



# EAGLE ERA

NOVEMBER 2024 AMERICAN HIGH SCHOOL 36300 FREMONT BLVD FREMONT, CA 94536 VOL. 52 ISSUE #2

## FUSD announces \$30 million budget deficit

*Everything we know about the FUSD budget deficit*

**Saanvi Deshini** | Staff Writer

During March 13th's Board Meeting, Fremont Unified School District announced a \$30 million budget deficit through the 2028-2029 academic year. However, the estimated deficit fluctuates according to various district sources; the Virtual Balanced Budget meeting claims \$26-27 million, the district's FAQs lists \$38 million, and the Balanced Budget for Fiscal Sustainability Workshop indicates \$30 million.

The district attributed the deficit to the expiration of "hold harmless" funding, the parcel tax, and increased costs following the pandemic. On October 15th's Virtual Balanced Budget Input Session, Superintendent Erik Bermeister said, "We find ourselves at

what some in the state are calling the fiscal cliff."

The FUSD general funds budget can be broken down into restricted funds including "self-contained programs with specific purposes and defined constraints," and unrestricted funds, "flexible dollars that are used for day-to-day



*Board meetings such as this one on April 17, 2024 play an important role in the future of FUSD's budget allocation process (Photo Credit: Grimmer Elementary School on X (Twitter))*

operations," according to James Arcala, the FUSD Director of Budget. Restricted funds account for 35% of the budget (\$178,121,600) while unrestricted funds make up the other 65% (\$337,772,431).

The structural deficit, meaning a persisting budget deficit, occurs because unrestricted expenditures exceed unrestricted revenues, so the 2024-2025 school year operates with a deficit of \$23.1 million and the following year, \$27.7 million.

Arcala attributes the deficit to "lower enrollment, increasing costs including salaries and benefits, negotiated raises, pension costs, utilities, and rising contributions." He said that without budget reductions, the 2026-2027 school (continued pg. 3)

## ASB dissolves sub clubs

*How and why sub clubs were disallowed*

**Ryan Liu** | Staff Writer

Starting in the 2024-2025 school year, ASB has announced their decision to ban sub clubs at American High School. While there may be potential losses with the change, their disappearance may also be a necessary change to the club system. As the new structure takes effect, it is important to understand why and how this decision has been made.

Sub clubs are small clubs that fall under the umbrella of a larger club. As Alex Francavilla, a member of a sub club (10) said, "A sub club is just a branch of a main club that acts somewhat independently from its main club, being accepted by the parent club rather than the school itself. It might even have its own dedicated officer positions."

Francavilla added how sub clubs have been undergoing a big change. "I remember some clubs created a bunch of sectors I thought were brand new clubs," Francavilla said. "Some of them even sent follow requests to my Instagram account. But suddenly, all of them changed their names by removing the word 'club' after they got banned. For example, I noticed that the App Development sub club, an extension of the Engineering and Technology club, changed their names to just App Development after they were removed from the school."

Although these sub clubs may provide increased diversity in terms of the range of niche interests available to students, the fact that they do not go

through the admittance procedure for official clubs makes them objectionable to the school. According to Madyson Tran (12), the head of the ASB Clubs Committee, "Sub clubs were not really banned. As a matter of fact, they were not even allowed to exist in the first place due to their forged connection to American High School. These sub clubs have been advertising themselves as official clubs on campus, which is entirely false, taking away from the clubs that have gone through the grueling process to actually be accepted as American High School official clubs. Many official clubs began to mass accept sub clubs, which ruined the individuality of the clubs at American that we cherish

**"SUB CLUBS WERE NOT REALLY BANNED. AS A MATTER OF FACT, THEY WERE NOT EVEN ALLOWED TO EXIST IN THE FIRST PLACE DUE TO THEIR FORGED CONNECTION TO AMERICAN HIGH SCHOOL."**

so much."

