another.

The home groups look at student data,

and analyze learning based on those statistics.

Focus groups consist of a mix of many departments, as well as students and parents. There are five different focus groups, with each group examining topics from assessments to support for students' academic and personal growth.

During the spring semester, focus groups will meet five times. During the meetings, the groups will examine the goals from the previous accreditation, and evaluate whether or not they have been achieved.

According to Keys, the focus groups have many questions they ask in order to improve their plan for years to come.

"How did we set out to accomplish our goals as a school community?" Keys said. "What is our focus and what did we do, and are we succeeding? Should we keep trying to pursue the same goals? Have the needs of the school changed? And what can we do as a school to further meet student needs?"

In the fall, after evaluating previously achieved progress, the school will move towards writing the school's progress report as well as conducting a "self-study." In the spring of 2020 the school will host visitors from WASC coming in to evaluate.

The school has routinely gotten a full accreditation in the past. Because the school is so strong academically it focuses more on topics such as reducing student stress and

creating stronger bonds among all students. However, in the past, changes have included building a new science wing and recently the addition of a student center.

Keys said that the process might be interesting to students because it helps them to understand why the school introduces programs such as CASSY, Speak Up for Change week and Breaking Down the Walls week.

"The accreditation is a process that's built into a complicated system of responding to the needs of the people who are in our community and it's an exciting opportunity for teachers and other staff, students, and parents to come together and continue to make our school better every year," Keys said. ♦

>>> bigidea

WASC

**What is accreditation?**

*It certifies that a school is meeting its students' needs and meeting its goals.*

**When will WASC occur?**

*Between now and the spring of 2020.*

**Who will participate?**

*All staff members as well as some students and parents.*

# Mr. Saratoga fundraiser to take place in late February

BY Jun Lee  
& Nitya Marimuthu

Six boys who will try to be the next Mr. Saratoga during a pageant held in the McAfee Center on Feb. 27 are busy trying to figure out what they will do in the talent portion of the show.

One of them, senior Isaiah Vivero, joked: "It was either I do a mini hoop dunk contest as a joined talent with [senior Roshan Verma] or an ASMR on stage, so it's one of those." Besides Vivero and Verma, the other contestants are seniors David Berkowitz-Sklar, Roshan Verma, Justin Chao, junior George Bian and sophomore Darwin Chow.

Because previously recruited judges are facing scheduling conflicts, the leadership class is still looking to find replacements for the event.

The contestants must pass four rounds of competition to gain the title of Mr. Saratoga — an introduction round, talent round, bathing suit round and question round. During the question round, random questions will be picked out of a box for contestants to answer.

In previous years, contestants were judged by audience members, who received tickets that they could put in jars to decide the winner.

In previous years, the competition struggled due to a lack of publicity. To combat this problem, the senior class officers are creating a promotional video featuring the contestants as well as posts on Facebook and Instagram.

"Hopefully that will kind of draw some more attention to the event," senior class vice president Hanlin Sun said.

Sun also said that they hope to get around a hundred or so people to watch the contest.

Vivero said that his enrollment in the contest started out as a joke between him and one of the organizers, senior Jennah El-Ashmawi, when they were discussing how to get more people to participate.

"We started making jokes about different acts that I could do for the talent part, and then I was like, 'That could be funny and kind of fun,' and so we just decided to sign me up and do it," Vivero said.

Vivero said that he is anticipating the experience of being on a stage alone and

hopes to gain some confidence from the contest.

"I'm just kind of going, doing my thing and seeing how that turns out," Vivero said.

Vivero hopes to gain some confidence

from the contest. Vivero also aims to gain support by being enthusiastic about the event and spreading that feeling to others.

"I'm just going, doing my thing and seeing how that turns out," Vivero said. ♦

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**SJART ACADEMY**

# Student-directed play 'Anna Karenina' provides a platform for actors to explore production process

BY Anna Novoselov & Emilie Zhou

During the weekend of March 1, a tragic love story starring junior Marly Feigin as Anna Karenina and senior Raghav Malaviya as Governor Konstantin Levin will unfold in the Little Theater, with senior director Shasta Ganti in the audience watching months of hard work pay off.

"I want it to do well. I want it to succeed," Ganti said. "But more importantly than that, I want my actors to feel like they've worked on something worthwhile and that they've contributed to something that could be truly amazing."

Directing a student production is one way Drama 4H students can complete a required Honors project and earn their Honors credit for the class.

Students can also earn their Honors credit by working as a stage manager or technical director for either black box shows, such as student productions, or McAfee Center shows, such as musicals and plays.

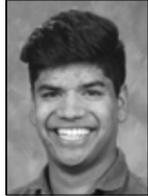
Ganti is directing the play "Anna Karenina" and it is the only student production this year. The play, set in 19th century Russia,

is based on Leo Tolstoy's novel by the same name and juxtaposes the lives of Anna, a married mother who feels incomplete because she did not marry for love, and Levin, a young unmarried man with overwhelming existential questions and a general dissatisfaction with his life. Ganti stumbled upon the book in his father's library, and after finding an adaptation of it in the drama room, decided to choose it for his production.

Ganti thought a dramatic tale like "Anna Karenina" would make a great student production because it involves a relatively large cast, and he wanted to give students who had less experience in dramas the opportunity to participate in something a little more serious.

Auditions were held in late November and 11 students were cast. Senior Dermot Gleeson will play Alexei Karenin (Anna's husband), junior Matilda Hickman-Smith will play Dolly (Anna's sister-in-law), and senior Mateo Morgenstern will play Alexei Vronsky (a military officer with whom Anna has an affair with).

Student productions are directed by advanced drama students and generally have a much smaller cast than regular productions. According to Feigin, there is a different dynamic between the actors and the director, as it can often be "easier for [the cast] to communicate" with a student director than a teacher. In addition, the smaller cast size allows the group to "get a lot closer" and build stronger connections with each other.



Ganti

"I really like how Shasta is very relaxed and still lets us have fun while he directs," Feigin said. "He can relate to us very well because he is a student as well, and he is very understanding in general."

As director, Ganti is responsible for casting roles, planning a schedule, designing the set and stage, working on costume design, coaching actors and helping students deliver an authentic performance.

He said the best part about directing has been seeing his actors come out of their shells and overcome what they're struggling with. "I really love it when I can give

them notes and when they run it again, it's exactly what I wanted to see.

That really makes me feel like I can do this," he said. "It's always really rewarding to see people succeed and do things that they didn't think they were capable of."

However, during this time Ganti has also learned that the hardest part about directing is having to "alter [his] style of teaching and even of acting" to fit different people and their acting methods.

Although Ganti does not know for sure how big of a part drama will play in his future, he knows that he will keep acting and be involved in the arts, as they "will always be a part" of him.

Feign, on the other hand, knows that her dream is to major in drama in college and become an actor. She said that the student production will help her grow personally as an actor and prepare her for future roles.

Although the foreign setting of the play and Anna's background makes it difficult for her to relate to Anna, Feign has enjoyed learning her character's viewpoint on life and assuming an identity so different from her own.

"Anna is faced with a lot of hard

decisions, so it's very interesting to see how she thinks about every decision and how she goes through the process in her mind," Feign said. "Anna is definitely a challenge, as with most characters in this show, so I'm looking forward to growing as an actor."

For the cast, the hardest part about being in the production has been the time commitment, Feign said.

The cast has rehearsals four times a week, from 2:30-6:30 p.m. on Blue Days and 4:30-6:30 p.m. on Red Days.

"My actors are held to the same standard as they would be in the fall play or the musical," Ganti said. "It's as much of a commitment, and the quality of production I expect of my leads is the same Ms. Thermond expects of us in the McAfee."

For now, Ganti is looking forward to seeing everyone's hard work pay off when the lights dim in the Little Theater and the cast performs the play the first weekend of March.

"Directing has been a really fun experience," Ganti said. "While it's been challenging at times, it's been very rewarding and I hope all of you enjoy the show!" ♦

# Does academic burnout intensify during spring?

SOME SAY THEY STRUGGLE TO MAINTAIN MOTIVATION IN LAST STRETCH OF SCHOOL YEAR

BY Connie Liang

In a 2018 column for the Psychopharmacology and Substance Abuse Newsletter, Dr. Elizabeth Holly defines academic burnout in three distinct areas: physical and emotional exhaustion, feelings of inefficiency and lack of personal accomplishment.

While it is typically associated with college students, this fatigue is an all-too-familiar feeling for countless high school students; in competitive environments like Saratoga High's, it often takes a toll on even the youngest students.

Freshman Anouk Yeh is the president of the Leos Club, an avid member of the speech and debate team, a member of the MACLA Slam Poetry team, a horseback rider for the Stanford Red Barn IEA team and Charlebois Farm, a teacher at Silicon Valley Youth and

a volunteer at a special-needs day care center, Angel Love. On top of all that, she is a dedicated student.

"I feel like in the beginning of the year, everyone is motivated to get back to school, get good grades and ace all their classes," Yeh said. "But once second semester starts, trying your best all the time gets pretty tiring."

Now, Yeh finds herself more frequently taking longer naps before getting to her schoolwork: a habit she didn't have before.

Senior Katie Hulme — who was recruited to play volleyball for Emory University as a junior — said she has experienced a similar but slightly different situation.

Hulme had to fight an earlier onset of "senioritis" in the beginning of second semester of junior year. However, she now realizes the dangers of falling behind.

"There are definitely seniors

who accept that they can get worse grades," Hulme said.

Hulme strives to maintain the good grades she has worked hard for throughout her high school career. To Hulme, pride in her own abilities prevents her from slacking too far behind coursework.

"It's more just my personal standards," Hulme said. "I want to keep doing as well as I can especially since I need to prepare for college doing pre-med. I'm still going to have to study a lot so if I lose my work ethic this year it won't help me for college."

This sentiment falls in line with what Precalculus, Calculus and Statistics teacher Jennifer Mantle believes high school students should keep in mind, especially seniors who face possible rescission for falling too far behind.

"That's the biggest bummer of the whole planet," Mantle said.

"It doesn't mean that that student didn't go to college, they just didn't go to a college they really wanted to go to because they didn't make some good choices."

**"Once second semester starts, trying your best all the time gets pretty tiring."**

FRESHMAN Anouk Yeh

Mantle believes that although second semester seniors face an "emotional tornado," senioritis is a mental construct.

Mantle believes Saratoga students face different stressors that contribute to a different type of burnout than what she saw at

Lincoln High School in San Jose, where she taught for nine years.

"It was more like 'Can I get kids to graduate?' and get them to pass and earn their high school credits," Mantle said about teaching at Lincoln High School.

Here, Mantle sees cultural and familial pressure to become an Ivy-League student lead to the problems.

"It's harder to let go of some of those stresses because everyone else is on that train and then you feel like if you're not on that train you should be on it," Mantle said. She hopes her students keep in mind that high school is only the beginning.

"While academics are important, it's also important to be a kid," Mantle said. "There's a whole huge life in front of you. There's a lot of different ways to live a really, really fruitful life." ♦

## AP TESTING

continued from pg. 1

have one primary proctor in charge of each test, with support from the office staff.

Each proctor is paid \$260 per exam, a stipend that is not anticipated to increase. Including set-up and clean-up, proctors spend between four to four and a half hours administering each exam.

While students in the district may be shocked by the prices, neighboring schools charge even more. At Cupertino High, students pay \$115 to take an AP test and \$125 for a world language AP test. Meanwhile, Palo Alto High students must pay \$115 for an AP test and \$145 for

a world language AP test.

In the San Jose Unified School District, however, board members decided in 2015 to set aside \$550,000 annually to pay for AP or IB exams. As a result, all students regardless of household income are qualified to receive the discounted price of \$5 for each exam.

Safine noted that the school will waive the test fee for any student with demonstrated financial need.

Safine warned that next year, students are likely to face a far more difficult situation. This year's price increases are not as significant as the CollegeBoard earlier announced that AP test registration will be moved forward to November and that the charges to drop taking the test would increase from \$15 to \$40. ♦

**While students in the district may be shocked by the prices, neighboring schools charge even more.**



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FOURTH PERIOD

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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.

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# Optional finals for high achievers: a reasonable and stress-free reward

Finals are a stressful time all around, and there's nothing more nerve-racking than knowing that a single final has the ability to raise or drop a grade by an entire letter, especially for students caught in the B+, A- range.

And it's not entirely true that hard work during the semester keeps you safe during finals week; even if you only need a 75 percent to maintain a solid A, you still need to get a majority of the test questions correct, and winging it probably isn't going to work. You still have to study.

Instead of focusing on other classes, possibly with borderline grades, students are forced to sacrifice their sleep and sanity to study for finals in all of their classes.

The logical solution is to offer optional finals in some classes, and it's quite simple to implement.

All teachers have to do is set a pre-final grade cutoff, and students who meet or surpass this standard are exempted from the final exam.

Optional finals are a more than fair option for students who have already proven proficiency in a class. In many cases, if you have a solid A in a class by the

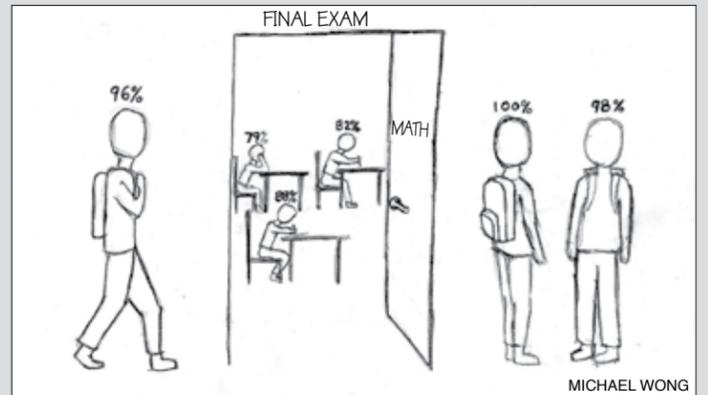
time finals roll around, you've essentially already proven yourself. It is unfair to have to spend more time studying, stressing and taking a final in a class you've already shown mastery in.

In fact, mandatory finals are beginning to fade away at the college level, according to the Harvard Magazine.

Of the 1,137 undergraduate courses offered at Harvard University in 2010, only 259 of these courses scheduled finals, and for the 500 graduate-level courses offered, a mere 14 had obligatory finals. Harvard now assumes that professors will not be administering finals unless specifically stated.

Mandatory finals are simply relics of a 19th century system of schooling, and rather than being a modern educational advantage, they serve only to demoralize and strain students. Some teachers at SHS are beginning to recognize this, including physics teacher Jenny Garcia, who implements optional finals.

After all, semester finals exist to test a semester's worth of knowledge, and if you've got a 95 or above 17 weeks in, nobody can say you didn't master the material.



The situation gets more complex with AP testing, as AP class finals are often a good way for students to review before the AP exam. Since these finals generally happen in April and not during the scheduled school finals week, mandatory AP class finals are easier to justify and make sense for AP test preparation.

But for regular or honors

classes, one more strictly timed, clinically administered, anxiety-inducing test will not tell you anything about my work ethic or knowledge that was not already apparent during the semester. Too often an unnecessary final will only foster irritability and sleep-deprivation during one of the most trying weeks of the year. ♦

## Opinion of the Falcon Editorial Board

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The Falcon staff voted 23-10 in support of this article.

# We need to start caring about the environment

By Connie Liang

A few weeks ago, I asked my dad, "Why are you just letting the faucet run like that? It's wasting so much water..."

He peered at me from beside the stove, where he was standing and cleaning some kitchen appliances. Clutching a dirty pan in one hand and a stained towel in the other, my dad replied with exasperation dripping from his voice. "Don't be ridiculous."

My father is one of many with doubts about how we are depleting our underground aquifers, how climate change is creating ripple effects on all continents and how human activity will soon cause irreversible changes to our biosphere.

This sentiment parallels generational differences concerning climate change. A 2018 Gallup poll concluded that only 56 percent of Americans aged 55 years and older are worried about climate change compared to 70 percent of Americans aged 18 to 34.

According to Business Insider, 10 percent of livable area in the cities of Miami Beach and Atlantic City will be underwater by 2060 due to rising sea levels. Worse still, 1.8 billion people will be living in water-scarce regions by the year 2025, according to National Geographic. That's only five years after the current junior class graduates from high school.

We tend to think that environmental problems will only be pressing in the far-off future — in the time of our great-great-great-great-great-great grandchildren and beyond. But even cursory examination of the problem reveals that this is simply not the case, and

the world is already starting to see major effects.

The year 2030 is a turning point, according to the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. By 2030, if drastic measures aren't taken to reverse the emissions of greenhouse gases, worldwide temperatures will rise 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial times.

This amount sounds insignificant, but it appears to be the tipping point. On the current track, 2030 will mean a major loss in diversity for the world's ecosystems, one of the most important being coral reefs, which are projected to be 90 percent dead by then. This increase in temperature also entails a greater risk of weather and heat extremes leading to the displacement of millions and a damage to key world crops.

So with all these looming threats, why isn't more being done to reverse the course our planet is headed?

An argument against environmental measures is that even if one person recycles an aluminum soda can, there will always be another person who doesn't. Therefore, the efforts of that one environmentally conscious individual are essentially pointless. Also, as many like to argue, it's not like the actions of even the largest organization stand a chance in the face of all 7.5 billion people on Earth.

This point actually made me stop and think when I was writing this article (note: I stopped and thought more than once through-

out writing and researching this article). Why bother if your actions are so small in comparison to the effects of an entire country or global population? However, as is applicable to so many other areas in life besides the environment, big steps start small.

Habitat restoration efforts around the world almost always begin with the well-meaning intentions of one or a few individuals. Yet despite small beginnings, such efforts still succeed in minimizing the positive feedback loops of desertification and deforestation.

Take the draining of Iraq's Mesopotamian marshlands, for example.

To retaliate against Shiite rebels who often took refuge in the area, former dictator Saddam Hussein ordered the draining of the ancient marshlands — an act that resulted in the image of sand and barren desert that the Middle East generally evokes.

Meanwhile, in California, Iraqi environmentalist Azzam Alwash knew he had to reverse the destruction of his childhood home somehow.

In 2003, when Hussein's reign ended after the U.S.-led invasion and the marshlands were drained to 10 percent of their previous size, Alwash flew to Iraq to begin conservation efforts. He set up the nonprofit organization Nature Iraq, surveyed and planned restoration measures, and educated local officials.

By 2008, the marshlands were restored to 75 percent of their

original size, reviving biodiversity and rich wildlife in the area.

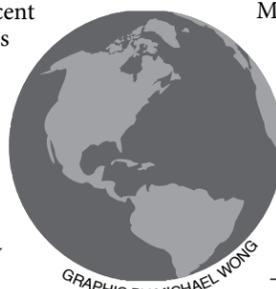
Such efforts can be revolutionary, but it starts with education. Whether that means researching, watching documentaries, or erasing the stigma that AP Environmental Science is trite, understanding the Earth and its processes is the first step.

Second, stress the small things. Put a bucket under the showerhead while waiting for the water to turn hot. Reuse this water in a garden or vegetable bed. Switch the showerhead itself to a low-flow one and turn off the lights in an empty room. Choose reusable materials instead of plastic and see to it that all disposable wrappers end up in the correct bin.