Tran also describes how sub clubs provide no purpose by circumventing the admission process, making it necessary for them to get disbanded. "Normally, clubs go through a strict process to be accepted. They must describe their past successes and contributions to the community, and future plans," Tran said. "By bypassing these standards, sub clubs don't demonstrate a promise and responsibility to improve the club community at American. Furthermore, once clubs are officially accepted by the school, they are now official representatives of our school, whether it be at competitions or conferences. Clubs not accepted by the school that continue to advertise as a part of the school mislead students and other organizations. Therefore, since sub clubs were never allowed in the first place, whenever we, the AHS Club Committee, saw a sub club advertising themselves online or on campus, we would tell them that they were not allowed to continue promoting themselves on campus or online as a part of American High School."

As the decision to ban sub clubs is being enforced, the breadth of extracurricular involvement has been fundamentally changed for students. "Overall, I think that for students, the banning of sub clubs is a bad change because it limits the educational opportunities that [students] can pursue," said Maurya Mopuri (10). "As a member of the Quiz Bowl sub club, I don't want to see it disappear since I think that it's a great subject to pursue."



# SPW: Seniors steal the show

*October calls for Spirit Week and the excitement of each class holding multiple performances during rallies. However, only one class can win.*

**Sanika Yadav** | *Staff Writer*

Spirit Week commenced with the class of 2026 juniors who placed 4th overall. The sophomores, or class of 2027, performed next and secured 3rd place. Class of 2028, despite being newcomers to Spirit Week, impressively took 2nd place. Last but definitely not least, the class of 2025 seniors earned the well-deserved 1st place in their final Spirit Week.

## 4th Day 1

On Monday, the juniors kicked off Spirit Week with enthusiasm and high energy. Highlights of their performances included a remarkable fight scene in which multiple students revealed expert kicks, spins, and punches, all while dressed in outfits that aligned with their theme of “Avatar: The Last AirBender.” Their Bollywood and Heels performances also amassed excited cheers and applause from the audience due to their coordinated and dynamic moves.



## 3rd Day 2

Following the juniors, the sophomores presented their skit and dances during rallies the next day. Their semi-classical performance exhibited elegant and graceful movements to songs like “Nainowale Ne” and “Pinga.” The class of 2027 also delivered a Couples and Tahitian dance performance, both of which were well-executed.



## 2nd Day 4

The fact that it was their first Spirit Week did not stop the class of 2028 freshmen from obtaining 2nd place in the overall scoring, showing their commitment to school spirit. Their skit demonstrated notable acting through an engaging storyline which followed their theme of “Barbie.” One of their most memorable performances was a hip-hop routine which featured high-energy moves and detailed formations.



## 1st Day 5

Finally, the seniors concluded Spirit Week 2024 with invigorating and contagious energy that was impossible to miss. With over 200 performers, the class of 2025 undoubtedly had the highest participation in all nine of their dances. The seniors started with a bang—literally—with their Step dance which featured light sticks and high spirit. Following them were performances like Tahitian, Tinikling, and Bollywood which showcased intricate, coordinated, and energetic formations. Perhaps one of the most exceptional performances was the Heels dance which presented elaborate and captivating moves, including the use of a blindfold, making it truly unforgettable.



(Photo Credit: Sanika Yadav (12) and Elisa Varghese (12))



# FUSD announces \$30 million budget deficit (cont'd)

year would face a debt of \$15 million.

Some of the cuts to the budget include a promised reduction to supplies, services, and utilities. Still, Arcala said, “It won’t be enough to balance our 27 million dollar deficit.” The district proposes attriting staff, affecting mostly counselors, campus supervisors, coaches, and library-media-technicians.

Recent negotiations with the teacher’s union address the district’s goals of reducing staff, and FUDTA has postponed their long-term goals of smaller class sizes to protect staff job security. Former FUDTA representative Mr. Elam said, “When teachers speak on issues specifically related to budget cuts, we focus on ‘retaining current people’ because smaller class sizes, while a priority, is not feasible if you are having budget cuts because that’s expensive. An overall union goal is smaller class sizes, but here, we don’t want to let go of any counselors, psychologists, medical personnel, or teachers because job security is important.”

The FUDTA bargaining team did not provide comment for this story, citing ongoing negotiations.

The decisions surrounding the district’s budget will be finalized January 8, 2025, but until then, influence from the Fremont voter base, community Balanced Budget Input portal, and further FUDTA negotiations will affect how the deficit is addressed. As the budget is to be finalized in December, the community voice is crucial in influencing how the deficit will operate.

# The cultural celebration of Garba Night

AHS hosts Indian events, giving students an opportunity to share their culture

Kaya Misra  
Staff Writer

On Friday, October 18th, AHS Indian Student Association (ISA) and AHS Nritya, one of American’s Indian dance clubs, took the initiative to plan AHS’s third annual Garba Night, a long-awaited event among the Indian community at American. With over 350 people in attendance, the event started with a traditional Indian garba dance and ended with a lively mosh pit.

“Garba Night went really well. The decorations, food, and music all came together nicely to represent Indian culture,” said the president of AHS Nritya, Manya Aggarwal (11). “Garba is a traditional Indian dance done during the festive season of Navratri, usually during October and November. People dress up and come together to have a good time,” said Mohini Chahal (12), the president of ISA. Although organizers aimed to host the event in the gym, they were unfortunately unable to do so and settled for the MPR.

Underclassmen were especially enthusiastic for Garba Night. “I’m really excited. Having Indian events at American is a way to stay in touch with our roots. Dancing like Garba, Bhangra, and Dandiya has



Garba Night attendees pose for a picture at the end of the event. (Photo Credit: Mr. Sharma)

always been a big part of our culture,” said Adish Joshi (10). “Having Garba Night can either teach Indians what Indian culture is all about or it can help people who used to dance connect back to a hobby.”

Executive officers of both AHS ISA and AHS Nritya recognized what could have been improved from previous Garba Nights. “Last year, we exceeded our capacity in the MPR so we’re hoping to improve that,” said Chahal. Although the planners were hoping to downsize the event, AHS Garba Night was still accessible to everyone, meaning that students from different FUSD schools were able to attend. “I want garba to be a way for the Indian community and other cultures to come together at our school. I’ve seen so many people who aren’t Indian come to our school for Garba and that is so exciting.” However, there were also areas of improvement for this year. “We had popular food like samosas and lassi, but unfortunately did not have enough for everyone. It also would have been fun if we incorporated more activities like dandiya,” Aggarwal commented.

“ISA’s goal is ultimately to educate students about Indian festivals and events. An event I really hope to do this year is Holi,” said Chahal.

For students, Garba Night has been proven to be more than just a school event. Recognizing cultural traditions and festivals in meaningful ways allow school communities to embrace their heritage. “It’s the small things that matter. Having events like these helps students take pride in their culture,” said Joshi.

# Behind the scenes of Homecoming

Homecoming involves preparation from many students in order to host a successful dance

Caleb Truneh | Staff Writer



Leadership students work on a galaxy-themed poster to be held up during the Homecoming dance (Photo Credit: Caleb Truneh (11)).

On Saturday, October 26, American hosted their annual Homecoming Dance. The dance often holds over one thousand students so a lot of preparation is required to execute a fun and safe event.

“The ASB executives work about a month to a month and a half prior to Homecoming to figure out all the logistics and work on the decorations we want to put on out, the overall theme, how ticket sales are going to work, and the different aspects of games and what they involve,” said ASB Vice President Ayush Sharma (11).

Leadership teacher Mr. Anderson explained how he oversees the setup of Homecoming and how he helps students to put on this dance. “Those mainly responsible for setting up the dance are those in Leadership, but also the ASB executives who all organize it. They organize layout and how activities are going to be laid out in the rotunda. So it’s pretty much the leadership class and me who set the dance up” In addition to

the dance, Regal Homecoming Court is chosen from a group of several seniors voted on by the entire student body. “The executives who are not seniors work on Homecoming Court and collect votes to decide who the Homecoming regals are going to be, so we have three rounds of nominations,” said Sharma.

When asked about the differences in preparation for Homecoming from other events that are not hosted on campus, Mr. Anderson explained how much more effort is involved for both him and Leadership students. “During Prom, we do not do any decorations for it which we provide, instead, every venue that we pick is already set up for decorations like last year at Lake Chalet for example. Most of those things we plan a lot in advance but on the day of the dance we just show up but for Homecoming I get here at 8 o’clock in the morning and students come around 9 and we do all the decorations and what not for about three to four hours and the vendors usually arrive throughout the day,” said Mr. Anderson.