On a broader scale, governments and corporations alike must figure out how to cut worldwide greenhouse gas emissions practically in half by 2030, reaching a "net zero" in 2050. According to CNN, this maintains that the projected rise in temperature doesn't surpass "the crucial threshold of 1.5 degrees Celsius."

Somehow, we will need to create, from scratch, an industry that focuses on withdrawing greenhouse gases from the air; implement new and improved industrial practices; and foster a more tangible urgency. All this leaves so much up to the the whim and responsibility of our future workforce — the high school and college students of now.

At the end of the day, the Earth can only withstand so much. It's like a rubber band that's been pulled on for far too long. If we're not proactive soon, it's bound to snap, regardless of whether or not you believe it will. ♦



GRAPHIC BY MICHAEL WONG

## No pluses or minuses reduce student stress

BY AngelinaChen  
& EdwinChen

As second semester begins, stress begins to pile up as students struggle to cram material and maintain borderline grades. Starting with the class of 2020, however, the administration introduced efforts to mitigate said stress — removing plus-minus grades on transcripts.

Having a grading system solely reliant on A/B/C grades is beneficial toward students, as it helps boost student GPAs while simplifying the GPA system. The old 13-point system meant that students with A+s would receive a 4.33, but students with an A- would receive a 3.67.

Normally, A's are worth 4 points, B's are worth 3 points and so on. Honors or AP courses boost the point worth of each class by 1. This means that a student who receives an A- gets the same GPA as a person with an A+.

This four-point system has proven beneficial to many students, who tend to raise their grades just enough to push it to the next grade letter.

Attaining an A at the school is already hard enough. Many students spend excessive hours studying and completing homework in pursuit of a high GPA.

Some may argue that this system does more harm than good, since students who

achieve pluses are hurt by this change and don't get the GPA that they deserve. However, principal Paul Robinson said that 60 percent of all students' plus or minus grades each semester are minuses, meaning the change will help a majority of students.

Students who receive an A- in such a competitive school deserve to be rewarded adequately, and by removing the plus and minus from the grading system, it means that they will receive the grade they worked so hard for.

The removal of the plus and minus system can also help relieve excess stress and ease the intense academic culture.

With this change, students don't have to spend as much time obsessing over being perfect. Without this kind of stress, students can lead a healthier lifestyle. It helps open up more free time for students to focus on their passions and to spend time with their families and friends.

Intense academic culture results in students pushing themselves to compete with their peers, especially since getting into college is seen as an important step to success.

The new GPA system of removing the pluses and minuses helps more students relieve stress by alleviating the high stakes academic culture as well as boosting their highly valued GPAs. ♦

## Old grading policy has more student benefits

BY SofiaJones  
& AmandaZhu

Most students have experienced receiving a grade that they were not happy with, despite putting consistent effort into the class throughout the semester. Many have felt the disappointment of a borderline grade that they could not bring up, forced to live with a letter grade that was so close to being better.

But due to the removal of pluses and minuses in GPAs starting with the Class of 2020, an 89.5 percent grade that a teacher refuses to round up might as well be a flat 80 percent B-. This seems unfair to many students who struggle in the beginning of the semester but start improving as the semester goes on.

Teachers have vastly different approaches to every aspect of their classes, such as homework policies, best ways to study for tests and different grade weightings. Students usually need time in the beginning of the year to adjust, and because of this, they may perform poorly at first, despite putting in effort.

And if gradual improvement is visible, through pluses and minuses, students will have more motivation to make steady progress throughout the semester. Currently, though students may move up a percentage or two, the grade and GPA change is not as

noticeable, resulting in decreased motivation in some cases.

Although the GPA policy is helpful for students with grades on the lower end of a letter grade, it does not provide an incentive to work harder for all. Administrators may have thought that no pluses or minuses would help to alleviate stress from students, but it also demotivates students from bettering their grades. Students who put in significantly different levels of effort end up with similar grades as a result of this rule.

Having gradations within grades is beneficial, as it creates intermediate levels of achievement. This would force indolent students to work harder and improve their grades from a minus to a plus.

Students may settle for a minus under the current system because they know that it will show up as a flat letter grade on their transcript anyway, and neglect class material they otherwise would have processed more thoroughly.

Perhaps most important of all, including pluses and minuses in grades better reflects students' abilities. It rewards hard-working students with the grades they truly earned and motivates others to work harder. Pluses and minuses should be integrated into students' grades again, so that the next time a student ends the semester with an 89.5 percent, their transcript will show their hard earned B+ rather than a flat B. ♦

# DISCUSSION

## Schools should integrate coding in younger grades

BY RohanKumar

Smartphones. Computers. Graphing calculators. Self-driving cars. Without a doubt, the results of computer programming are everywhere, ranging from applications like Snapchat on our phones, or the built-in functions on our TI-84 calculators. Coding knowledge allows people to truly harness the power of their electronic devices.

Although we are surrounded by electronics, many people are not comfortable or interested in computer programming due to a lack of education. In school, coding is often not introduced to students until late middle school or early high school, cutting short career prospects in the field.

The benefits of learning how to code are boundless. Even the simplest coding skills can allow students to analyze data or create websites.

And, of course, knowing how to code can lead to well-paying jobs. According to Rasmussen University, the median annual earning for coding-related jobs in 2016 was \$80,000 as opposed to the average \$30,000 annual income in all jobs.

Going into a computer science job is not for everyone. Still, coding causes students to think more algorithmically and helps improve their problem-solving abilities.

Coding is a fundamental skill, and it is extremely important that students start learning how to code earlier. Elementary schools should integrate basic computer programming into their curriculum.

This integration doesn't have to include complicated algorithmic concepts; even simple and fun applications like Scratch and Terrapin logo can help develop the foundational skill set necessary for more involved

programming.

Students who begin coding at a younger age would be more likely to be comfortable with it. Teaching younger kids how to program also affects the way they think and develop. First and foremost, it gives them a basic understanding of how the electronics they use actually work. It also improves a child's potential for creativity by giving them a resource with which to express themselves. Just as teaching students how to write allows them to express their opinions through essays or bring their characters to life through stories, teaching students how to code allows them to create websites, games and more.

With technology being integrated into classrooms, a smaller investment is required to teach coding. A lot of elementary schools already have computer labs to teach students skills such as typing and finding information on databases. As a result, these computers can simply be co-opted for programming. In the Bay Area, there's a lot of excitement and publicity surrounding coding. People enjoy throwing around words like machine learning, big data and bioinformatics. However, this hype is not unfounded: Coding is impactful in a plethora of ways and everyone should have the opportunity to learn how to use it. ♦



GRAPHIC BY NEETI BADVE AND NITYA MARIMUTHU

## Coding should not be required at a young age

BY HowardTang

The Information Age, characterized by a shift from a traditional industrial economy to one based on information technology, has seen a high demand for coding skills — a demand that has already begun to reflect in education as early as the elementary school level.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, employment in STEM occupations grew by 10.1 percent from 2009 to 2015 and may grow by another 23 percent by 2024. Surprisingly, the number of computer programmers themselves is projected to decline.

Due to the perception of an abundant, ever-growing job market in computer science (CS), many schools have begun teaching it at elementary schools. Despite these intentions, making these skills mandatory won't suddenly create legions of new, eager programmers.

Required CS classes are helpful for students who want to pursue a STEM-related career, but this becomes an issue when it is forced onto students interested in other disciplines. For these people, a large chunk of their studying would be occupied by something they don't care about, and the skills would be quickly forgotten. Unlike some subjects like mathematics or physics, coding has little use in daily life, essentially

rendering courses useless.

Here at SHS, only 168 out of the 1,341, or 12.5 percent of the students, are enrolled in a CS-related course, a small percentage of the whole student body.

Over all four years, only 50 percent of the students coming through the school would take a CS class during that time. Of those, a hefty portion take the class to satisfy the Applied Arts requirements or to decorate their resume with an AP course. If half of the students are not willing to take CS on their own, the class should not be forced onto all students.

Furthermore, students in elementary and middle schools have not yet developed a strong work ethic and are not used to spending significant amounts of time on schoolwork. Coding requires a strong mathematics background and an analytical mindset, and students in the early grades mostly lack the cognitive readiness to master these skills. Adding an extra subject to learn will either lessen the time they have to learn more useful subjects or increase the amount of total time they spend learning, both of which will burden students with unnecessary troubles.

Despite the perceived benefits, implementing coding into the mandatory early learning curriculum is counterproductive and will result in a more deficient education for students, especially young ones.

Rather than making coding a requirement, making it available in middle schools as an elective would prove much more effective. It allows determined young students to explore their interests in hot areas while not forcing others to do the same and possibly ruin other parts of their education. ♦

## Difficult to find motivation during second semester

BY Aaria Thomas

A black cursor blinks steadily on an empty page. I drum my fingers on the keyboard and move up and down the page, staring at the document. Just staring at the words exhausts me. I close the document, telling myself I will write it later.

During second semester, getting through loads of work and long hours of school becomes more challenging for many students. Throughout first semester, most students put more effort into their studying, but as students move into the second half of the school year, they leave some of their motivation behind. I could hardly bring myself to write this newspaper story.

First semester is easier to push through because the routines and schedules that people have are different from the previous school year. Starting new classes and seeing different people brings a fresh sense of excitement to the learning environment.

But second semester is the same classes and schedule. Running through a cycle that students already endured for 18 weeks is extremely boring.

The repetition does mean that students are more prepared to effectively study for tests. While some students appreciate the identical routines, many find that the repetitiveness outweighs the appeal of using it to help themselves.

The lack of change in the school day and individual classes makes the experience dull. Once school has lost its novelty, students become tired and there is little to drive students to work harder. To make matters worse, the level of difficulty in classes often increases. Many teachers start to grade harsher as they assume more competency on the part of the students, and as a result, the work become more challenging. Students are required to put more effort into school if they want to do well, but many students are burnt out from the first semester's grind.

The repetitiveness and increased difficulty of second-semester also leads to more procrastination.

Students know they need to complete their schoolwork, but can't bring themselves to do the work.

Others who start on their work sooner lose their focus easily. When they try to force themselves to do an assignment they don't feel like doing, their minds tend to wander. Every few minutes, students tell themselves they deserve a break after the work they just did.

The monotony of second semester requires students to put more energy into school work. However, the prospect of this extra effort discourages students from starting the work.

If teachers adjusted their classes during second semester a little, it could motivate students to do to the work. Students could also try new activities break the monotony of second semester, and make it easier. ♦

## Established habits make second semester easier

BY Rohan Kumar

Spending three hours on lab reports due to unclear teacher expectations, over-studying for easily aceable math tests and pestering teachers every tutorial are actions overly eager and grade-conscious students fall into during first semester. However, once second semester rolls around, these problems tend to fade away.

Second semester may seem tough, as students have to learn new concepts while remembering material from first semester. However, second semester is much easier than first. For seniors, there are no college apps and no pressure to get high grades.

**By second semester, students have developed a rhythm to get through classes efficiently.**

For freshmen, sophomores and juniors, the biggest reason second semester is less stressful is that students have developed a rhythm to get through classes efficiently. For the first half of the school year, students scramble to find the correct amount of time for their homework while maintaining their presence in extracurricular activities.

At the same time, they also have to determine which studying habits are most effective for each class. For instance, cramming might work well for World History, but not for chemistry.

Students also are less familiar with learning resources during first semester. Many teachers give review packets or supplementary links to help students succeed.

At first, using aids may be cumbersome since students are not comfortable with them. Although powerful, websites such as Desmos have a lot of difficult-to-use functionalities. As the year progresses, students become more adept at using these tools.

First semester also serves as a chance for students to get to know their teachers better: what they expect, like and hate. On specific types of assignments, such as lab reports, knowing teacher expectations is helpful in finishing the work efficiently.

Similar optimizations surrounding test difficulty and tardies let students to spend less time on school in second semester.

This doesn't mean cutting corners, but rather, students are able to work more efficiently. Second semester also has more breaks, with one-week breaks after each six-week grading period. These opportunities to relax helps students get through their classes with less stress.

Second semester may seem tough, but those four months of experience from first semester make it significantly easier. ♦

# BOARD



GRAPHIC BY EILEEN BUI

## SAT offers a conceptual and comprehensive test

BY Kaylene Morrison

The purpose of standardized tests such as the ACT and SAT is to assess a person's intelligence so that colleges are more objectively able to pick the most high achieving students. Thus, high schoolers should take the test that will allow them to achieve a score that will reflect the full capacity of their abilities: the SAT.

The SAT gives more time per question, while the ACT does not allow enough time to thoroughly consider all answer choices, according to Study Point and Prep Scholar.

The SAT math section allows for a higher probability of guessing correctly. If students are unsure how to solve a problem, guessing on the ACT has only a 20% chance of choosing the correct answer, whereas guessing on the SAT has in a 25% chance. This five percent difference could make the difference between a 1450 and a 1500.

Also, the SAT math section is more conceptual rather than memorization based. Unlike the ACT, the SAT booklet provides a list of formulas for a plethora of shapes.

Additionally, the content in the SAT math section closely aligns with the Algebra II curriculum, and contains significantly less Geometry. The ACT tests concepts that are not included in the SAT, such as matrices, which are taught in Precalculus.

Those who take the ACT after taking Algebra II, primarily juniors enrolled in Precalculus who take the ACT in the fall, will have to study significantly more in order to relearn Geometry concepts and self teach themselves material taught in Precalculus. Taking the SAT allows these juniors to succeed with less studying.

The SAT reading section is easier than

the ACT reading section, because it contains evidence-based questions, allowing test takers to choose a section of the passage which provides evidence to the previous question. These types of questions let test takers to confirm that their answer to the previous question is correct. It also aids test takers in finding the answer to the previous question if at first they were unsure.

Additionally, while the ACT essay requires writers to be knowledgeable on the topic of the essay, the SAT is entirely skill based. The ACT essay presents writers with a prompt that includes a controversial topic. The essay must fully or partially supports one of these perspectives. They are provided with no information beyond a single paragraph which explains the topic. Consequently, if writers are unfamiliar with a topic, this can greatly affect their ability to write the essay.

In contrast, the SAT essay provides readers with an argumentative piece, including speeches, magazine articles and excerpts from books. Students must analyze the persuasive techniques the author uses to build an effective argument. This requires no prior knowledge on the topic, and therefore writers' scores are solely based on their reading comprehension skills and ability to effectively analyze writing.

Students who have yet to take a standardized test must start considering which test they will take. These students should prepare for the test that will allow them to best accomplish their goals: the SAT. ♦

## It's a f-ACT: ACT tops SAT as a better admissions test

BY Connie Liang

In 1926, Princeton professor and former U.S. Army psychologist Carl Brigham created the Standardized Aptitude Test for the College Board, a test intended to measure intelligence for high schoolers. It was in 1959 that the first ACT, devised by University of Iowa professor Everett Lindquist as a counterpart to the SAT, was administered.

Traditionally, the majority have chosen the SAT over the ACT. But fast forward to recent years and this trend is reversing.

According to The New York Times, in 2012, 1,666,017 people took the ACT compared to 1,664,479 who took the SAT —

the first time the ACT has seen more test takers. In 2017, there was an even greater difference: 2.09 million students chose the ACT versus the 1.64 million who took the SAT.

More and more students are opting to take the ACT over the SAT — with good reason.

It comes down to the classic lesser-of-two-evils scenario. If the SAT is a corn-maze, taking the SAT is like hoping to wander out of said corn-maze in the middle of the night. Blindfolded. With a broken foot.

With convoluted phrasing of questions and intense reading passages that make you question whether or not you even know how to read, the SAT complicates and confounds to an unnecessary degree.

The SAT has 52 questions with 65 minutes on the reading section while the ACT has 40 questions in 35 minutes. There is more time allowed per question on the SAT, but that means the problems are in-

herently more difficult to make up for the extra time.

On the other hand, the ACT is more straightforward with how it asks questions. This simplicity is especially evident in the ACT's Math and Reading sections, which to me, are much more effective at testing knowledge than the SAT's.

Initially, I took several diagnostic exams for both tests and also questioned a handful of peers soon discovering that they all seemed to be taking the SAT. I also heard that prestigious colleges look more favorably upon applicants who submitted SAT scores — a misconception among many high-schoolers.

The fact is that more top colleges accept the SAT. But that's only because people who take the SAT tend to apply to these top colleges. In other words, when deciding between an applicant who took the SAT and one who took the ACT, admissions officers aren't going to base their decisions on the type of test the applicant took: Both tests are considered equally acceptable.

One aspect of the ACT that is a significant hurdle, however, is the time crunch.

With a larger question to minute ratio than the SAT, the test pushes test takers to the edge of the time limit in almost all sections. This being said, it's doable for students to manage their time: You're going to have to manage your time for the SAT as well and because there are a greater number of simple problems on the ACT, it shouldn't be that hard.

Of course, the ACT is by no means a perfect test. It is, after all, a standardized test, and we all know that standardized tests are among the worst things to plague this planet. However, given the inescapable necessity of taking one for college-bound students, the ACT is the better option. ♦



GRAPHIC BY ROHAN KUMAR

# Don't feel pressured to apply to summer programs

BY Justin Guo

During this time of year, many students are well into the application process for summer programs, an annual routine involving half-hearted personal statements, indecision about actually attending a program, and last-minute pleas for recommendation letters.

There is an increasing tendency for students to apply for camps that don't necessarily suit their own personal interests.

There are three main reasons for this trend.

The first is peer and parent pressure. Students feel obligated to apply to programs because their friends are applying to summer programs. Additionally, some students might feel pressure from family to apply for

certain programs, giving them less of a say in their own summer plans.

Secondly, students also fail to take into consideration that they aren't the ones paying the thousands of dollars to attend the camps. If students had to cover the necessary tuition, materials and transportation costs instead of their parents, they might further contemplate if they truly want to attend these camps.

Finally, many students face the problem of not knowing exactly what subject they are passionate about, and therefore struggle to identify which camps to apply for.

As a result, students opt for a "safe" route by following what their peers or parents deem a good summer program, or they apply to programs just in case they get in.

If students choose to go to summer

camps, they should apply to camps that they have genuine interest in. Applying to camps that students aren't really that interested in makes it a lot harder to find the time and energy to work on the application, and may cause unnecessary inconvenience to teachers who are asked to spend time on writing recommendations.

Many try to rationalize applying for random programs by attempting to convince themselves that they like a certain subject, even if they don't. Some also claim that it will look good on college applications.

There is some merit to the argument that attending prestigious summer programs will help a student's later college application. However, getting accepted into a certain program doesn't lead to automatic admission anywhere.

It's also important to recognize that not everyone has to go to a summer camp. While these programs offer good experiences for various types of students, they aren't the only productive way to spend a summer.

During the couple months a year devoted to a break from school, it's equally beneficial to polish personal skills without being in the confines of a work-related environment. Getting a job or making the most out of volunteering opportunities during summer, when students typically have less homework and studying to do, also helps build personality and work ethic skills.