Students in Leadership often contribute to the setup of the dance, keeping the opinions and hopes of the collective student body in mind. “We first reach out to students to survey what they think the Homecoming themes should be for a given year, we usually get a lot of responses and narrow it down to which responses had the most votes, from this. The executives and the Leadership class work together to choose a final theme that would best benefit the student body and almost every time, the theme that we choose is appreciated by the general student body,” said Sharma.

Aside from decorations, various third-party services are offered at Homecoming for student’s enjoyment. “The third-party items such as the games and the DJ come from a party-planner which we have. He has different options that are available to us. For the DJs, we usually have to book first because they have tight scheduling but as for the vendors we go through the company for party planning and they usually have a lot of things available to us,” Anderson said.



# “We lose too many kids to overdose”

*How Fremont addresses the current substance abuse problem among youth*

**Tegbir Kaur**  
Staff Writer

According to the United States Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), the week of October 23rd to October 31st marks Red Ribbon Week, an opportunity for youth and adults to “renew their commitment to live a healthy, drug-free lifestyle.”

As stated on the National Center for Drug Abuse Statistics (NCDAS) website, “teenagers in California are 24.46% more likely to have used drugs in the last month than the average American teen.” How Fremont factors into this data is equally as concerning.

Fremont Police Department Officer Guzman, who served last year as American High School’s School Resource Officer (SRO), said, “We encounter smoking [paraphernalia] when we have to search a student, or it is being handed over to us to be booked into property, which usually happens around two to three times each month.”

Officer Tsai, American’s current SRO, framed the issue in Fremont in the context of previous years. “It’s all across the high schools in the district. From the incidents reported, in comparison from last year to this year, we’re seeing an increase.”

Student observations also reflect the seriousness of the problem. “Every once in a while you can see a kid who is actively vaping in the bathroom, but more often, it is just the very prominent smell of vapes when I walk in,” said Prisha Mathur (11).

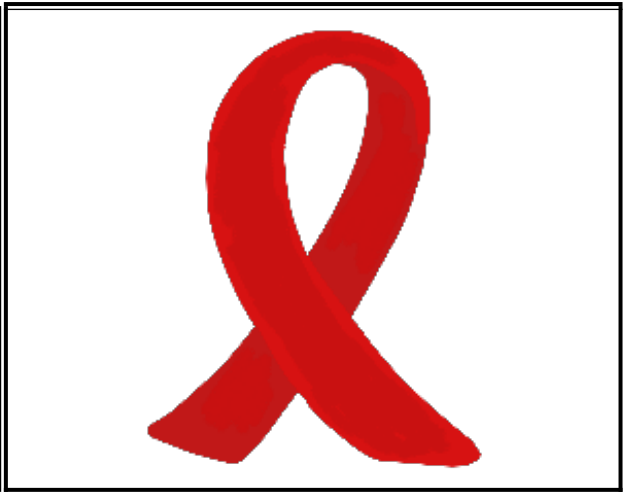
Ms. Martinez, a P.E, dance, and yoga teacher at American, runs the Brief Intervention program for offenders. “The program is for first-time offenders and is offered in lieu of

suspension. They get referred to me, and we sit down for three counseling sessions where we discuss the decision making process that led them here, what change could look like, and how I can support them in that,” she said.

Mrs. Pelayo, one of American’s assistant principals, detailed the administration’s emphasis on providing support for offenders. “Overall, we try to provide therapeutic support for students. They can talk to their counselors. We have stress busters. And through health class in ninth grade, students have a unit about alcohol, drinking, drugs,” she said.

Officer Guzman added, “SROs conducted presentations last year about vaping or drugs, discussing the dangers and the criminal component of it. We also work closely with Youth and Family Services, making referrals to them to provide counseling.” Kathleen Brown, the Youth and Family Services program coordinator, elaborated on the work the program does. “When we get a referral for a student, we try to reach out to the client individually. In general kids meet once a week for about an hour. We offer a group session for students and for parents. We also offer family sessions, both with the client and the parents when the client is ready,” she said.

“If they’re suffering from something else, then it may trigger them to want to use substances. For example, this fall, a student from Mission San Jose High School and



*According to the DEA website, “Red Ribbon Week highlights the importance of living a drug-free life.” Red Ribbon week activities allow “parents, educators, and communities to reinforce the drug-free messages they share with their children throughout the year.” (Art Credit: Kingston Lo (12))*

a kid from Washington High School passed away. If kids come in and are connected to that, we may address grief and loss. It’s important to get the coping skills in place, because some kids start smoking because of their feelings. If you take away drugs and alcohol, they are left to feel. And they don’t know how to manage their emotions. A lot of times there’s underlying trauma that they’ve never learned how to process,” she said.

“I just want kids to know that we’re a resource when they’re ready. Treatment is available, and it doesn’t cost anything. We’re here to support you,” said Brown. “We lose too many kids to overdose, and the fentanyl problem is getting much worse. It’s in everything. I just don’t want kids to die. We’re just losing too many.”

## FUSD and FUDTA negotiations

*An overview of recent negotiation updates*

**Saanvi Deshini** | Staff Writer

Toward the end of September, American High School teachers distributed QR codes to encourage support for the Fremont Unified Teachers Association (FUDTA) and its ongoing negotiations. FUSD and FUDTA negotiate contracts regularly, and October’s session marked twenty-two negotiation sessions this year. These sessions review working conditions, class sizes, and budget, but October’s second meeting shifted some union goals due to anticipated budget changes.

One of FUDTA’s goals was to reduce class sizes. The teacher’s union drafted Article 12 of the FUDTA contract regarding class size.

The district claimed, “FUSD believes in the value of small class sizes and strives to achieve the lowest student to specialist ratios, while ensuring essential services and personnel are sustained.” Earlier negotiations discussed compensation for exceeded class sizes, but the recent session revised this. Proposal 12.3.3 of Article 12, states that if the administrator is unable to reduce the class size, the district will compensate affected teachers with \$200 per month per student and a pro-rated payment if the teacher works with them part-time. This proposal, however, was eventually rejected due to the financial limitations.

Overall, negotiations focused on adapting union goals to the district’s structural deficit. Issues such as class size become secondary when job security is threatened.

Former FUDTA president, Mr. Bonaccorsi shared, “Our position is supporting Measure M, so we want to make sure that the community passes that. It’s in the district’s interest to settle the other dispute as

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quickly as they can, so we can all focus on that. We’re less than two weeks away from the election, so FUDTA isn’t so much pivoting, as much as raising to the surface some issues and putting the others in the background. It’s changing the contour of the conversation to make sure that students have counseling services and nurses and librarians..”

FUDTA and FUSD also released the “Initial Sunshine Proposal”, outlining proposals for an ideal academic environment. It reviewed past agreements between both parties to prepare for negotiations. Some of the issues that address student life include revising teachers’ rights to vote on bell schedules and school calendars, reducing the

current process of conflict resolution between parents, students, and teachers, adapting the public complaints process, and addressing district multiculturalism.

With regard to the process of negotiations, FUSD and FUDTA have bargaining teams that convene for the union’s contract; these negotiation updates can be found on the district website. Mr. Bonaccorsi shared some insight as to the nature of the contracts. “We’re bargaining for a three-year agreement, the maximum period of time for a contract. But sometimes within that three year window, you have reopeners. A lot of times, you would put salary on a reopener basis. You get an agreement, but then reopen in a year. Those agreements are done later, as the money issue resolves itself. There’s also a series of other kinds of agreements called memorandum understanding, or MOUs, or that can even be called side letters of agreement, that are add ons while the contract is in play.”

Negotiations between FUDTA and FUSD continue, and the decisions being debated are crucial to developing an educational environment that benefits both teachers and students while being sustainable under current fiscal policy. Many of these issues begin to affect Fremont at a larger level, and things like the budget deficit and protecting staff are discussed by the city council, with resources open to the public, online and in-person.