Above all, it's best not to apply to summer programs just because you see your peers are going to them or because you think you're obligated to; you're doing yourself a disservice. ♦

## Detention an ineffective form of punishment

BY Justin Guo

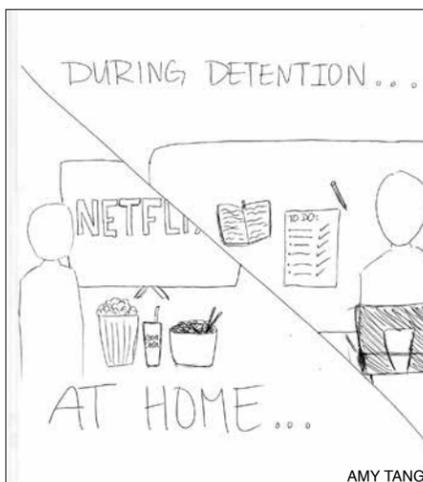
Detention is traditionally perceived as a punishment — a means of discouraging students from showing up late to class, talking back to teachers or engaging in any other inappropriate conduct.

But what a lot of students fail to realize about detention is that it actually provides a very good working environment — something that students might not have at home.

The biggest reason that detention offers a positive working environment is the absence of distractions. More obvious disturbances such as cell phones, laptops and gaming consoles are banned, fostering a focused environment. Detention also eliminates the less obvious distractions such as food or the potential of chatting with friends.

In detention, students can either do homework and study, or they can try to find another way to pass the time. The majority of the time, they opt for productivity.

Most students in detention aren't there because they are imbeciles or rebels; they just happened to be late to class a few too many times (six tardies to be precise), and now have to serve an hour in detention, twice a week. Most students are not willing



to waste an hour of their time doing nothing; if they're going to be stuck in a room for an hour, they may as well make a dent on their homework.

By the end of that hour, it's not uncommon for a lot of students to come out of detention with a few completed assignments and a sense of accomplishment.

Contrast this situation with their home environment. Netflix, YouTube and Instagram are mere keystrokes away.

A "quick" snack break can easily turn into a glorious 30-minute binge-fest of chips and ice cream.

It takes a lot of self-restraint for students to focus on homework and ignore all possible distractions. But if that urge was just removed altogether, students are able to efficiently work on their homework and get through productive hours of their day.

So perhaps it's time to look at detention differently.

Regular attendees see how useful detention can be, and they don't really care about getting issued detention because they use that time to be productive.

Students should use their detention sessions as a learning opportunity. It's one thing for students to go through detention and realize the effectiveness of a tech-free study session and another for students to actually implement those values into their own daily lives.

Students can create their own form of detention by putting their phone or laptop in another room and focus on their work for a hour or so. This way, students will see an increase in their productivity and be able to develop a disciplined work ethic — all without having the privilege of earning yet another detention. ♦

## 'Smart' is shallow

GENERAL DESCRIPTOR  
WORDS STIFLE  
STUDENTS' POTENTIAL

BY Nitya Marimuthu

"I'm so dumb."

"How do you get such good grades? You're so smart!"

Phrases like these can be heard every day across campus. Students view their little mistakes as a sign of "stupidity." No wonder they got that failing grade, they're not smart. These words are used as excuses, as insults, as descriptors of entire personalities, until they lose their meaning.

The word smart, for example, is defined as "having or showing a quick-witted intelligence," a vague description for a rather meaningless word. Similarly, intelligence means "the ability to acquire and apply knowledge and skills."

Except for those born with severe disabilities, almost every single person can acquire and apply knowledge and skills. Even a young baby has the ability to learn new skills, whether it be eating food or drinking from a bottle. Yet babies aren't usually described as smart or dumb.

The problem with the word smart is that it becomes ingrained in a person's identity, often creating an inferiority complex. Feeling inferior to someone due to their "smartness" can only lead to a vicious circle of judgment. There are always going to be people in the world who are faster at picking up new concepts or more knowledgeable and more advanced.

If that's the case, then what is the point of trying? Smartness becomes an excuse not to put in effort.

In addition, rather than being praised for the effort a person puts into achieving high scores, peers take their results for granted, and their success is assumed to be effortless.

On the flip side, being called dumb does no justice either. If someone does not understand a concept or makes a mistake, they put themselves down as dumb. As the instances of this pile up, people can't help but ingrain the word into their identity. Their apparent lack of intelligence becomes a self-enforced truth.

How do we overcome these traps?

The next time someone does something that deserves a compliment, instead of labeling a whole person by a single word, aim to label a positive action that the person does such as making the effort to write an insightful essay.

Rather than using words like smart or dumb to label ourselves and others, we should strive to use more accurate, descriptive words such as hard-working, perseverant, creative or witty, which do much more justice than their shallow and inaccurate counterparts. ♦

## Labeling others as 'white-washed' further divides the Asian-American community

BY Kaitlyn Tsai

I'm not white-washed. At home, I speak Mandarin, my first language. When it's Chinese New Year, I eat nian gao, celebrate with red envelopes and call my relatives in Taiwan to wish them a happy Chinese New Year. Almost every day, I eat home-cooked traditional Chinese dishes for lunch and dinner.

I embrace my culture, like many other Asian Americans, because preserving my traditional cultural roots matters to me. But I also shop at stores like Hollister or Forever 21. I use American slang, like "lowkey" or "sus." I keep myself updated on strange American memes and trends, like the surprised Pikachu.

How can learning about and partaking in both cultures make me and others who enjoy two cultures "white washed"?

Supposedly, the term "white-washed" refers to a racial minority who assimilates into Western culture. But this term shouldn't apply to any American citizen, regardless of their race, especially not one who was born in America.

If someone was born and raised in America, it should be natural, not offensive, that they adopt at least some American customs. That doesn't necessarily indicate

that they are alienated from their family's culture.

In fact, many "white-washed" Asian Americans really aren't that white-washed at all. Most at least understand their native languages and celebrate certain traditional holidays.

Even those who completely depart from their traditions and cannot understand their native language are often second- or third-generation children who have less direct connections with

their cultural backgrounds, making it reasonable that they seem more American than other Asian Americans whose families have arrived more recently. If they identify more with American culture than Asian culture, it's only natural for them to understand the culture they are most familiar with.

Sadly, many Asian Americans seem to pride themselves in labeling fellow Asian Americans "white-washed." They mock their appearances, their tastes in music, their less-proficient skills in their native languages. By placing excessive superiority on Asian culture, some Asian Americans

disparage their "white-washed" peers just for accepting both cultures into their lifestyles.

In response, these peers feel insecure and self-conscious; a way of living that they were once comfortable with suddenly seems shameful.

Not only are such actions belittling, but they create a greater divide among an already exclusive community. Most Asian

cultures aren't as community-based as others, because people tend to be more closed off and focused on their own families. Mocking others for being too westernized only worsens this problem by creating a bitter sentiment against those who are more American.

In a country that claims to be a massive melting pot of cultures, Asian Americans should stand strong and stand together, rather than discriminating against others of the same race for assimilating into American culture.

So the next time you're on the run for a box of bian dang and pass by an Asian American holding a cup of Starbucks, please refrain from judgment. After all, this is America, and as Asian Americans, we should promote unity, both in and out of our community. ♦



GRAPHIC BY AMY TANG



GRAPHIC BY ALEXANDRA LI

# Don't be jelly, we ruined mac and cheese

REPORTERS ATTEMPT A DESSERT RECIPE FOUND ON 'SUBTLE ASIAN TRAITS'

what a neet idya



Neeti Badve and Nitya Marimuthu

Simultaneously scared and excited, we regarded our culinary creation. A beautiful combination of condensed milk, table cream, multiple kinds of canned fruit we had trouble pronouncing, macaroni and cheddar cheese, the Filipino dessert salad looked like it might taste all right.

After the first bite, we decided that our preliminary judgement was so far off, we should never try our luck in Vegas.

A few days earlier, Nitya was browsing through the famous page, Subtle Asian Traits, when she came across a very interesting post with a fascinating food picture.

"Filipino pasta fruit salad - macaroni, tinned fruit, condensed milk and cubes of cheese \*puking emoji\*," the post read. "Anyone else got a cultural dish they are ashamed of?"

Below was a picture of a macaroni salad that would look good if the ingredients to this "salad" were not spelled out above. The idea came up a few weeks later, and the two of us decided to abandon the safe foods we usually eat, and plunge into a food adventure.

Days later on a Saturday morning, Nitya went to 99 Ranch Market, an Asian supermarket, to get the necessary ingredients. She discovered while shopping that canned fruit came in many different forms. Staring at the shelf that stretched half an aisle long, she

picked out the required elements — fruit cocktail with the classic combination of grapes, cherries and more indistinguishable fruits; nata de coco, a fermented concoction of coconut water in a solid, jelly like form; and kaong, sweet palm fruit. Unfortunately, she had to resort to Safeway to get the macaroni and cheddar cheese.

The recipe began with the combination of the thick condensed milk with the cheese-like table cream to create a mixture that chemistry teachers could only classify as heterogeneous, despite our best efforts.

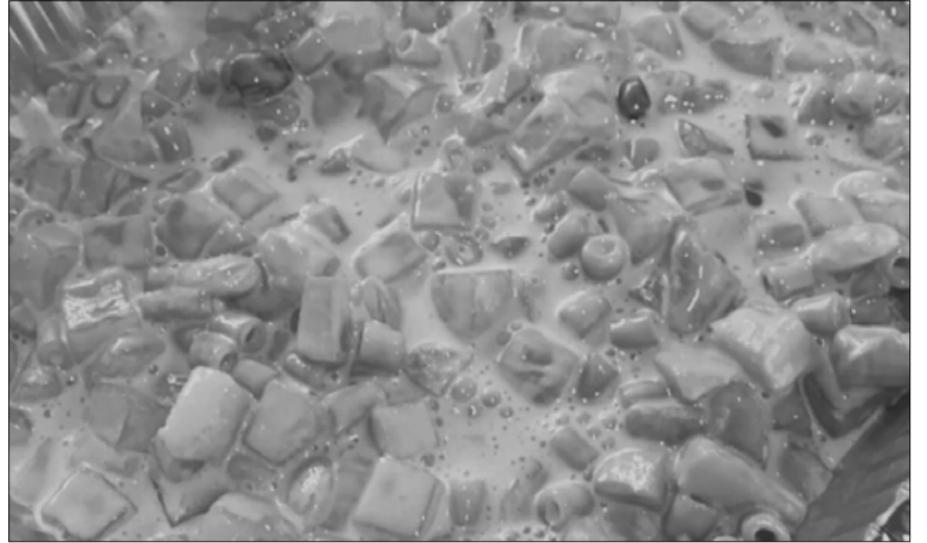
The unfamiliar (to us uncultured spoons) jellies and fruits reeked as if they had been soaked in alcohol for too long and the condensed milk made the air around it sickeningly sweet.

This combination was far from appetizing, so we decided to delay adding the cheese, which we thought would be the most trying part of this concoction for our unrefined taste buds. Boy, were we wrong.

Even though we put in only half the amount of condensed milk that the recipe called for, it was still the most overpowering part of the entire dish. Every bite had the consistency of surprisingly firm white fruit with a semi-solid jelly, combined with the soft squishy nature of the macaroni, all drenched in the sweet syrup.

After realizing everything was too sweet for our taste, we decided it was time to add in the final ingredient: cubed cheddar cheese. Before throwing the cheese into our mixture, we ate some first by itself as a palate cleanser, more scared than ever of what we had just created.

However, at first bite, we were pleasantly surprised that the cheese improved the dish.



FALCON // NEETI BADVE

The final product: the mixture of macaroni, jelly, cheese and more surprised reporters with an odd sweet taste.

As weird as it sounds, the cheese actually combatted and broke through the taste of the powerful condensed milk. Our stomachs and mouths were able to handle the food, although our taste buds did not quite agree with it.

For someone who has an authentic recipe and access to a knowledgeable assistant to make the "salad" for them, this dessert might be a hit. Our feeble internet knowledge combined with our passable (at best) mixing skills left us with much room to grow, as well as a large tray of unfinished dessert.

When brought to school the next day, the dessert repelled the usually hungry teenag-

ers that spend time in the Journalism Room, and was even subjected to a timeout in the corner by students who wanted to use the table it was occupying.

The next time we try a recipe as unconventional as this one, we will make sure to do more research on the subject matter rather than an impulsive pick off of Subtle Asian Traits. The positive reviews that Nitya read in the comments were either written by people who had a miraculous family recipe, or by those whose taste buds were more refined to the flavors of the dish.

As for us, the next time we pick a dish to try, we will make sure to pick one not as ... interesting. ♦

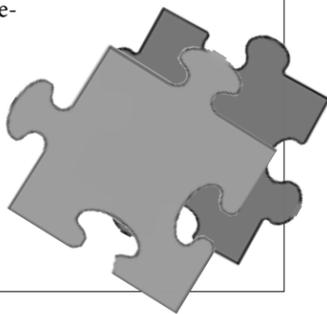
## Second semester seniors try new activities

### 1500 PIECE PUZZLE

On day one, we invited three friends over to help us complete a 1,500-piece puzzle of a sky filled with hot air balloons of various designs. In two hours, we completed the frame of the puzzle, putting together edge pieces. Two days later, we invited six more people over and completed another solid 2 percent of the puzzle in an hour. It was fun to struggle and challenge our minds with close friends, but after a while, we were just too fatigued to continue.

But we didn't give up. Over the course of a week, we recruited three friends to come over for about two hours a day. Four puzzle sessions later, we finished the epic puzzle — two weeks after we started.

At times, the experience of solving such a challenging puzzle proved frustrating and left our backs aching, but overall, it was a surprisingly fun bonding experience. Our bottom-line advice: Start with a more doable puzzle, with maybe 500 pieces instead of 1,500.



### GAME NIGHT

On a Friday night, we invited 10 of our friends over to Francesca's house to play wholesome versions of truth or drink and fear pong, carrying out dares written under the cups. Don't worry, no alcoholic beverages were consumed. Truth or drink brought us closer together, as intimate details were revealed and much tea was spilled.

Fear pong resulted in toilet selfies, fake relationship status updates, a chastity belt made of duct tape and a seductive dramatic reading of "The Practice of Statistics." Overall, the game night was a success. It was a refreshing change from our usual hangouts and a great bonding experience, and we plan to continue to host more game nights as the semester unfolds.



### THRIFT SHOPPING

On a recent Sunday, we headed to Goodwill to cop some steals and create outfits for under \$20. Walking in, we were met with the classic smell of old lady perfume as we began our search for cheap but cute clothes. After about 30 minutes of walking around, we both had our outfits picked out.

Amy's outfit, which consisted of a red cropped quarter zip (\$8), a black denim skirt (\$4), and red sunglasses (\$4), cost \$16. Francesca's outfit, which consisted of a white blouse (\$3), patterned shorts (\$5), and leopard print sunglasses (\$4), only cost \$12.

Recommended for all those ballin' on a budget. It takes some digging to find cool pieces, but your new favorite item is out there, and it'll be less than \$10.



### DANCE WORKSHOP

On a Monday night, we traveled to San Jose to take an urban hip hop class at On One Studios. Since both of us have been dancing since we were young, we were excited to challenge ourselves by taking a class in groovy urban hip hop, a genre we had little experience with.

The energy in the room was amazing, and we could tell that everyone was there because they loved to dance and genuinely wanted to learn. Some of the moves were definitely out of our comfort zone, but it was fun to challenge ourselves.

Though the Monday Night Workshop was difficult, we plan to try more workshops and classes. Monday Night Workshops cost \$25 a person and a standard class costs \$15. ♦



- Amy Tang and Francesca Chu

# GENERATION HANDBOOK

## Generation Z

Born from 1995-2012

This generation is commonly known as “Gen Z” and succeeds the millennials. They are characterized as growing up alongside technology and the internet.

Airpods nestled in ears, juul pods tucked in the back pocket and tide pods packed in the lunchbox. Thousands of memes saved in camera rolls and 350 day Snapchat streaks sent daily. These are some of the most prominent associations for Generation Z, or those born between 1995 and 2012. On the other hand, Millennials, the generation born between 1980 and 1995, are often known for being “hipster” and enjoying uber cool treats like avocado toast and \$6 coffees.

Based on generational differences, we often form stereotypes, varying from habits, hobbies, slang and attitudes. Both generations have significantly contributed to the world we live in today, especially in aspects relating to the internet and social tendencies. Both generations also have some ridiculous and inexplicable tendencies and quirks that may be puzzling to the outsider. So where do the differences lie?

First, AirPods. Sometimes they seem to be in almost every teen's ears. When parents yell at you to do something, you just blame your AirPods. You can't hear your mom yelling at you to do the dishes because your AirPods are in. It's super convenient too: You can barely see them so they're the perfect excuse.

Besides that, for us Gen Z peeps, memes are more than entertainment; they are a source of

life. They have transcended all barriers in the mortal realm, perhaps even outweighing food, water and air as necessities for survival.

It's also important to note that we learned how to swipe before learning to speak. Technology has become an extension of our arms and a permanent part of our existence.

Some of us check social media 100 times a day and itch for our phones each time a notification pops up. It doesn't matter if we have a huge exam the following day; we must get our fix.

Something that many Gen Z people may notice is the obsession with people receiving messages and immediately responding. No one likes to get left on “read.” If people don't reciprocate, things get ugly. For example, you might get quite frustrated if you started a Words With Friends game on Facebook Messenger, and someone left you on read and didn't play you back.

Basically, with instant gratification simply an internet search away, Gen Z kids are characterized as impatient and in need of constant stimuli.

But, to those adults that think we're so impatient: If we are, would 1,000-day Snapchat streaks even exist?

Go back a generation and you have the Millennials.

The stereotype is that they were coddled by their parents (baby boomers) during a period of economic prosperity, and are now in need of constant pampering and attention. Positive re-

inforcement and compliments are like oxygen to them.

They get offended at the slightest of things and update their Twitter feed every couple of minutes. Of course, what they ate for breakfast and what they think about while brushing their teeth is completely necessary information for all of their devoted followers to know.

Maybe they should have stuck with their single-family desktop computer, floppy disks and cassette players instead of being sucked into the digital age. Now, they too walk around with phones and tablets by their side throughout the day. However, instead of sending black screens with a messy red S on Snapchat, they scroll through Facebook, contemplating whether a post deserves the “Love” reaction or simply a “Like.”

Although both generations use social media, Millennials tend to stick to Facebook and Twitter over Snapchat.

They are also known for their skinny jeans, oversized flannels and Tumblr Instagram posts that give you 2008 Bethany Mota vibes.

Despite these differences, it's evident that both generations have made the world a more interesting place, whether through inspiring Pinterest posts, or “weird flex but okay” memes. And although we sometimes don't notice our weird tendencies, looking at them closely reveals they may not be as different from each other as they'd like to think. ♦

-Anna Novoselove and Sandhya Sundaram

## Gen Z and Millennial stereotypes

## 'Kids these days' will change the world

patele-  
tubbies



Anishi Patel

Dear #haters,

I'm a member of Generation Z, the demographic cohort following Millennials, or Generation Y. As of now, we are the most ethnically diverse, digitally skilled and information-sensitive age group in the United States. We also seem to be the most ridiculed.

Not one of us can go a week without hearing about how things were “so much harder” back in the days when the internet and smartphones didn't exist or about how dependent we are on social media. It's

a defining characteristic of this generation, to be accustomed to nodding along while someone four decades older lectures us about the indolence the world is so sure we embody.

It's easy to call us “attention-seeking” or “dramatic” when we express our frustrations with the systems around us, namely student loan debt and the affordability of, well, everything.