Emphasizing the importance of community engagement, Mr. Bonaccorsi shared, “Being visible at a board meeting is something that the board members have to see. They have to address that their decisions actually have consequences, and what they as board members should take in that input, whether a person speaks or not, their sitting there, is important.”



# PSAT restricted to only juniors and seniors

The impact of PSAT being restricted to juniors and seniors

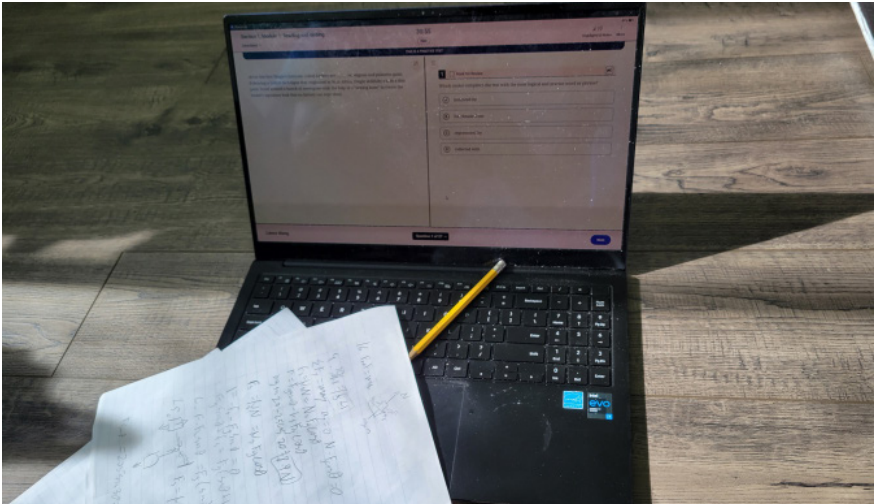
Lance Wang  
Staff Writer

In a major shift for students, the PSAT this year has been made accessible to only junior and senior students. While some may view this as a change that results in the loss of early practice, the upsides that come with this decision ultimately benefit the PSAT’s original goal: preparing students for the SAT.

One issue with providing the PSAT exam to sophomores was that it’s simply too far from the actual SAT to

SAT, meaning that the intended benefits of familiarizing students with the SAT format were not applicable to this year’s PSAT for the few juniors taking an early SAT. For the most part though, students will be taking their SAT later into the year, giving them adequate time to process the content on the PSAT.

The grade requirement change has also allowed students to qualify for the National Merit Scholarship. The National Merit Scholarship Corporation



Students taking the SAT have online practice tools such as Bluebook, but the PSAT testing environment is irreplaceable. (Photo Credit: Lance Wang (12))

make a difference to scores. The year between the PSAT and the SAT gives students extra time to forget what content was on the PSAT. According to Dong You (11), “The PSAT does help a bit with preparing, but once you forget, Bluebook is your only choice.” With seniors, the gap is a year larger, making the impact of the PSAT that much less substantial. With the PSAT now much closer to the SAT, the PSAT is now much more relevant in prepping for the SAT, as students now know what content they have to focus on while studying for the exam.

Scheduling the PSAT close to the SAT also ensures that students get a realistic preview of the test format. While there are alternatives to SAT practice that can be found online, the PSAT is usually a student’s first official experience with SAT style testing.

As Wilson Lo (11) said, “If you’re taking the SAT, it’s good to know the format.” With the new testing schedule, it’s easier for students to familiarize themselves with the pressure and pacing of a timed test. Unfortunately, the PSAT this year was right after an actual

(NMSC) is a program that allows students to receive significant financial rewards. Among other requirements, the NMSC requires upperclassmen to score high. As per the program, “The PSAT 10 and PSAT 8/9 will NOT be considered for entry to the National Merit Scholarship Program.” This means that any sophomores or freshmen taking the PSAT will not be eligible for becoming a National Merit Scholar. While competing for the National Merit Scholarship may add pressure to an already work-heavy year of high school, studying for the SAT could serve the dual purpose of studying for the PSAT. By combining preparation for both tests, students can maximize their efforts, preparing for the SAT while still aiming for a scholarship.

The impact of the PSAT moving to junior year remains to be seen, both in regard to SAT scores and its various other uses. As the school year goes on and SAT scores are released, the effects of the new testing schedule will become apparent. Until then, all the signs point to this change as being a positive one for the test-takers of AHS.

# The lunch line gauntlet

A satirical analysis of the lunch line

Lance Wang  
Staff Writer

The state of lunch at AHS is a never ending saga of suffering. To the students, at least. Complaints of mile long lines and barely edible food are exchanged between students over tables covered in ketchup smears and sticky chocolate milk stains.

The undisputed king of lunch-time grievances—the length of the lunch lines. Starting from the entrance of the multi-purpose room, this behemoth stretches halfway around the building. The students act like a swarm of ants, ready to swarm the cheeseburgers and claim a tasty prize to bring back to their nest of lunch tables. However, unlike ants, students somehow can’t seem to form a straight line without the guidance of an adult present. As Hang Gree (10) puts it, “Getting to the end of the line takes, like, fifteen minutes. But on a good day, I can weave my way through the people and cut it down to ten.” For anyone involved with clubs during lunch, the situation is even more dire. It’s either starvation or missing half a club meeting. Womp-womp.

Luckily, our experts here at the Eagle Era have discovered a groundbreaking solution that many students are already using. We’ve dubbed it “Friendtrak.” This revolutionary method allows students to jump to the front of the line simply by spotting an acquaintance up ahead. As confirmed by our highly trained ethics expert, Dr. Doctor, “Yes, it does instantly become morally acceptable to skip to the front of the line because you made eye contact with that person once during English.” This method has been so refined by some students that we have spotted them performing this solution with imaginary friends.

Moving on from the lines, the experience doesn’t improve much once you reach the end. Your reward for enduring the school’s DMV simulation is a singular condiment dispenser, yet another addition to the neverending line of doom. A far cry from the simple efficiency of a grab-and-go ketchup packet, the pump mechanism ensures that germs are spread to as many hands as possible before being placed on our food. Furthermore, the line is held up even further as students decide that they want ranch to suddenly be their beverage of choice.