It's also easy to gloss over the fact that Gen Z is more technologically apt and information-sensitive than any group before it, in favor of saying we are “glued to our screens.”

Because of our internet usage, we know how to keep our information safe and how to filter through online scams, catfishing and fake news better than nearly anyone else. Plus, as we enter the workforce, our high social media usage will require companies to change their marketing strate-

gies, meaning it's time to stop hating on our means of communication and start learning how to use it.

Additionally, all the stereotypes perpetuated about “kids these days” discredit our rising social activism and desire to catalyze positive change in the world.

In fact, our generation has already created and fueled a nationwide gun reform movement. We are climate change activists, feminists and advocates for mental illness de-stigmatization. From 16-year-old Greta Thunberg, who recently sparked climate change protests across Europe, to Nobel Prize laureate and education activist Malala Yousafzai, members of Gen Z are proving that we can and will change the world.

As cliché as it sounds, we are the future.

Sincerely,

Gen Z ♦

# The Gen Z Rosetta Stone

luova  
hound



Mathew Luo

We are changing the English language, and it is glorious. Standing on the shoulders of Shakespeare's sonnets and Milton's epics, on Steinbeck's stories and Orwell's essays is the new teenage lingo, language that's concise, powerful and descriptive, yet beautiful too.

Think of a thesaurus. What words could replace your colloquial, mundane terms and expletives — large, cool, ouch, shoot — and transform you into a dank, LIT AF, trash-talking memelord, hypebeast UBERFLEXER?

Big is the new large. Big is cool. Big is lit. Big is the dankest adverb. Big is not a traditional adjective, but an intensifier to signify the biggest things: Stephen Hawking's big brain made him big smart; little Jimmy's report card made him big dumb; big Tyler's brown YEEZYs made him a big loser.

To properly incorporate "big" into your lexicon, be especially conscious of your usage of adverbs. Where words like "very," "extremely" and "greatly" might have sufficed, "big" knocks them all out of the water with its conciseness, power and avant-garde quality.

Big brain, right?

Lit is the new dank, and dank was the new cool. But there are subtleties to catch between the two — for instance, memes can be either dank or lit, but there are only dank memes. Lit describes situations, not places, things or people.

A pizza party in history class? That's pretty lit. Little Brooker's giving out donuts to all his friends? That's pretty lit. Elon Musk's funding "Despacito 2"? Well, that's B-I-G-L-I-T, 'cause he's my role model.

OOF is a new invention. It's for those situations that really OOF you, those times where you really be feeling bad about something that happened to someone, but you lack the vocabulary or desire to properly express yourself and say anything meaningful.

OOF is the reaction to your report card. An SAT score. A rejection. The schadenfreude that

comes with reading reddit.

OOF.

Flexing is all about how big you can show off. For example, little Billy is flexing on the peasants when he complains about his precurve B+ on his AP physics test. Billy probably smirks, too, when he surreptitiously glances over his shoulder to see Bert's score. What a loser.

Sometimes someone can flex, but flex weird. Then you go, "weird flex, but okay" and that's that. A weird flex is telling your friends you studied for APUSH on time, or that you completed your math homework without copying from the answer key or that you can spin your pencil around your thumb a hundred times without dropping your thumb once.

That's a weird flex. BUT FLEXING WE DO.

The list goes on. Ufts. Lowkey. Thicc. BIG LIT OOF FLEX. Pretty average slang, all thing considered ... But that's our English, and that's how we're gonna speak it.

The slang of our generation might sometimes be vulgar, but it's vulgarity that we own and we appreciate.

Yeet, and goodnight everybody. ♦

Precursors

## Silent Generation

Born before 1946

## Baby Boomers

Born 1946-1964

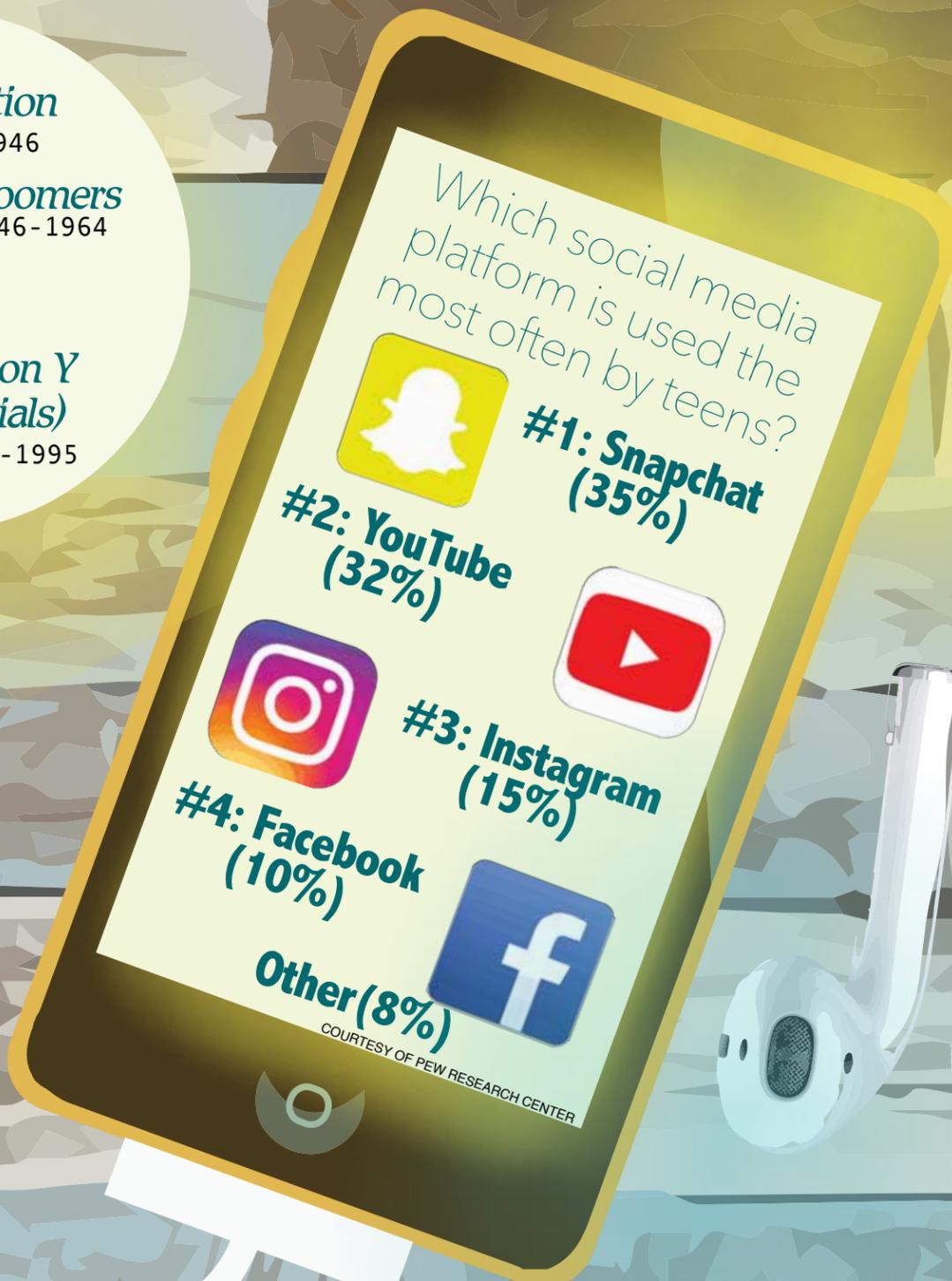
## Generation X

Born 1965-1976

## Generation Y (Millennials)

Born 1977-1995

A popular millennial color on social media is "millennial pink," while a color trend commonly associated with Gen Z is yellow



## A MESSAGE FROM OUTER SPACE



FALCON // OLIVER YE

As you enter biology teacher Lisa Cochrum's room, your eyes are overwhelmed with the hundreds of photos plastered on the walls. The photos show her travels around the world as well as past students. Cochrum's desk is littered with various knicknacks: stuffed animals, toys and even a taxidermied fish.

Among all of her other interesting objects, according to Cochrum, her most prized possession in the room is a picture of her and astronaut Michael Massimino taken after he spoke at the school in 2014.

"He's very funny and personable," said Cochrum. "He used that to try to make space science very accessible to the general public. He

went on 'The Big Bang Theory,' he's been on science shows, he's willing to come to a high school and talk to kids which is a phenomenal way to use his skill set."

Along with the picture, Massimino wrote Cochrum a note saying, "To Lisa — with best wishes from the crew of Atlantis STS-125." Atlantis STS-125 was the fifth space shuttle mission to the Hubble Space Telescope in which Massimino took part in.

"I respect the science that he has studied. I respect the fact that he took his degree and applied it in a new direction with NASA," said Cochrum. "It is exciting to me that you could major in something other than aerospace and end up working at NASA." -by Eileen Bui

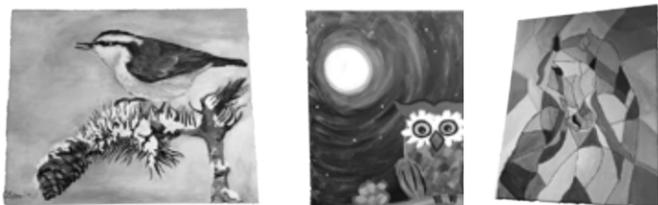


Cochrum



FALCON // KAITLYN WANG

Posters from music director Jason Shiuian's time at Northwestern University decorate his office.



FALCON // SAMANTHA YEE

In English teacher Emily Wu's classroom, many works of art decorate the walls, from picturesque paintings of birds to more abstract paintings, with shapes coalescing into an image.

## MOTHER RECALLED THROUGH PAINTINGS

Bright canvases are nestled on the edges of English teacher Emily Wu's classroom, some depicting small images of abstract colors and others with serene naturalistic depictions of birds.

She's kept these decorations throughout all the classrooms she's worked in: a testament of student class work, her own affinity for painting and gifts from home.

These various acrylic ornaments keep her in touch with memories, especially of her

mom, a retired nurse who took painting classes back at home.

"My mom just paints in her free time," said Wu. "So she started with abstract ones — easy ones like the fruit one on the cabinet — and she started doing more perspective stuff . . . nature scenes, and I loved that one so she gave it to me when I moved up here." -by Samantha Yee



Wu

## A WHITE LAB COAT OF REMEMBRANCE



FALCON // OLIVER YE

Many teachers keep items that are important to them inside their classrooms, whether they are essential to teaching a class or hold personal and emotional significance. For chemistry teacher Kathryn Nakamatsu, the lab coats that she wears when performing class demonstrations holds special meaning.

"This coat used to be my husband's," explained Nakamatsu. Her late husband, Jayson Chang, taught Honors Chemistry at Northgate High School, and the two met while grading Golden State Exam Chemistry exams.

"A month after we were engaged, he was diagnosed with cancer, and we were married for two and a half years," Nakamatsu said. "When I wear it, it is like a memory of my first husband. He was a fabulous teacher, and the world lost a great teacher when he passed away."

Today, Nakamatsu wears the lab coat in memory of her late husband, trying to emulate the passion and energy he displayed while teaching the subject he loved. -by Oliver Ye

## POIGNANT POSTERS



Shiuian

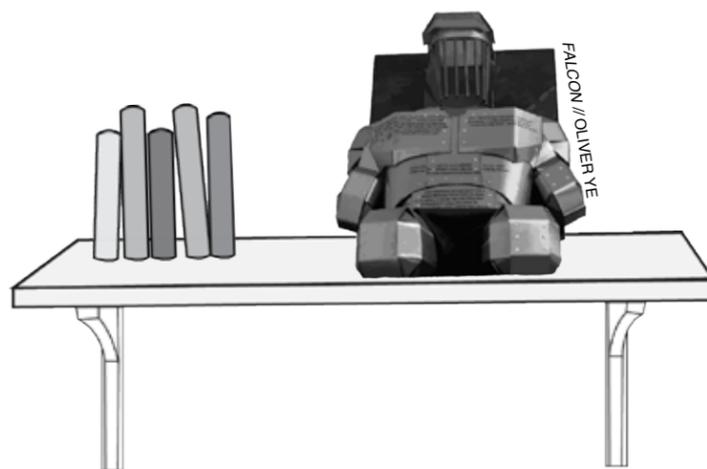
Various personal belongings, gifts and motivational quotes fashion music director Jason Shiuian's office, but several framed posters from his experience at Northwestern University stick out to him among the hodgepodge of diverse mementos.

One of them showcases his experience directing the musical "Titanic."

The other displays Shiuian's first saxophone professor, Frederick Hemke.

"While I was [at college], he retired, so there was this big giant gathering of all his students that he taught for 50 years, and so that's a memory," Shiuian said.

Although these flyers may seem like just another poster on the wall, their presence can remind Shiuian of his past schooling roots and how much he's progressed since. -by Samantha Yee



FALCON // OLIVER YE

A silent warrior, a welded suit of armor done for an independent reading project by 2015 alumni Matthew Peterson sits high up on a cabinet in English teacher Amy Keys' room.

## 'WELD-DONE' ARMOR FOR ENGLISH CLASS



Keys

After 29 years of teaching English, Amy Keys has acquired a large collection of exemplary student projects, some of which she continues to display in her classroom. Out of all of the items in her room, Keys identified her favorite as an incomplete suit of armor made by former student Matthew Peterson, Class of 2015, for an independent reading project.

The suit was inspired by the book "Johnny got his Gun" by Dalton Trumbo in which the main character participates in World War I, causing him to lose his arms, legs, and ability to speak, as represented by the missing limbs of the armor. However, the character retains the ability to think, leaving him trapped in his body, which is symbolized by the cage over the helmet.

"I was impressed that Matthew learned to weld specifically for this project," Keys said. -by Eileen Bui



# THE THINGS THEY CARRIED

TEACHERS REFLECT ON FOND MEMORIES HELD IN PICTURES AND OBJECTS IN THEIR ROOMS

## WALL OF PETS GROWS YEARLY



FALCON // SAMANTHA YEE

Sixteen years ago, when one of English and MAP teacher Cathy Head's former student's kitten fell asleep on his AP textbook, the student did what any reasonable pet owner would do: he took a photo. After he gave the set of photos to Head, she tacked it on her classroom wall.

Seeing the example, other students brought pictures of pets to add to the now-established "Pet Wall," including cats, dogs, chickens, rabbits and birds.

Starting with a student's photo of their dog Rafiki, Head started asking students to label the pictures of the pets

they'd bring.

About five years after a student brought pictures of their chickens, Head said that that student's younger sister found herself wondering why her family's chickens were pictured on the wall.

The same coincidence happened with cat shots from the one family.

As new classes came in, students would often ask Head why their pet was on her wall.

This collage of animals has kept Head in touch with remnants of graduated students in a way, keeping them in the family.

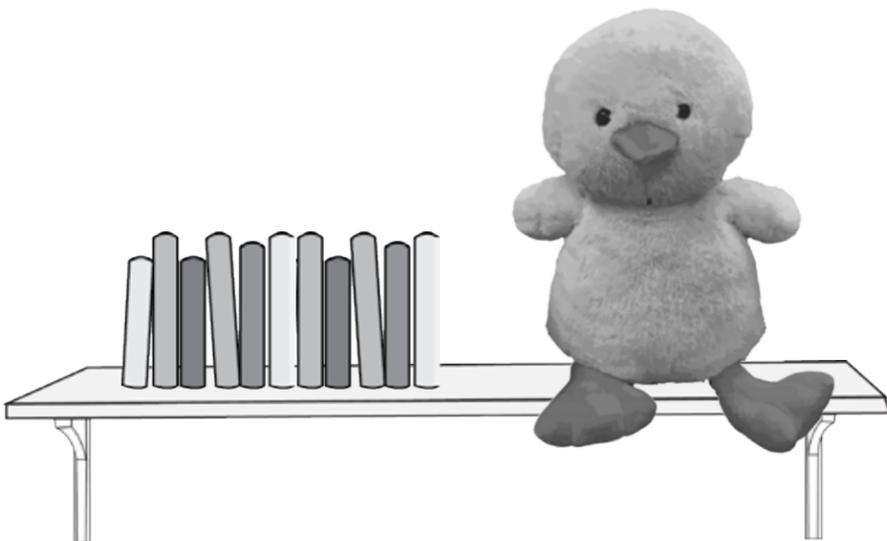
-by Samantha Yee



Head



English teacher Catherine Head has a collection of pet photos from current and past students.



The duck, donated to AP Physics teacher Kirk Davis by 2018 alumna Allyson Chang, sits in a variety of spots in his room.

## PHYSICS DUCK-GREE

From fun gadgets to stuffed animals, AP Physics teacher Kirk Davis's room is home to a variety of toys. Last year, the most noticeable elephant in the room — or in this case, a large yellow duck — waddled its way into the classroom as a gift from 2018 alumna Allyson Chang. The duck, who often listens to Davis's lectures along with students, joins Davis's collection of a heat lamp, fancy thermometer, fake light switch, weiner dog that turns into a pen, two halves of a pear (because forces come in pairs, according to Newton's Third Law of Motion) and more. This year, Davis added a snowman that spins in a circle and sings a song. Most of these items were gifts from students, Davis said.

-by Sherrie Shen



Davis

## MEXICAN TOY TOP EVOKES MEMORIES



FALCON // OLIVER YE



Voorhees

On one of her bookshelves, Spanish teacher Sarah Voorhees keeps a small toy, nestled between gifts that she has received, including a clay skull and a wooden train. It is a small, wooden, handmade top that spins when you pull on the shoelace attached to it.

"If there's nothing in the way it will spin forever and ever," explained Voorhees. "It just makes me so happy because the kids [in Mexico] play with this kind of stuff for a really long time and not on their phones."

The top was given to her by her "host papa" when she attended the school trip to Cuernavaca around three years ago.

Voorhees especially appreciates that children in Mexico are not so "obsessed with their phones" as other children in other parts of the world. -by Oliver Ye

## 50TH BIRTHDAY COMES EARLY

"This was the best prank I ever pulled," said veteran science teacher Kellyann Nicholson, as she looked wistfully at a photo on the wall above her office of fellow science teachers Lisa Cochrum and Kristen Thomson in shiny skirts. Above that photo hangs a large, shiny, blue number 50.

In 2000, Nicholson was the judge for a competition in which Cochrum and Thomson were vying to see who could wear a dress to school for the most consecutive days.

Feeling that the competition was a bit boring, Nicholson decided to work with former principal Kevin Skelly to pull a prank on the pair.

"I wrote a big fancy letter about how [the competition] needed to 'cease and desist,' and I used all sorts of fancy words in it," Nicholson said. "I wrote that it was 'exclusionary and it made people uncomfortable,' and I went down to the office and made Mr. Skelly sign it."

When Cochrum and Thomson received the letter, they thought it was real and went down to the office to try to straighten the situation out.

They soon realized that the letter was a prank and vowed revenge. "They latched onto a plan to hold a '50th birthday party' for Nicholson.

"Back in your 30s you didn't want people to think you were old," Nicholson said. "They decorated my room even though it wasn't my



Nicholson



FALCON // OLIVER YE

birthday and they wore these god awful dresses for me."

For the next week, all of Nicholson's students thought she was 50 years old.

"They got me back good," Nicholson said with a smile. -by Oliver Ye



Courtesy of CREATIVECOMMONS.ORG

GRAPHIC BY KAITLYN WANG

BY Anna Novoselov

Freshman Anouk Yeh gazed over a crowd of 700 people clustered at the Frank Ogawa Plaza in front of Oakland City Hall. With words full of force and emotion, she performed three slam poems she had written — one about feminism, one about seeking asylum and one about gun control — as people cheered and shouted support.

To the boy in her writing class she said, “understand when I say feminism, I do not mean the genocide of chivalry,” and to the asylum seeker she voiced, “I wonder what it is about migration, or chasing salvation, that asks to be antagonized into bloodthirsty home invasion.”

Yeh believes that her words helped move a lot of people and exposed them to a different perspective.

“It felt really exciting, especially since I could feel the energy radiating from the crowd, almost as if they were hanging on to every single word I was saying,” Yeh said. “When I was speaking, it almost felt like there was an electric current in the air.”

She was pleasantly surprised about how well the audience received her performance for the annual Oakland Women’s March on Jan. 19, where she was invited by the women’s march “afterparty” organizer Rita Forte. Afterward, numerous marchers praised her and gave feedback. A young girl even said that Yeh was her inspiration.

Advocating for the causes she supports has helped Yeh discover her political beliefs and solidify her stance on several issues.

**Yeh becomes involved with activism**

Yeh began writing slam poetry last summer and got involved in youth activism a few months ago. At first, she was afraid that people would criticize her for speaking about controversial issues such as gun control and the true meaning of feminism, but now she thinks that people are grateful that she is willing to voice her beliefs.

“A lot of people might be scared to go into activism because it might seem daunting,” Yeh said. “But I think the most important part is to keep in the back of your mind that what you’re doing has a greater purpose than just yourself and that it may be benefiting people you don’t even know.”

She is part of the slam poetry team at DMC studios MACLA, an organization aiming to help young people gain the courage to participate in social movements. Slam poetry, which combines performance, writing and powerful emotions to stir an audience and transfer personal experiences or beliefs, is one art form that activists may use to discuss social and political issues.

She was inspired by the 2017 Brave New Voices International Youth Slam Poetry Festival winner, Samuel Getachew, whose political poetry taught her the importance of



Courtesy of ANOUK YEH

**Freshman Anouk Yeh performs at the Tournament Entertainment Poetry Slam in San Jose.**

participating in the fight for reform.

Yeh said that youth activism is gratifying and has a larger potential for impact than some people may think.

**The Civil Rights Movement, the anti-Vietnam War protests, Tiananmen Square, Arab Spring, the Indigenous Water Rights Movement and March for Our Lives were sparked by youth or largely motivated by youth action.**

Youth activism involves young people speaking out about issues to raise awareness and bring about social change. It has played a crucial role in sparking prominent movements.

**Examples of youth activism**

One of the earliest examples of youth activism is the 1899 Newsboys’ Strike in New York City. When The New York World and New York Journal owners, Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearst respectively, raised the price of 100 newspapers from 50 to 60 cents, the homeless boys who sold newspapers on the streets to earn a living were outraged. They rallied and went on strike, refusing to sell any more newspapers.

Although Pulitzer and Randolph did not lower the newspaper prices, the newspaper publishers agreed to buy back any unsold papers at the end of each day. This demonstration inspired protests around the nation as more youth demanded social change.

A recent wave of youth activism came about following last year’s Feb. 18 shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla. After 17 of their former classmates were killed and 14 wounded, a group of teenagers, including Emma Gonzalez, David Hogg, Sam Zeif and Julia Cordero, began advocating for harsher gun restrictions and greater safety in schools.

By organizing nationwide March For Our Lives protests and promoting the hashtag “#neveragain,” they garnered attention from people of all ages, spurring others to join the movement for gun control.

**The power of social media**

Special education resource aide Michael Morosin emphasized the power of social media to amass widespread attention.

“The internet is this door to issues that are far away from the area you happen to be living,” special education aide Michael Morosin said. “There’s a greater consciousness on youth today that they’re all connected and that they have very similar issues, whether they’re living in North Dakota, or Florida or California.”

Yeh said that even though the March for Our Lives activists were unable to create legislative change as of now, they opened up the eyes of innumerable people.

“I think that the youth have realized that even though they don’t want to grow up to become politicians or lawyers, that this is their future,” Yeh said. “If they don’t try to help steer the country in the right direction or try to do something, then this is going to be their mess to clean up.”

Morosin praised social media for its ability to spread awareness, generating movements almost instantaneously. When he was a teen in the 1960s, there was no mass media other than television, newspapers and

radios, so movements started from rallying in the streets or making phone calls.

Now, joining a movement is much easier. Social media provides a platform where youth activists can connect with others and reach many people with their message.

**Age should not dissuade young activists**

Morosin said that although young people don’t have the same financial power as adults, they do have numbers and passion.

“They can change things that we’ve tolerated for way too long,” Morosin said. “Just because they’re young doesn’t mean the should be disrespected or that their life experiences are too short.”

When Morosin was a teenager, youth activism was largely concentrated on anti-Vietnam War efforts. He said that people were passionate about the advocacy, as their lives were at stake if they were to be drafted into a war that many did not believe in.

Morosin himself attended several protests. He said that the protests were very successful, as they raised awareness and got “under (then-President) Nixon’s nerves.” Adults were forced to come to terms about identifying the reason behind the war, which spurred even more anti-war campaigns.

“People are rightfully outraged about what hasn’t been done by adults, so they participate in social movements,” Morosin said. “That is meaningful and powerful.”

In fact, six relatively recent influential social movements — The Civil Rights Movement, the anti-Vietnam War protests, Tiananmen Square, Arab Spring, the Indigenous Water Rights Movement and March for Our Lives — were sparked by youth or largely motivated by youth action.

**“Youth can change things that we’ve tolerated for way too long.”**



SPECIAL EDUCATION RESOURCE AIDE **Michael Morosin**

Yeh said that youth activism has helped close the culture clash between older generations and younger generations as adults have started taking youth activists more seriously. She said there is no age limit for young people wanting to get into activism.

“If you’re a youth activist, there will always be people trying to discredit you because you’re younger, and you should just brush that aside because if you really want to do this than that shouldn’t be a limit,” Yeh said. “If you’re passionate and have the drive and motivation, then you should be able to do it regardless of age.” ♦

**togatalks**

How effective do you think youth activism is? Can youth enact widespread social change?

“Youth activism helps create a new generation of people who are willing to be the change they want to see in America.”



senior Ria Jobalia

“It’s important for youth to actually care about what they are protesting for. Too many times I think youth just protest to be “morally right.”



sophomore Michael Burry

“While I support standing up for what you believe in, youth activism seems to inspire more news articles than change.”



sophomore Karen Lei

# Why I'm in the closet

COLUMNIST WEIGHS MERITS OF REVEALING HER SEXUAL ORIENTATION TO POTENTIALLY DISAPPROVING PARENTS

*Editor's Note: The author of this column wishes to remain anonymous to protect her identity in light of the deeply personal issues concerning her family she discusses in this story.*

My first experience talking about sexuality with my traditionally Asian parents was in middle school. We were on the reproductive/sex education unit in science, and I had come home curious as to why my parents hadn't given me the birds and the bees talk yet. In fact, I was curious as to why my parents hadn't given me any talks broaching topics such as puberty, intercourse and sexuality when I had already been having regular periods for a while. Even that subject was taboo; my mother had been scandalized beyond belief when I asked her to take me to CVS for tampons.

During one particular science class, I remember briefly brushing over the topic of relationships. We touched on same-sex couples and orientation, but my questions were left unanswered. It was that afternoon that I asked my parents what they would think if I came out as lesbian.

See, I'd been hearing clues about their stance on LGBTQA+ issues for a while. When we still watched TV shows together, my father had voiced his disapproval after finding out the lead of their favorite show was gay, while my mother had actually stopped watching. Every time I would ask them about their thoughts on current events in the news concerning LGBTQA+ issues, they would shy away from the topic, mumbling muttered excuses. I think they suspected from the beginning that their daughter had wildly liberal views compared to themselves.

That was why, when I began question-

ing my own sexuality during sophomore year, I was extremely hesitant to tell anyone — most of all my family.

Just as I had been navigating puberty by myself, I had to do it once again with my sexual orientation.

**Most of all, I'm worried that I won't be met with the same acceptance that my closest friends have afforded me.**

In the beginning, I was confused and more than a little scared. I knew — well, I thought I knew — that my parents would not accept me for being anything other than heterosexual. So, I turned to the internet.

I'd heard stories of classmates encountering explicit photographs, sleazy predators and random people who wanted to meet up on sites like Omegle. To be honest, I wasn't expecting any results or positive advice from my venture into the unknown. The actual outcome turned out to be much different.

Talking to people about my fears and concerns regarding my sexuality was a welcome release of all the pent-up questions and emotions I continuously repressed. It was only natural for me to want to find out more about myself, and I did that by discussing my predicament with random strangers on the internet. I received mixed advice.

Regardless of their opinions, there was

always one common thing that accompanied all of their replies — sympathy and stories about friends or family who had gone through the same thing I had.

It was a bubble-bursting moment for me. The number of stories I heard online about people in the same situations as me were a jarring glimpse into a world outside of my small comfort bubble. I started wondering if there were more students here who I could relate to.

To add to the confusion, I had begun a heterosexual relationship with a close friend who I hadn't even confessed my sexuality to yet. I was scared that if I came out, it would imply that I had somehow lied to him — that I didn't trust him enough to tell him about who I was.

In the end, the conversation went exactly how I hoped it would. So well, in fact, that I felt encouraged to come out to a few of my closest friends. Those conversations also turned out perfectly — a miracle that I hadn't expected.

Now, it was just a matter of deciding whether or not to publicly come out of the closet.

**I think they suspected from the beginning that their daughter had wildly liberal views compared to themselves.**

This, I was particularly hesitant about. I had overheard conversations between

my classmates before about how a certain student who had publicly come out was only attention-seeking, and I feared that I would be labeled similarly. I also didn't want to influence the opinions of people who didn't already know me without the label of my sexuality.

The truth is, I'm still undecided. A part of me wants to be able to reveal who I am to the classmates who I've spent four years of my life with, while a different part of me thinks that the trouble that might come with it just isn't worth it, especially since I'm already well into my last semester of high school.

Most of all, I'm worried that I won't be met with the same acceptance that my closest friends have afforded me. I'm afraid of being judged as someone I'm not, that assumptions will be made about the kind of person I am. I'm afraid that I'll come to regret my decision to come out, and that I'll begin to dislike myself for who I am simply because of the opinions of others.

It's this same fear that has thwarted me from coming out to my parents. I don't know what their reaction will be: "will" because I know that there will come a time in the future where I'll be forced to tell them. I don't know how I'll navigate that conversation, or if I'll be met with disgust, disbelief or even acceptance.

See, that day in middle school when I asked my parents what they would do if I came out, they looked up at me, my mother setting down her reading glasses and my father muting the game on the TV. I had been prepared for them to scold me for saying something so outrageous — to laugh incredulously at the outlandish notion. What I hadn't expected was an uncertain silence. ♦

## High school and college LGBTQ+ experience differs

BY Kaylene Morrison & Emilie Zhou

The transition from high school to college is usually accompanied by a mixture of fear and excitement; while college freshmen gain freedoms, they also acquire new responsibilities.

For members of the LGBTQ community, the former usually overshadows the latter.

"Being trans in college is radically different from high school," 2018 alumna Sasha Berkeley said. "College has given me the freedom to be myself that I never had before."

**"Being trans in college is radically different from high school."**



ALUMNA Sasha Berkeley

Berkeley, currently a freshman at the University of Oregon, first came out to her friends and family around the end of 2014. Berkeley said that while her high school experience was difficult in some ways, compared to many other trans students in the Bay Area, she is very fortunate since she has never been openly harassed.

Compared to high school, Berkeley has

found that students generally have more opportunities to explore and express their sexuality and identity in college. She has also found more LGBTQ groups and clubs on college campuses than in high school.

"High school is limiting because not everyone has figured out who they like yet, so it's a breath of fresh air to be in college and know people who are confident in who they are and who they like," Berkeley said.

For senior Caspiene Ebrahimi, who came out as bisexual in his freshman year and transgender in his sophomore year, it was difficult to be open about his identity in a high school setting. Ebrahimi also faced challenges with his parents when he came out, as they did not understand or seem to approve his decisions.

"My dad still doesn't call me by my chosen name [and] most of my family doesn't even know," Ebrahimi said. "I lost a lot of my friends here and when I came out, they just stopped talking to me and never explained why."

In addition, the school did not have many LGBTQ clubs on campus in previous years, as many LGBTQ students are "just terrified and closeted," Ebrahimi said. For example, the school did not have any LGBTQ clubs this year until a group of seniors and juniors brought back the Gay-straight

Alliance club, or GSA. GSA existed in previous years until 2017, but is currently the only LGBTQ club at the school.

However, numerous colleges and universities are offering a personal essay option for LGBTQ students to write about their experiences. For example, since 2014, Duke University has encouraged applicants to "share with more about how you identify as LGBTQIA+, [if you] have not done so elsewhere in the application" as one of their optional essay prompts.

According to the Huffington Post, prompts like these allow schools to "gain a complete and holistic picture" of its applicants, as admissions officers are able to acknowledge sexual orientation and gender identity as important aspects of a student's background, just like race, religion, ethnicity and age.

"LGBTQ applicants will benefit from answering this question because it provides a space to safely disclose their identities while minimizing concerns over the stigma that comes along with 'coming out' in a college essay," said Daniel Kort, president of Duke's undergraduate LGBTQ student group.

Though Ebrahimi understands the appeal of writing essays about being LGBTQ, this option doesn't appeal to him.

"Some people have a lot of pride in their struggle and what they've done to get over it and some people would rather just live their lives and ignore it," he said.

Berkeley, on the other hand, wrote about her experiences being LGBTQ and encourages other LGBTQ students to do the same if they are comfortable with it.

"Being LGBTQ is a valuable part of my identity, and I imagine it is the same for any other LGBTQ students," Berkeley said. "It shapes how you see the world, and reveals how other people see it too. The life experiences you gain from it are too immense to not reference when describing yourself." ♦

>> THE bigidea

### The LGBTQ+ Student Experience

#### Reality of College

Alumna Sasha Berkeley experiences more freedom in college as a transgender freshman at the University of Oregon

#### Limitations of High School

The newly-revived GSA club is the only LGBTQ+ club on campus

#### Identity in College Admissions

More and more colleges are including an optional essay allowing applicants to explain their LGBTQ+ identity

#### Difference in Opinion

Some students prefer to focus on the LGBTQ+ aspect to their identity while others prefer a more subtle take

# Resident artists at

## ◆ Kija Lucas explores the meaning of home and remembrance through photography

BY Kaitlyn Wang

Covered in elegant handwriting, papers lay spread out across the studio floor. Photographer Kija Lucas, a Montalvo guest artist, then arranged the notes on a black background. The arrangement will soon become another photo in her body of work “Collections from Sundown.”

“Collections from Sundown” features notes written by Lucas’s grandmother, who suffered from Alzheimer’s disease and passed away last summer. The notes range from reminders to perform certain tasks to descriptions of her experiences for the past 10 to 11 years.

“Collections from Sundown” is about [my grandmother’s] relationship with the world and her reality changing during that time when she was living with Alzheimer’s disease,” Lucas said. “I feel like it’s a collaboration with her, but she’s unwitting in the collaboration.”

Lucas began “Collections from Sundown” in 2014, a year before she first became a resident artist at Montalvo. Since 2015, Lucas has spent five months in total at Montalvo in month-long intervals, with her most recent residency ending on Feb. 9.

**“I want it to be a museum that everyone can feel comfortable in because they can see themselves reflected in it.”**

PHOTOGRAPHER Kija Lucas

### In Search of Home

When Lucas came to Montalvo in 2015, she was working on another body of work called “In Search of Home.” For that collection, Lucas traveled to 13 states significant to her ancestry as a person of Eastern European, African and English descent. She based her work on stories she read about family members who experienced America in different ways.

Focused on subjects like plant clippings, rocks and other artifacts from the places she visited, Lucas’s photos resemble scientific photographs or drawings, combining her exploration of her family history with her interest in taxonomy and classification.

While students learn about botanist Carl Linnaeus and his systems of taxonomy in science classes, they may not know that Linnaeus also named and defined five races of man in the 1700s.

“It was incredibly racist, and I feel like the people who made this country wanted to keep it very white,” Lucas said. “They used scientific methods in order to say that they were in the right. And it’s the same reason why right now several people in our government are trying to pass incredibly racist laws in this country.”

“In Search of Home” explores how people often inherit these outdated ideas.

“We accept things that have been passed down since the 1600s or 1700s, but those were actually ideas that were made up by people,” Lucas said. “How do we grapple with that and how obviously race is something that’s embedded in our society?”

Like “Collections From Sundown,” the

photos from “In Search of Home” are all scans on a black background. Lucas treats different objects the same way, whether they are flowers or weeds.

“People speak very similarly about botanicals as they do people — the idea of native and invasive species,” Lucas said. “I use cultivated plants that are considered traditionally beautiful, but also things like weeds from the side from the road. Then I show them in the same way in order to talk about that hierarchy that we’ve created.”

### Objects to Remember You By: An Index of Sentiment

Lucas’s other works also emphasizes the significance of objects. For “Objects to Remember You By: An Index of Sentiment,” she has documented people’s sentimental objects over the course of several years.

“Objects to Remember You By” is about what we choose to hold on to in our lives and what makes us feel at home, but also what museums choose to hold on to and what stories our history books choose to tell,” Lucas said.

Lucas has created a “museum that will live on the internet” with photos of objects, along with information about the objects and their owners, who range from 66-year-olds to 4-year-olds living across the country.

Even though objects like a worn stuffed animal or a damaged pair of shoes might seem insignificant to other people, they can contain an aura someone has imbued the object with, Lucas said.

Lucas would like to raise money to build a more comprehensive website that would look more like a museum.

“I want it to be a museum that everyone can feel comfortable in because they can see themselves reflected in it,” Lucas said. “I don’t think vvv museums or history museums are always welcoming to people. A lot of times they have objects that are stolen or

maybe taken out of context, and so we don’t always all feel represented in that.”

### Distance from home

Lucas continues her search of home both as a body of work and as a personal pursuit. Although Lucas has always lived in the Bay Area, she often moves around because the cost of living is so high, leading her to question what home is.

Arriving at a residency can sometimes come with feelings of discomfort working in a certain area, Lucas said. She brings objects like her coffee mug with her — “something that feels yours” — to help her adjust to a place faster.

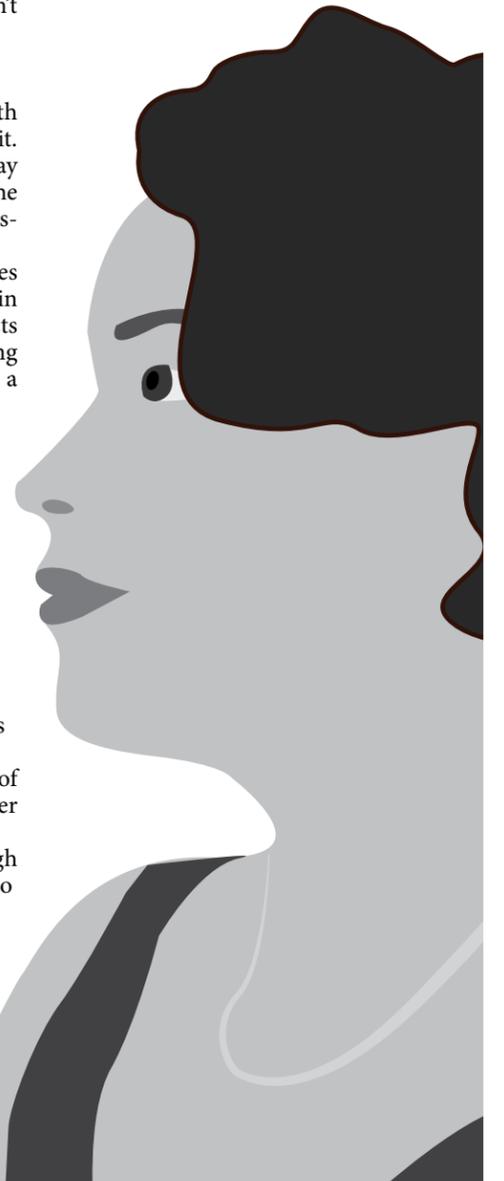
Lucas finds it hard to feel settled in a place. Constantly looking for that feeling, she considers home to be more of a concept than a concrete location.

“I feel like home is more of an idea than an actual place,” Lucas said. “It’s interesting because once you leave and go back to a place, it feels different. But part of that is because you’re different as a person, like I’m different than I was when I was growing up at home. Going back, it feels like it’s shifted, but it’s really me that’s shifted more.”

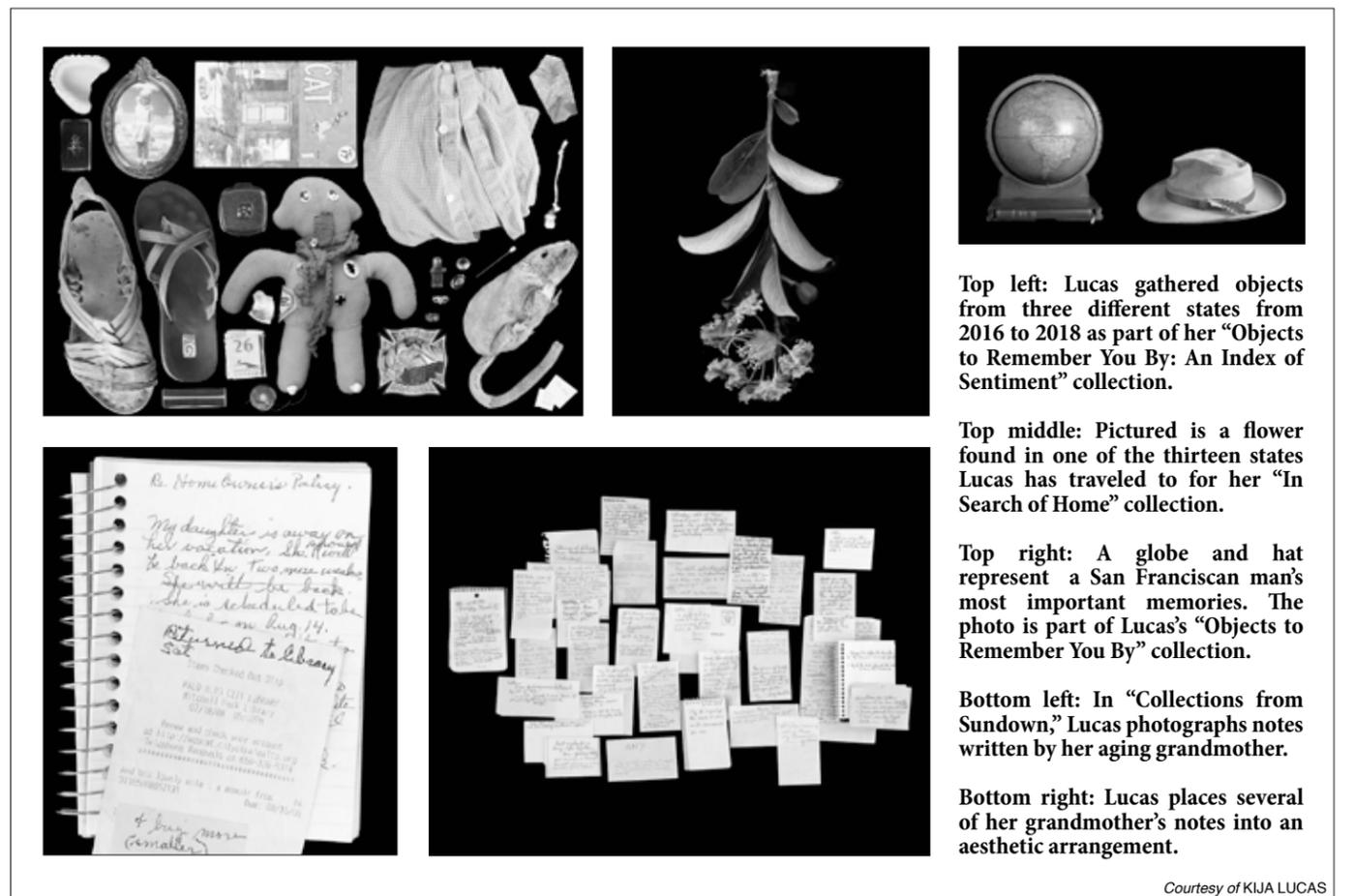
Now, Lucas continues exploring ideas of “home, heritage, and inheritance” in her work.

She considers Montalvo far enough away from her home in San Francisco to minimize distractions, enabling her to sit down and focus for longer in a space specifically made for artists.

“There’s something really amazing about being able to roll out of bed, make some coffee and just walk across four feet to the studio and start working,” Lucas said. “It’s a really magical place that Montalvo has made for artists to focus on their work.” ◆



GRAPHIC BY EMILIE ZHOU



Top left: Lucas gathered objects from three different states from 2016 to 2018 as part of her “Objects to Remember You By: An Index of Sentiment” collection.

Top middle: Pictured is a flower found in one of the thirteen states Lucas has traveled to for her “In Search of Home” collection.

Top right: A globe and hat represent a San Franciscan man’s most important memories. The photo is part of Lucas’s “Objects to Remember You By” collection.

Bottom left: In “Collections from Sundown,” Lucas photographs notes written by her aging grandmother.

Bottom right: Lucas places several of her grandmother’s notes into an aesthetic arrangement.

Courtesy of KIJIA LUCAS

# Montalvo

## Montalvo Artists Residency Program

The Sally and Don Lucas Artists Residency Program (LAP) seeks artists who have the potential to become "major voices in the next generation of creative thinkers." Selected artists are offered a 1-3 month fellowship in which they live and create at Villa Montalvo, utilizing the natural environment and collaborative opportunities the program offers.

## ◆ Poet Ariana Reines draws inspiration from different cultures, artistic styles, natural world

BY Samantha Yee

A published free-form poet, playwright, performing artist, French-language translator and astrology connoisseur, Ariana Reines was a resident artist at Montalvo Arts Center up until recently.

Reines has published multiple books, such as "The Cow" and "Thursday," and her poetry takes on a distinct style and subject matter: internal body-and-mind experiences, derived from Reines's hope to truly connect with others.

"The cool thing about poetry is it's close to the body because it's measured by the breath," Reines said. "I find that [poetry is] an exciting medium where all human beings have these bodily experiences."

In much of her work, Reines delves into the innate intimacy and intensity of poetry — how every poet's internal beat is different, offering them guidance in dividing the lines in their poems based on "some mysterious metabolic rhythm."

Her writing style is based on spoken conversations. To her, it sometimes feels like people are "talking" to you but not "speaking" to you, and instead they're putting words into the atmosphere and creating a sort of energy between the two people. Reines's goal with much of her poetry is to recreate this type of experience for the reader.

"Whether it's a night that you spend talking to your best friend or to someone you just met, there's something electric," Reines said. "That's something that I personally feel starved for."

Reines also "namedrops" other artists as characters within her work, an ele-

ment inspired by circles of poets from the New York School of Poetry who put each other's names and personal details in their writings, creating a feeling of "intimacy and glamour."

The Bay Area is just one of the places where Reines has lived, and the variety of people, cultures and relationships she's experienced has helped to sculpt her voice as an artist.

"There is this moving constellation of friends that are part of my world," said Reines. "It's not that it's a specific circle; it's like we're all these moving parts in a very strange time for the culture and the planet, and some of us bump into each other in different places."

Because her grandparents lived in the French-speaking region of Belgium, she learned to speak the language.

Wanting to include French in her work and deepen her relationship with the French language and culture, she started working as a French-speaking translator nine years ago, when she translated three works at the request of friends' publishers.

"When a great poet translates another great poet, there's an intimacy there," Reines said. Reines expresses her love for French with translation, so while other translators do it professionally, she translates as a "spiritual" or "artistic" exercise so she can have a piece of that culture with her even when she can't express it fully in a non-French-speaking country.

Reines has also explored culture and art through playwriting. Armed with a taste for the whimsical nature of spoken word, Reines's first play, called "Telephone," was an "unleashed torrent of language."

However, since then, she's begun to explore more physical movement and art in her plays.

This decision was inspired by a commission with Jim Fletcher, an actor Reines met in New York City. She and Fletcher happened to have the same birthday, but they were starkly different in appearance — Fletcher is male, two feet taller, older and "powerfully" built, "sort of like a superhero." But with their connection being their shared birth date, Reines wanted to play with the parody idea that they were equals.

She wanted to experiment with the idea of bringing words out of the extravagant movements of the actors on stage.

"In the traditional play, there's a bunch of words and the actors come and make it physical, but I got really interested in reversing that," Reines said. "Sort of exploring what if the writer was just like a dumb animal? And the language and the plot and the structure would come out of that, so it was a very different working process."

The play, influenced by her meeting Fletcher, was titled "Mortal Kombat," inspired by the video game. It was structured with rounds of physical fighting, the ultimate idea being a fair fight with an adversary.

"The play, which we performed in Switzerland, Canada and New York, became a

really interesting laboratory for exploring," Reines said. "Not just the relationship between fighting and dance, the relationships between unspoken aggression and verbal confrontation, but also looking at the ways that very different bodies try to negotiate dominance in space, and so it was a really exciting, fun, weird experience."

**"Whether it's a night that you spend talking to your best friend or to someone you just met, there's something electric."**

POET Ariana Reines

Another type of insight that further expanded Reines's artistic life is her practice of astrology. She had initially been adverse to working with anything witchy or cult-related, since her mother's schizophrenia had manifested when her mother developed an obsession with astrology.

However, when Reines was in Haiti after the 2010 earthquake, she saw a voodoo priest using astrology as an integrative approach to healing people.

"That really was eye opening for me, and that's when I thought, 'it's time to stop being afraid of this thing that my mom was so passionate about and start thinking about it more consciously,'" Reines said.

After that encounter, she began her New York based astrology project called Lazy Eye Haver, where she works with individuals' horoscopes to hear their stories and offer insight into their lives in a unique way.

"I called it 'Lazy Eye Haver' because there's something kind of funny to me about what we're supposed to be looking at in our lives," Reines said. "Like, are we supposed to be looking at the reality in front of us, or what's happening 'over there?' So I liked the thought of having one eye on the physical manifest of reality and the other eye looking out at somewhere else."

Although she's enjoyed traveling all over the world and collecting unique experiences in each place, Reines has decided to stay in California for a while. She's spent time in California before, having lived with old friends in Berkeley. The Bay Area is also a notable hub for poets and has a well-rounded art and culture scene that she can celebrate.

The residency at Montalvo, in particular, contributed to Reines's decision to stay in the state. She felt pulled toward the variety of plants and animals sprinkled around the grounds.

A unique aspect of her poems are the references to constellations and musical notation, and she wanted to add natural elements like Montalvo's Redwoods, fungi and insects to her pieces as well.

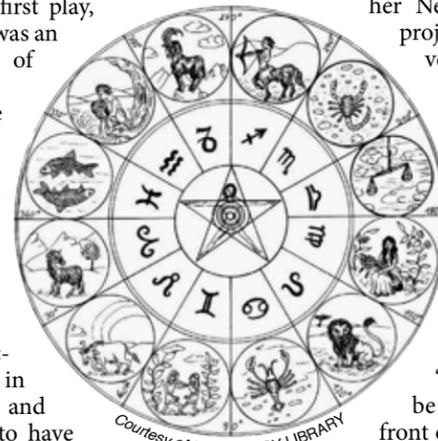
"The trees, the smell of nature, it's a real nice fit for me," she said. "It's really magical. California, the state, I'm a fan." ◆



### "I can't sleep you can't eat"

by Ariana Reines

Consumed with voluptuous privacy  
My boat she sailed upon the surge  
Fat bees come around me to suck  
The flowers I cross my legs  
Tight n hold in my nectar neither  
Known nor seen do I want to be  
Not even touched by none  
But you but out the corner  
Of my better eye I suppose I do  
See shimmering the singed edges  
Of my mortality the leaves of even  
This book a breeze shall blow  
Open the sun upon my shoulder  
Where I cannot see it grazing  
My secret forge the single  
Yolk of an egg only the mouth  
Of one poet



Courtesy of ASTROLOGY LIBRARY



# Couples explain meaningful stories behind their favorite love songs

BY KevinSze

Whether you spent Valentine's Day with the love of your life or your math homework and those really delicious chocolates you bought for yourself, everyone can appreciate love songs and the

powerful emotions they often evoke. For couples, there is often that one song that embodies their relationship.

Perhaps it's the song that came on the radio when they were on their first date, or when they sat under the stars and a romantic song played in the background.

Personally, I am in a long-term relationship with BonChon, but sadly for us, we don't have a song.

I set out to find couples at the school and ask them about that special song that embodies their relationship and reminds them of good times.

# Movies to get through post V-day sadness

BY AngelinaChen & AmandaZhu

Who isn't guilty of watching cheesy romance films one after another, wishing that they too could experience that kind of love? These six movies we've selected are perfect for a chill night spent at home in bed.

Starring Ryan Gosling and Rachel McAdams, "The Notebook" is a beloved classic that never fails to draw a few tears. Released in 2004, the movie follows a lower-class boy, Noah, and a rich girl, Allie, who fall in love. But after Allie moves away, and Noah serves in World War II, they face difficult obstacles that test their love for each other. Whether you are rewatching it for the fifth time or just discovering it, "The Notebook" is a great movie describing how no matter the challenges, love will always prevail.

Another good but lesser-known movie, starring Blake Lively, is "Age Of Adaline," a love story surrounding a woman who suddenly stops aging for an unknown reason. This film, released in 2015, will make you think about what in life really matters and what isn't as important. As compared to other movies, the mood of this film is more serious and related to the topic of missed opportunities. If you're looking for a tragic love story that has a surprising twist, this movie is for you.

If you are looking for a movie that can make you simultaneously laugh and cry in a span of 20 minutes, "Me Before You," released in 2016, is the movie you need to watch. This film is on the serious side and touches on themes like death and depression that people often avoid. It follows the story of a young woman, Lou Clark (Emilia Clarke), who becomes a caregiver for a paralyzed man (Sam Claflin) and tries to show him that life is worth living.

In August 2018, the lighthearted Netflix original "To All the Boys I've Loved Before" aired to great acclaim. It tells the story of a teenage girl, Lara Jean, who writes letters to her crushes that she never plans to send out. But after somebody sends out the letters, Lara Jean's life is turned upside down. But due to a series of unexpected events, she ends up faking a relationship with a popular boy in her school, Peter Kavinsky. But will Lara Jean work up the courage to tell him her true feelings?

If you want a consistently watchable romantic comedy, "P.S. I Love You," released in 2007, follows a woman who loses her husband to an illness, but discovers on her 30th birthday the first letter out of 10 that he wrote for her before he passed away. This classic surpasses most other cheesy romantic movies and will definitely give you a good cry.

Perhaps the most well-known romantic movie of all time, "Titanic," released in 1997, is one of the best blockbuster movies ever created. The movie follows a rich woman, Rose, played by Kate Winslet, who is set to marry a wealthy man named Cal but ends up falling in love with a poor man, Jack, played by Leonardo DiCaprio, aboard the Titanic. You will definitely be in for a ride with the iconic scenes and heart-wrenching moments in this movie.

Who needs a date to spend the afternoon with when you have these six romantic movies and a bucket of popcorn to keep you company? ♦



When I asked junior Joelle Compeau if she and senior Nick Bray had a song that was special to them, she responded simply with "the Pina Colada song."

Dumbfounded, I googled "the Pina Colada song," which I found out was of-

## Nick Bray and Joelle Compeau: 'The Pina Colada Song' by Rupert Holmes

ficially titled "Escape" by Rupert Holmes.

The song is about an unhappy couple who both publish ads in a newspaper to look for a partner to run away with. They eventually find each other's ads and decide to run away from their original relationship, only to be confronted by the same person they ran away from.

Bray first played it in his car, and although he felt like it was "a bop" and "super catchy," Compeau didn't like it as much.

"I could tell Joelle did not appreciate the first few verses the first time I showed her the song," Bray said.

Compeau found the lyrics a bit con-

tradictory to a successful relationship, but she enjoys the song because it brings back memories.

"I thought it was special because he played it when we were on the way to the beach," Compeau said. "He really liked the song and knew every word and I thought it was really cute."

On the other hand, Bray believes that the overall message of the song is one that couples should always keep in mind.

"The song is about your partner's aspirations that you didn't know about," Bray said. "It reminds us that we are separate people with big goals and encourages good communication."

## Kay Jewler and Santiago Dutro:

When senior Santiago Dutro first heard "Sunflower" by Rex Orange County he knew his girlfriend senior Kay Jewler would enjoy the vibe of the song.

"I knew that Kay would like it as well," Dutro said. "It just has such a warm feeling without being too 'lovey-dovey', and I just felt that she would appreciate it as much as I did."

The song highlights the singer's near obsession with his significant other and uses a metaphor of a sunflower to symbolize purity, beauty and delicacy.



Although the song began as just another love song, it led Dutro to take Jewler to a Rex Orange County concert last November

## 'Sunflower' by Rex Orange County

at The Regency Ballroom.

Although the concert was crowded, they had a blast and will always remember that night.

"It was really hot and crowded because we were in the general admissions pit but it was still so fun," Jewler said. "[Rex Orange County] did a cover of 'No One' by Alicia Keys which I listened to a lot when I was kid, so it was a cool combination of my taste of music now and what I listened to growing up, making the night even more special."

## Nick Patil and Ashley Feng: 'Moon River' cover by Frank Ocean

Senior Nick Patil has always been a Frank Ocean fan, so when the artist dropped a cover of "Moon River," a 1961 ballad performed by Audrey Hepburn, a day after Valentine's, Patil quickly told his girlfriend, senior Ashley Feng, to give it a listen.

The song was written by Henry Mancini and Johnny Mercer and sung by Hepburn's character Holly Golightly during a short but impactful scene from the iconic 1961 film "Breakfast at Tif-

fany's."

Feng fell in love with the song when she first listened to it, and it is now one of her favorite romantic, slow songs, even though it's completely different from her usual style of music, which consists of bangers from rappers like Aminé and Travis Scott.

"It was a little sad but sweet and definitely more of Nick's style of music than mine," Feng said. "It was one of the first songs he ever showed me that was more



slow and quiet, so it always brings up loving memories." ♦



Playlist by Francesca Chu and Amy Tang

Not feeling the love?  
Forever alone?  
The Falcon has created two  
playlists just for you!



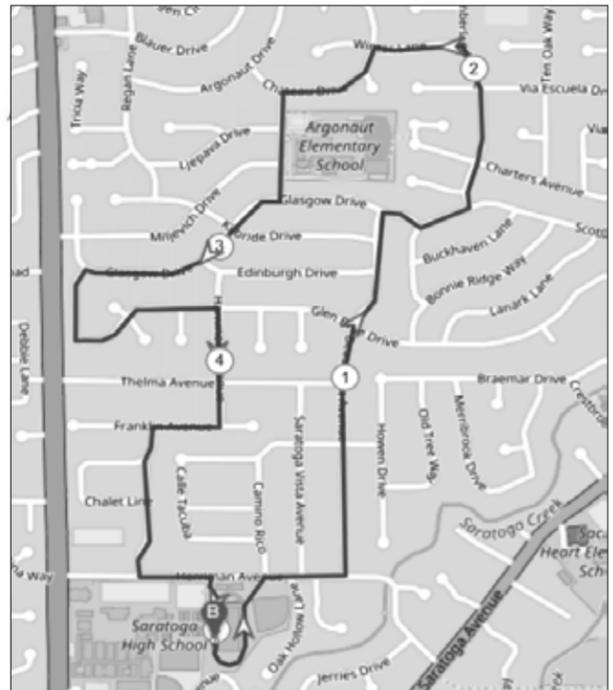
Playlist by Angelina Chen and Amanda Zhu



# 2019 Falcon Fun Run

Saratoga's First Annual  
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Sunday, March 3<sup>rd</sup>  
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Race starts and ends at Saratoga High School



**Pre-registration: Website**

**\$35 Adults**

**\$25 Students/Teachers/Seniors**

**Day of Event Registration: Starts at 8am**

**\$40 Adults**

**\$30 Students/Teachers/Seniors**

**Proceeds Support:**

**Saratoga High School Athletics**

# SHS Alumna reflects on her experiences winning bronze medal at 2004 Olympics

NOW A SUCESSFUL LAWYER, 1997 ALUM PATRICA MIRANDA EXPLAINS HOW SHS PLAYED A CRUCIAL ROLE IN HER PROFESSIONAL WRESTLING CAREER AND LIFE

BY Shama Gupta & Allison Hartley

The announcer's voice dipped lower, ending the list of names for 1997 alumna Patricia Adura Miranda's weight class. Anxious that she had made a mistake, Miranda hurried to the posting table to check her match schedule for the pre-season high school wrestling tournament in 1993.

"Someone scratched your name from the bracket," the volunteer said. Frustrated, Miranda realized that her father had driven to the tournament to remove her from the bracket.

But this tournament wasn't special — later, her father would scratch her name out time and time again and even threaten to sue the school to keep his daughter out of wrestling.

**During her senior year at Stanford, Miranda became only the second woman in NCAA history to beat a male opponent in competition.**

But Miranda, who was the only female wrestler at Saratoga High during her time here, went on to attend Stanford University and get bachelor's degree in Economics and a master's in International Policy Studies and become the first American to win a medal in women's wrestling, earning the bronze medal in the 106-pound women's weight class. Her pioneering journey was inevitably riddled with roadblocks, but English department teacher Cathy Head, who taught Miranda as a senior in AP Literature, said that Miranda was well equipped to break through.

"She was one of the bravest people I've ever met, especially when it comes to social concerns," Head said. "She was an idealist who did what she believed in."

Miranda's strong values may have morphed from the principles she developed in middle school.

Miranda's mother died of an aneurysm when she was young, setting a false notion in young Miranda's 10-year-old mindset that she, too, would die young. Looking toward the future, Miranda set a vision for what her life might be like.

"I came up with a basic principle that at the very least, I want to know myself before I die," Miranda said. "Mentally, emotionally, physically — know who I am."

Throughout middle school and the beginning of high school, Miranda did not abide by this vow, doing poorly in her classes and escaping all social interactions. After her freshman year, she truly started the process of "finding herself," taking continuous risks to find out who exactly she was.

"If anything scared me, I would do that thing," Miranda said. "The best way to get

to know yourself is to put yourself in challenging situations because that tells you who you are."

When she discovered wrestling in middle school and became committed to the sport in high school, Miranda found it integral in her identity, yet her father refused to let her continue — a gesture that she believed was due to her gender.

So in order to preserve their relationship, she eventually sat down with him and explained that she would have to make independent choices and that he would have to open up to her about what was troubling him.

To her father, the issue was not a matter of gender, but rather the constant concern of his immigrant family falling through the cracks.

Miranda's parents, who were both presidents of universities, emigrated from Brazil's military dictatorship in the 1960s, taking refuge in Canada before immigrating to the United States. To a Latino head of house with no family or friends to lean on, he had the mindset that her grades and education, not sports, were the only way to a better life.

Her father's adamancy pushed them to an agreement: She could continue wrestling as long as she maintained a 4.0 GPA.

At first Miranda didn't do well in school out of apathy, but ended her high school career with over a 4.0 GPA because of the conversation with her father, which she called an "essential milestone" growing up. She retook classes she failed, working hard to fulfill her promises to herself, her father and her future.

After she entered wrestling, her all-male peers presented more obstacles. To show their authority, seniors on the team tried to pressure her into quitting, which only served to motivate her to continue.

After overcoming discouragement from upperclassmen and earning their respect after her freshman and sophomore years, the team elected her as captain during her junior and senior years. The elected leadership position helped her feel more involved in the team, as the team — not the coach — had selected her.

Miranda continued wrestling through college at Stanford, where she earned a spot on the all-male Division 1 roster. One of her goals was to beat at least one male opponent in her college career, which she finally did at the very end of her five-year term.

Around the same time, women's freestyle wrestling was announced as an event in the Olympic Games for the first time. She hadn't even thought about participating until late in her career, when she attended the 2004 Summer Olympics Games.

Miranda fondly called wrestling a "catchall sport" — one that considers all body types and rewards the mentally tough.

"In wrestling, you are fatigued beyond anything you can possibly imagine. Every fiber gives up, and there's no energy left to fake anything," Miranda said. "Mentally



Miranda takes down her opponent in a preliminary round at the 2004 Summer Olympics. Representing the United States, Miranda won the bronze medal in the 48 kg weight class.



Miranda celebrates after winning her first Olympic Match.



Miranda makes her final move during the bronze medal match at the 2004 Summer Olympics in Athens, Greece.

Courtesy of Adura-Miranda



Patricia Miranda, 1997 Alum

too — so taxed, so scared — there's nowhere to hide. That's the cliché: You're out there in Spandex."

Reflecting on what became of her interest in wrestling, Miranda said a theme soon emerged: Wrestling impacted every aspect of her life positively.

"As a teenager, you can do [anything]," Miranda said. "Wrestling was very exhausting, but it provided a lot of motivation and opportunities for character building and better prepared me to handle future challenges."

After her undergraduate studies at Stanford, she graduated from Yale Law School.

**"Wrestling was very exhausting, but it provided a lot of opportunities for character building and it prepared me to handle future challenges"**

ALUMNA Patricia Miranda

Today, Miranda works as a partner at Miranda, Magden & Miranda Law Group in Salinas, which specializes in immigration, family law and bankruptcy. As a lawyer, Miranda said she uses the lessons learnt from her teenage years to help others.

She also draws on her experiences as a daughter of immigrants and someone directly affected by the challenges of a new country to connect to her clients. Another source of inspiration for her interest in law originated from learning about her own family history.

Not wanting the changing political times to be a central part of her identity,

Miranda's father only told her his heroic story when she was older.

During the severe unrest in Brazil in the 1960s, both her mother and father advocated for their beliefs in staged protests. They soon realized that they had to escape from their country through Uruguay, Chile and Canada to avoid torture before finally settling in the United States, where Miranda was born as the last of their three children.

Knowing the story made Miranda proud to "even be a tail-end to their story." Her parents fled through three countries to provide their children the tolerance and security that Miranda grew up with.

When Miranda volunteered in an immigration project to help enrich the society after college, it was already clear to her that she had a connection and passion for law.

She also felt that it would be a great privilege to fight for deserving people.

"I just feel fortunate to be on some sort of frontline to do, family by family, a little bit of good," Miranda said. "Being an immigration lawyer has taught me that it's all training to stand up and make the argument. Someone fought for my right. I became stronger to rely on and lean on myself because I know myself, who I am, and I worked on my weaknesses."

Miranda credited the starting buds of her strength in character to wrestling, which gave her validation for her path to becoming an immigration lawyer.

"In order to test and work on your character, you need to have a window to reach for and work on your building blocks," Miranda said. "[In wrestling], I passed over a threshold — normally, there isn't that avenue, and there's so many layers to hide under versus when you're exposed." ♦

The Falcon spoke with Miranda via a phone interview.

## BOYS' BASKETBALL

# After late season skid, Falcons look to regroup and get healthy heading into Division III playoffs

BY Justin Guo  
& Siva Sambasivam

The Falcons, who were originally headed for a top 2 seed in Division III CCS, will have to embrace their underdog status after a late-season losing streak.

Especially because of their Feb. 8 loss to the previously 1-21 Lynbrook Vikings, the Falcons will likely enter the playoffs as the fourth- or fifth-seeded team. They might still get a first-round bye if they are a fourth seed.

The Falcons were 14-9 headed into their final game Tuesday night vs. Fremont and no matter what, they will have a home CCS game. The game will either be in the first round or the quarterfinals, if they receive a bye.

However, their loss to Lynbrook was costly, and the Falcons are going to have to regroup and move on quickly.

Making it worse, the game was the team's Senior Night, and the Falcons fell just short of an amazing comeback, being down upwards of 20 points early in the first half.

In the fourth quarter, they had just turned the ball over and were forced to foul the Vikings' best free throw shooter allowing him to put his team up 4 with less than 30 seconds left.

In the remaining seconds of the game, the team's senior captains, Hanlin Sun and Kyle Yu, took over.

With the Vikings expecting the Falcons to shoot a quick 3 and go for a foul, Yu took what the defense gave him, driving to the lane for an easy layup to cut the lead to 2 with 22 seconds to go. He then picked off the Vikings' inbound pass, giving the Falcons a chance to win the game or force overtime with one final possession. Then, after their final timeout, Sun hit a elbow jumper after to tie the game, and force overtime.

Ultimately, the Falcons were not able to turn their momentum into a win, and ended up losing 85-82.

## Team shortcomings

The Vikings did not make a single field goal during the overtime, with all of their 11 points coming from the free throw line, a theme that has been representative of their



Photo courtesy of FRANK CHU

Senior Kyle Yu comes off a screen in the fourth quarter of the Falcon's Senior Night game against Lynbrook on Feb. 8. Yu scored on the possession, to tie the game.

recent struggles.

According to Yu, the main reason for the loss, was the Falcons' lack of defensive focus and discipline, fouling and sending the Vikings to the line at inopportune times during the extra period. Coach Patrick Judge has emphasized this aspect of the game as the one thing the Falcons have to tighten up heading into CCS.

Their defensive shortcomings were clearly indicated in the fact that it was the first time all year that the Falcons lost when scoring more than 60 points. They were previously undefeated in 6 games, when they hit that benchmark. Chu added that especially with the better offensive teams in CCS, when the pace slows down, the Falcons will have to achieve their goal of keeping teams to under 50 to be competitive in games.

Sophomore point guard Tyler Chu added that their previous drubbing of Lynbrook by 17 points played a huge role in their lax attitude toward the game. This has been a consistent theme for the squad, with the majority of their losses coming to teams that won't even make CCS.

"I think we were a bit too confident for the entire first quarter, and we just got too deep in a hole to come back," Chu said. "For

CCS, we have to come into every game with the mindset to execute on both sides of the ball, regardless of who we are playing."

## Getting healthy

The team lost their best big man, senior starting center Patrick Li to a sprained ankle during the second quarter against Lynbrook.

Li did not return to the game, and is expected to be sidelined for a week. Li's absence will likely hurt the team on both ends of the floor.

"Losing Patrick is a huge blow to our team," sophomore shooting guard Cameron King said. "Not only is he one of our anchors defensively, but he also really settles us on offense whenever we get into a funk."

In addition to Li, numerous players have been battling sickness over the last couple of weeks. The team's point guards Sun and Chu were both sidelined with the flu, against Monta Vista and Milpitas respectively.

The team hopes that they can get fully healthy heading into CCS, allowing them to return to early-season form where they were consistently blowing teams out.

"We've seen what we can do when we are all healthy and we all work together," said Chu. "As long as we get everyone back and

ready for CCS, we have a really good shot at making a deep run."

The Falcons beat the Monta Vista 62-59 in overtime on Feb. 4. They lost to the Milpitas Trojans 61-57 on Feb. 6.

## Looking Forward

Their recent struggles aside, the Falcons home court advantage for their first game, should loom large for their playoff success, as the team has only lost three home games all season.

"Our team has been extremely good at home for the most part this year," Yu said. "We really feed off the energy of the crowd to make our runs, and once we do, teams usually can't come back."

The comfort of playing at home will be extremely helpful for the Falcons not only to ensure early wins in CCS but also to help them gain momentum for the later, harder matchups on neutral ground.

But more important than the location of the game for the Falcons is the quality of the teams that they are playing. The team generally steps up whenever the competition increases, as evidenced by their numerous wins against teams in Division 1 or 2, including Los Gatos and Gunn. However, the Falcons have had trouble putting away teams that they should blow out, including Lynbrook.

"Most of our losses have come against teams that won't even make CCS playoffs, but we tend to really elevate our game whenever we play good teams," King said. "We know that whatever team we face, we can put ourselves in a position to get the win."

It's this mindset that gives the team confidence going into their playoff run. Despite the ups and downs of the season, the Falcons have shown spurts of complete dominance, against good and bad teams alike. They have never lost a game by more than seven points all season, and they are hoping everything will finally come together in time for their first CCS game.

"We have shown glimpses of absolute brilliance on both ends of the court, and we've become more and more consistent during the season," Yu said. "When it all finally comes together during CCS, we will be a scary sight for any team." ♦

## Why bandwagoning isn't only acceptable; it's the best

e-size  
money



Kevin Sze

As I write this, my favorite NBA team is the Golden State Warriors, my favorite NFL team is the Los Angeles Rams and my favorite MLB team is the Boston Red Sox.

I guess that makes me a "bandwagoner," a fan of the best team in a league for no reason other than they're good. Especially in sports, being a bandwagoner draws scorn and mockery. Abandoning a team you supported mere moments before is perceived to violate principles of loyalty and character.

On the contrary, bandwagoning isn't the despicable crime many avid sports fans make it out to be. Believe it or not, I wasn't always the bandwagoner I am today. In fact as a sixth grader, I was an avid San Francisco 49ers fan. For anybody who remembers the 2011-2013 stretch of 49ers history, it was three seasons filled with manic highs and depressing lows. After the NFC Championship Game in 2013 and the NBA Finals in 2015, I realized that being a "loyal" fan just isn't worth it. Here's why.

The 49ers lost the NFC Championship. They had been well in control for three

quarters, until former 49er quarterback Colin Kaepernick lost a fumble and then threw an interception (ironically tipped by now-49er Richard Sherman) that sealed the 49ers losing fate once again.

My dad, who had been a 49ers fan just 30 minutes ago, was now the biggest Seattle Seahawks fan. To my dismay, he cheered how great Russell Wilson was throughout the game, how smart Sherman was and how terrible the 49ers were.

Being the "loyal" fan that I was, that loss ruined most of my week, largely because Sherman ranted about how he was the best cornerback in the league, and the 49ers were headed back home empty handed despite an impressive season.

Two years later the Golden State Warriors won an NBA Championship, bringing a basketball title to the Bay for the first time since 1975. Throughout the year, I had been rooting for the Warriors to win. Now that they did, I came to a surprising revelation.

I felt empty. The playoff run that I had been so deeply invested in ended as abruptly as an elimination would have, and all the emotions I had felt throughout the season evaporated into thin air. If the Warriors went 0-82 and were declared the worst team in NBA history, it would've made no actual difference to my life. I didn't get a share of the players' earnings or get to hold the Larry O'Brien trophy.

When the 49ers lost, I moped around and didn't want to talk to anybody. When

the Warriors won, Steve Kerr didn't come to my door and thank me for being a fan.

For me, following sports is simply entertainment. Blindly investing my emotions into a team that doesn't even know me just isn't worth it. That's why bandwagoning is so great. I can guarantee the team I'm rooting for always wins, and

I leave each game happy because my team won.

I might be rooting for the Toronto Raptors to put a dent in the Warriors dynasty as I write this article, but don't be surprised if my allegiances change and I root for Demarcus Cousins to get his first ring. Either way, I can't lose. ♦

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## GIRLS' BASKETBALL

# With star-studded backcourt back, Falcons are poised to make a deep CCS playoff run

BY Ashley Feng  
& Anna Novoselov

Multiple injuries and strong competition in the De Anza League have prevented the girls' basketball team from winning as many games as they did last year in the lower El Camino League. However, they have pushed through the challenges and became a stronger team as a result.

"This season is about persistence," senior small forward Kitty Huang said. "Even though we had injuries and were missing players, we still played through and gave the best effort we got."

The team lost 51-40 to Palo Alto on Feb. 11, beat Mountain View 42-37 on Feb. 8, lost to Lost Gatos 55-48 on Feb. 5 and won 50-39 against Santa Clara on Feb. 1.

**"Even though we had injuries and were missing players, we still played through and gave the best effort we got."**

SENIOR Kitty Huang

As of Feb. 12, the Falcons were 4-8 in league and 13-11 overall.

They will likely play their first CCS game on Feb. 16, but as of Feb. 12, the Falcons are

still unsure of who their opponent will be.

Many of the starters and top scorers — including sophomore point guard Jane Loo, junior shooting guard Anika Prasad and senior post Kirstin Kruka — sustained injuries that kept them on the bench cheering on their teammates rather than playing in games for much of the year. Consequently, many other players have had to fill in their positions and play more than they would have otherwise.

While Prasad was able to play at the end of the league season, Kruka is still recovering. Loo and sophomore shooting guard Kaitlyn Yu (who was only recently injured) sat out for the Feb. 11 game against Palo Alto, but will play during CCS.

Huang said that the girls were nervous in their first three league games because of the new lineup and had difficulty scoring without their top players.

Last year, the team won almost every game in the El Camino league by a large margin and sailed to the league championship. But this year, the girls were challenged — both mentally and physically — by the strong competition in the De Anza league.

Coach Danny Wallace said that in the De Anza League, "every game is a good matchup," which helps the team prepare for CCS and gain experience playing at a higher level. Wilcox and Palo Alto, for instance, are ranked in the top 100 in California.

Wallace said that although the season has been rough, the girls remain strong competitors and dedicated to the sport. During practice, injured players watch on the sidelines in order to not fall behind and during games, and players are willing to step off the bench and assume a leadership role on the court.

Wallace hopes that next season players are able to stay healthy and prevent serious injuries.

Yu is one of the players who filled in for the injured players. Although the new role was difficult for her, she said that playing more has helped her and other players improve their basketball skills and become confident players.

"Everyone being able to touch the ball and get on the court was good for the team," she said.

Yu hopes that the girls improve their ball handling, develop higher basketball IQs and bond more in order to grow as a team.

Over the course of the season, the players created strong friendships through grueling practices, tough losses and joyful victories. Team bonding, especially at the West Coast Jamboree tournament in Concord, helped the girls bond as a team and learn to trust each other.

"Everyone on the team genuinely supports and encourages each other to get better as a team, and we give each other advice

as we see fit," Huang said.

While the team will lose seniors Rachel Bakke, Huang, Kruka and Hanna Zahabi to graduation, many strong underclassmen such as Loo, sophomore point guard Iris Lee, sophomore post Bereket Bailey and freshman post Amarangana Tyagi will remain as the nucleus of the team.

"I hope they can keep on playing hard like they've been doing," Huang said. "They definitely have a chance of winning league-champs next year if they have their full team with no injuries." ♦



Loo  
Point guard



Prasad  
Shooting guard

## >> scoreboard

Feb. 1

@ Santa Clara (W) 50-39

The Falcons took care of business against Santa Clara in a Friday Night away game.

Feb. 5

@ Los Gatos (L) 55-48

Despite beating Los Gatos at home earlier in the year, the Falcons were unable to pull out a win in their rivalry game at LG.

Feb. 8

vs Mountain View (W) 42-37

The Falcons got back on the right foot with a win on Senior Night against Mountain View.

Feb. 11

@ Palo Alto (L) 51-40

The team lost to the league-leading Palo Alto in their final league game of the season.

## Despite no basketball coaching experience between them, teachers Rector and Wang step up to guide JV girls team

BY Colleen Feng  
& Justin Guo

With the departure of Mike Davey at the end of last year from coaching basketball, the girls' JV basketball team had no head coach.

It was the second consecutive year where the girls were looking for a new coach to take the reins. This year, there was no clear-cut internal replacement to take over, especially considering Davey's run of success over 20 years coaching both boys' and girls' basketball, leading both teams into deep CCS runs and championship victories.

**"Coaching seemed like a really fun opportunity and a good way for me to experience basketball."**

TEACHER Erick Rector

Last summer, English teacher Erick Rector stepped up to the task along with the new computer science teacher Thomas Wang, who volunteered to be an assistant coach.

Though neither of them had any experience coaching basketball, they are both alumni who were heavily invested in sports during their time at the school.

Wang played basketball under Davey from 2006-2009, and Rector played basketball and rowed during his high school days,

graduating in 2000.

Their experience as athletes and their understanding of the sports landscape at the school led to a smooth transition into the job.

"I've always liked basketball and playing basketball, so the idea of coaching seemed like a really fun opportunity and a good way for me to experience basketball in a different way," Rector said.

Rector has previous coaching experience with the girls' lacrosse team, but just having coaching experience was not enough; Rector still had to research techniques of the game.

"I just had to really think about what kind of drills I would want the kids to do in order for them to improve as basketball players," he said. "So I ended up watching a lot of coaching tutorials and basketball tutorials on YouTube."

The plans that Rector came up with for the team have included basic dribbling drills and shooting drills. Along with that, he has included exercises that focus on defense. Making the situation especially challenging this year, the team has only eight players, compared with a roster that ideally would run 12 deep.

According to Rector, this small size makes it difficult to run drills since they can't even play five-on-five during practices.

In addition, a small team also forces the girls play for an extensive amount of time during games without taking a break,



Head coaches Erick Rector and Thomas Wang both coach the JV girls play during their home game against Mountain View on Feb. 8. Rector and Wang replaced Mike Davey, following his retirement from coaching the sport. The JV girls went on to win the game, 42-37.

whereas normally players would be alternating during the game.

Sophomore point guard Athena Mahajani said they adapt to their small numbers by increasing their stamina through running drills at practice.

Mahajani added that their small numbers have huge in-game implications.

"When teams press we usually take turns bringing up the ball so one person doesn't get too tired," she said. "We usually get extremely exhausted in the fourth quarter but we save up timeouts

so we get lots of rest."

Additionally, the team's offense differs from last season, something Mahajani attributes to Rector and Wang's efforts to encourage a more active offense by spreading the dependency among all teammates rather than just a few.

While last year the team's offense was more play-oriented, relying on a few players, Mahajani noted that "more players score this year than last year for sure." All things considered, the players are happy with their season,

boasting a record of 6-5 in league so far, and their last game of the season will be on Feb. 11 against Palo Alto.

Rector noted that the other coaches such as head coach Danny Wallace have helped guide him and Wang through the season.

"The other basketball coaches are a great support group. We spend a lot of time talking about prepping and going over the games, which really makes me feel like part of the coaching team," Rector said. ♦



GRAPHIC BY KAREN CHOW

### BADMINTON MOVES TO DE ANZA LEAGUE

**Head Coach:** John Li  
**2017-2018 record:** 12-0

**2017-2018 recap:** Despite breezing through all conference games in the lower El Camino division, the Falcons failed to send any players to CCS. This year, the team will do battle with the upper De Anza division.

**League:** De Anza Division

**Key Matchups:** Milpitas, Palo Alto

**Star Players:** Seniors Nathan Luk and Nicholas Zhang, junior Alvin Ren, sophomore Ryan Hsiao

**Key Additions:** Freshmen Enoch Jung, Victoria Tso

**Key Losses:** No. 1 boys' singles Stephen Ding, No. 1 girls' doubles Mana Shimokawa, No. 1 mixed doubles Cameron Chow

**Prognosis:** Following the graduation of many key players in the Class of 2018, the

team will be forced to fill its top positions with less experienced players. Returners and new talent from the Class of 2023 will prove vital to the team's success. Under the guidance of new coach John Li, the Falcons look to rebuild their position in the upper division.

With longtime head coach Charley Situ leaving to coach at Mountain View High School, the team found a new head coach in Li, who once played badminton semi-competitively in Taiwan, but now plays recreationally. Assistant coach Calvin Blocker will return to help out during practices and open gyms.

Although Li does not have much experience coaching, his experience as a com-

petitive player allows him to provide the team with valuable insights.

He plans on implementing a more rigorous training program by first having all players start in singles to train their strength, stamina and footwork.

Senior Nathan Luk, a returning captain, has been helping Li become more integrated with the team and is also working on scheduling preseason scrimmages.

He cites the large skill difference between Division 1 and Division 2 levels of play as a likely cause of "growing pains" for many of the underclassmen, who are not as accustomed to playing top-level oppo-

nents.

However, Luk remains hopeful as newcomers will help patch the holes in the lineup created when Ding and others graduated last spring.

"With internal improvement bolstered by incoming talent, I have full confidence in the ability of our team to get their footing and succeed in the upper division," Luk said.

Tryouts started Feb. 1 and the Falcons' first conference game will be against the reigning De Anza League champions, Monta Vista, on March 5. ♦

— Connie Liang and Sherrie Shen



**Luk**  
Senior captain

### BOYS' VOLLEYBALL TEAM REMAINS STRONG

**Head Coach:** Brendan Wang

**2017-2018 record:** 13-3 in the De Anza League, 18-7 overall

**2017-2018 recap:** The Falcons finished third out of the eight teams in the De Anza league. The boys made Division III CCS, but were eliminated in the first round by Pacific Collegiate.

**Key additions:** Junior Cameron Chow

**Key Matchups:** Monta Vista, Harker

**Star players:** Junior setter Mohan Duvvuri, senior hitters Derek Chiou, Joshua Lee and Usman Khan

**League:** De Anza Division

**Key Losses:** middle blocker Harrison Fong, outside hitters Collin Hovey and Evan O'Brien

\* Due to the lack of signups, there will be no JV team. \*

**Prognosis:**

After winning NorCal in 2015 and 2016 and placing 1st and 2nd respectively in CCS Division II during the 2015 and 2016 seasons, respectively, the boys struggled to keep up with their lofty expectations last season.

They dropped one division in CCS and failed to advance past the first round

in the CCS playoffs after losing alumnus Joel Schneidmiller to graduation in 2017. This season, the team will face a similar challenge in learning how to play without alumnus Evan O'Brien, who had been a staple on the team.

An additional challenge the boys will have to face is connecting with their new coach, Brendan Wang, a 2017 alumnus from Homestead High.

In spite of these challenges, junior captain Mohan Duvvuri believes the team still has potential, provided that seasoned players step up and lead the team.

"The upperclassmen that have experience are going to have to step up and take more of a leadership role," Duvvuri said. "This is our second straight year with a new coach, so the people who have been there are going to have to use their experience to help the team."

Tryouts concluded on Feb. 12, and the boys' first game will be on Feb. 27 against Lynbrook at home. ♦

— Justin Guo and Oliver Ye

### GIRLS' LACROSSE GAINS PLAYERS

**Head Coach:** Trey Freeman

**2017-2018 record:** 3-16

**2017-2018 recap:** The girls struggled during games because of limited subs and finished 8th in the SCVAL league.

**Key matchups:** March 6 vs. Los Gatos, March 15 vs. Mountain View, March 20 vs. Gunn

**Star Players:** junior Kathryn Hamilton, senior Ines Pickard

**Key losses:** Nayoung Kim, Milan Nguyen, Laura Bhurji

**Prognosis:**

Last year, the JV team combined with the varsity team halfway through the season,

splitting the team in terms of skill level and team chemistry.

**"The team's strength is making everyone feel included and encouraging each other."**

JUNIOR Julia Yoo

For most of the season, many players would play for an entire game. However,

the larger interest in lacrosse this season will allow the girls more subs. Almost 50 girls signed up for tryouts this season while only about 30 did last year.

Tryouts occurred the first week of February, but girls participating in winter sports will only join after their current season ends. The first game will be on Feb. 27 against Woodside Priory. Junior Julia Yoo said that the increased interest in the sport might be because the new coach, Trey Freeman, also coaches the girls' field hockey team in the fall.

The upperclassmen on the team also tried to recruit new players because they

feared that the sport may be cut due to a lack of participation.

Yoo hopes that the team will bond and learn to play cohesively rather than as individuals so they can do better than last year.

"The team's strength is making everyone feel included and encouraging each other," Yoo said. "I hope that the team will have good chemistry so we can work both in and off the field together." ♦

— Anna Novoselov

### BOYS' GOLF RETURNS STELLAR LINEUP

**Head coach:** David Gragnola

**2017-2018 record:** 9-3

**2017-2018 recap:** Although the team was very young, with three freshmen, one sophomore and one junior, the boys advanced to league championships and CCS. The team lost in the first round of CCS while junior Kevin Sze and sophomore Albert Jing continued as individuals to the second round.

**Key matchups:**

March 6 vs. Palo Alto @ Baylands GC 3:00  
March 19 vs. Cupertino @ Santa Clara time TBA

March 27 vs. Monta Vista @ Coyote Creek 2:30

**Star players:** sophomore Michael Burry, junior Kevin Sze

**Key loss:** Charles Qi

**League:** De Anza

**Prognosis:**

The bar for this year's team has been set extremely high.

After a solid 9-3 season, the team has matured, improved, and is prepared to win leagues this year and make a deep CCS run.

**"This year's competitive squad is relatively the same as last year's because of the very few losses."**

"We have a really strong core players in the sophomore and junior years, so it should be fun to see how the team grows and gets better," sophomore Michael Burry said.

Last year at SCVAL League Finals, the team came out with a score of 373 and placed second, losing to Palo Alto by two strokes. Since Palo Alto already qualified for CCS, the next CCS spot went to the Falcons. They qualified for CCS for the first time in four years. According to Burry, this year's traveling competitive squad is relatively the same as last year's because of the very few losses from graduation.

Likely members of this team are Bur-

ry, Sze and sophomore twins Albert and Geoffrey Jing.

Similarly, the scheduling of the practices and the methods of training have remained constant. The first match is scheduled to take place on March 4 against Monta Vista.

"I think this is one of the most talented teams to pass through Saratoga High in a long time," Burry said. "I'm excited to be a part of it and I am looking forward to competing with Kevin for the top spot." ♦

— Kevin Sze and Howard Tang



**Burry**  
Sophomore

# Breaking down the Holy Trinity of .IO games



'han over ye liver

Rohan Kumar and Oliver Ye

The genre of .IO games, characterized by simple player versus player mechanics, consists of hundreds of unique and popular games. Two hard-core .IO gamers have come together to determine their top three favorites.

## 1. Surviv.io (5/5 Falcons) — reviewed by Rohan



It was not love at first sight. To be completely honest, there is nothing lovable about three circles that move sporadically around, absorb an assortment of colorful shapes and discharge lines at other circles. However, controlling these round figures to beat up toilets, blow up barrels and shoot other round figures full of colorful bullets can be extremely addicting.

After playing a couple games of the 2D battle royale, I was hooked. A few days later, I pretty much knew every single gun in the game (there are 40 by the way, so it was quite an achievement). It turns out my friends were also surviv.io addicts, so every day after school, we whipped out our Facebook Messenger apps, texted the code to our group chat and got last place in squads. Getting into a match is fast and easy, so it's essentially instant fun with your (imaginary) friends whenever you're bored.

Fun in Surviv.io never ends: it's fun for beginners and fun for veterans. After a year of playing, there are still new things for me to try. There are regular updates that bring new weapons, locations and game modes. If you start winning too often (like I do, of course), you can always challenge yourself with solo duos or squads. If that's too easy, try winning without any weapons.

By the way, if you want to call yourself a true Surviv.io addict, you have to beat my record of 1,385 damage with fists only in solo squads.

## 2. Shellshock.io (4.5/5) — reviewed by Rohan

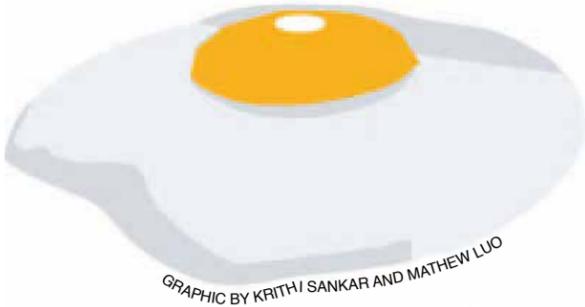


Shellshock.io is a pretty unconventional game. Bullets move at approximately negative 5 miles per hour and egg avatars use egg cartons as ammunition containers. However, as the first .IO game I really got into, Shellshock.io introduced me to the power of simplistic graphics and straightforward gameplay. With zero experience, you can jump into a Shellshock.io game and have a ton of fun. Creating a game is easy, and you can easily go toe-to-toe with all your friends in a full-on egg brawl.

With four classes, there are many unique and interesting ways to scramble, poach and crack your friend's eggs. Shotguns for getting up close and egg-sonal, snipers for practicing high-level prediction skills (otherwise known as blind guessing), assault rifles for some good ol' spraying and praying and rocket launchers for the people who can't aim (no offense).

The game has been evolving, progressively becoming more and more fun. At its creation in the fall of 2017, there were only three classes and nothing to unlock. Now, I play to earn myself some currency eggs that I can spend to make my avatar egg look more stupid than it already does. There are also bigger, cooler maps and skins for weapons.

My only complaint is that the grenades in Shellshock.io have an uncanny resemblance to exploding boomerangs. Every time I throw a grenade up the ladders to get those campers on the top of the platform, it comes back down and explodes my poor egg persona. Why can't eggs be grenade-proof?



GRAPHIC BY KRITHI SANKAR AND MATHEW LUO



## 3. Agar.io (4/5) — reviewed by Oliver



Agar.io seems almost like a myth today; only the most experienced .IO gamers even remember it. However, the old is gold motto applies in this case: It's still one of the most legendary .IO games out there.

Agar.io is a simple game: You attempt to be the most gluttonous cell out there, grabbing up some tasty, colorful morsels from the ground or absorbing other wannabe gluttons to make you an even bigger glutton. Because big fat cells are slower than small skinny cells, it is sometimes beneficial to split yourself up or eject pieces of yourself like a blobby machine gun.

The simple yet creative (and sometimes hilariously weird) mechanics of the game, along with the straightforward objective of eating as much as you can (which is also my goal at parties with free food), make Agar.io an extremely satisfying game to play. It also has game modes for everyone.

The free-for-all mode, where players try to get on the leaderboard for size and stay there, is perfect for people who have nothing better to do than run away from other blobs until they get to the leaderboard by pure luck. The battle royale mode is perfect for people who are pressed for time, and the teams mode is fitting for people who can't survive the other two modes.

I personally get a bit tired of trying to be the biggest blob: Why be the biggest when you can be the most helpful? My professional altruism strat, where you grow big and then split into a bunch of smaller blobs to let other blobs absorb parts of you like a tasty cell buffet, is quite fulfilling. Except when someone absorbs all of you with one split (where did gratitude go?). ♦

## ISSUE

# Highlights

BIG UFTS  
BIG OOF  
BIG LIT

"Big is the new large. Big is cool. Big is lit. Big is the dankest adverb. Big is not a traditional adjective, but an intensifier to signify the biggest things."

— reporter Mathew Luo on Gen Z language (pg. 15)



More than  
**200**

students performing the Bombay in the Bay performances, taking place on Feb. 15 and Feb. 16, following the overall theme of "Bend It Like Beckham" (pg. 1)

"Being trans in college is radically different from high school. College has given me the freedom to be myself that I never had before."

— 2018 alumna Sasha Berkeley on the LGBTQ community (pg. 19)

featured Montalvo resident artist Ariana Reines a "published free-form poet, playwright, performing artist, French-language translator and astrology connoisseur" (pg. 21)



**53** of **85**

students who requested summer recommendation letters from the science department last year did not attend a summer program (pg. 3)

GRAPHICS BY HOWARD TANG

## topten

### WAYS TO SURVIVE VALENTINE'S DAY

- 10 Buy yourself a gift.** Who needs someone to buy you a gift anyway? You're an independent high schooler who is .... broke.
- 9 Eat a lot of candy.** Live in a sugar-induced state of bliss for a day so you won't notice how single you are.
- 8 Write your significant other a handwritten note.** It'll show you care more than a typed letter, even if the only thing you scribble on it is "Hi".
- 7 Give your heart to someone you care about — or at least a liver.** Organ donors are highly respected here.
- 6 Learn how to play the cowbell.** The beautiful sounds that the cowbell gives off when you violently smack it under a windowsill will truly reflect your love for your partner.
- 5 Learn to play Beethoven on the piano.** Use those forced childhood lessons to do something romantic.
- 4 Watch a romantic movie.** By yourself. At home. With ice cream.
- 3 Distribute a penny to each of your friends.** When they reciprocate the favor next year, you can finally say you received Valentine's gifts.
- 2 Play a lot of Brawl Stars.** What better way is there to spend Valentine's Day than with your true love?
- 1 Get a Hershey's kiss.** It's a decent substitute for the real thing.

>> Rohan Kumar and Oliver Ye