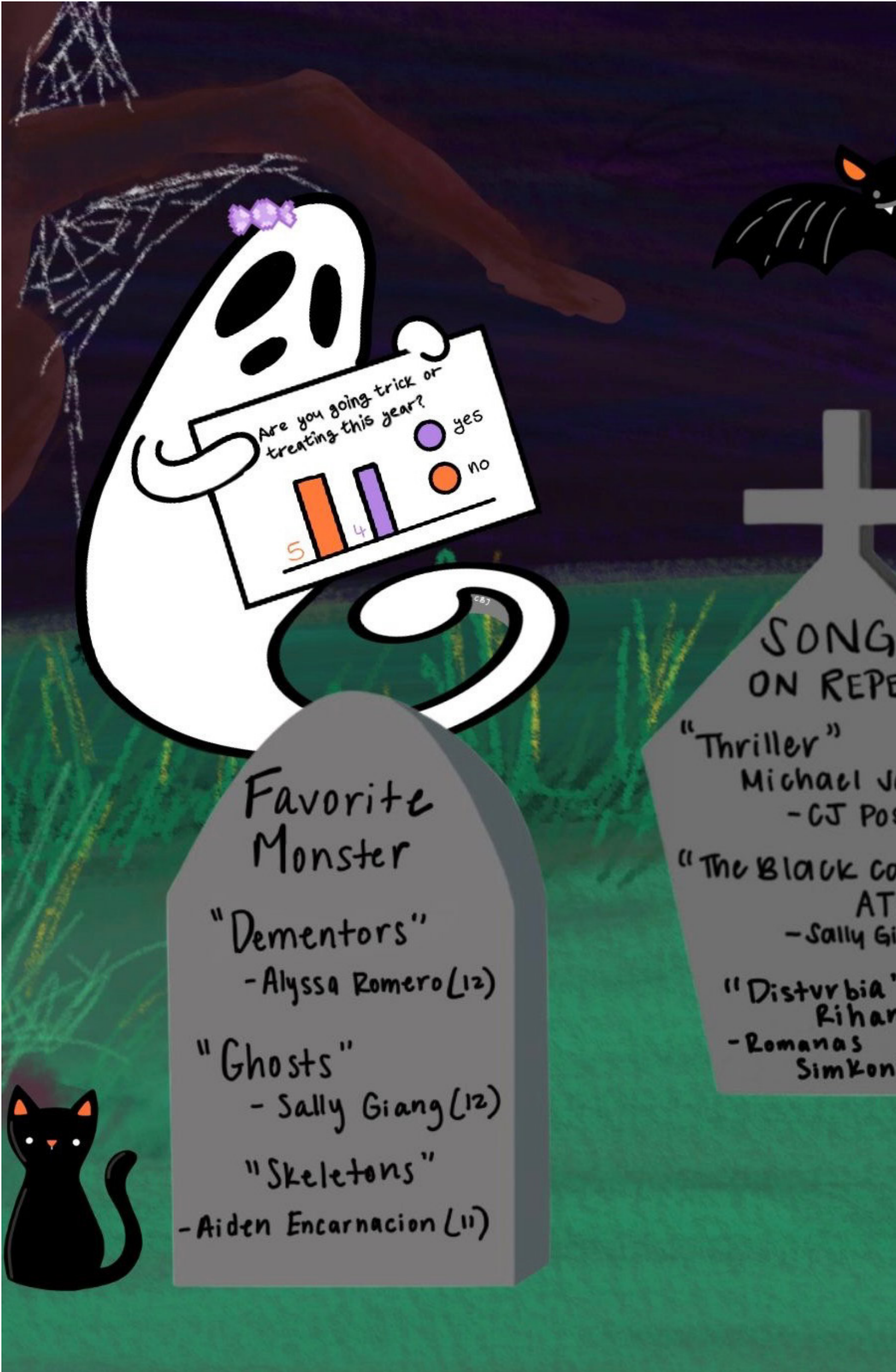
As if condiment chaos wasn’t enough already, the latest addition to the lunch line—the self-serve salad bar—has introduced its very own set of challenges. While it’s nice that FUSD doesn’t seem to consider processed tomato sauce an adequate serving of vegetables anymore, the self-serving nature of the line means that students leave with watermelon stacked on their paper trays higher than the result of a Costco grocery run. By the time they get to the tables, their trays look more like abstract fruit sculptures than a side serving of fruit. If you don’t get there within five minutes of the lunch bell ringing, your selections become either half a mushy strawberry or five hundred carrot sticks.

So who’s to blame? Is it the school, who insists on funneling the students in a slow, single file line comparable to Black Friday at Walmart? Or is it the students, who insist on turning lunch into a Hunger Games scenario where only the fastest and well connected get to eat without waiting half the lunch period? Either way, one thing remains for certain: nobody leaves the line without a battle—and maybe a ketchup stain.



Students lining up to get lunch (Photo Credit: Lance Wang (12)).











# American falls to Encinal 63-0 in 2024

## Homecoming game

*A celebration of football, marching band, color guard, homecoming court, and the AHS community brought positives to a disappointing defeat*

**Rohan Bhagra**  
*Co-Editor-in-Chief*

“Walking out, that’s when the energy is the highest and obviously when it doesn’t go your way, energy drops. But when you’re coming out, you don’t know what the outcome is going to be,” said Harris Nawabi (12), a safety and first-time varsity player.

Entering this year’s homecoming game on October 24th, the American Varsity Football team played to a 1-6 record, earning their lone win against San Lorenzo. Their opponent, Encinal High School in Alameda, entered the game with a 2-5 record.

This season, the Eagles have struggled on defense, giving up no fewer than 30 points each game this season. However, players cited changes in the pre-game planning against Encinal. “We changed the formation of the defense a little [and are playing] some man coverage and deep third [coverage],” said wide receiver and defensive back Sage Kobayashi (11)."

Traditionally, man-to-man coverages can be prone to giving up rushing plays for significant yardage. After an early interception, these adjustments were immediately put to the test. Encinal took quick advantage of this weakness, scoring on a roughly 40 yard touchdown run.

A similar theme recurred throughout the first half. The Eagles’ inability

to sustain long offensive possessions left the defense fatigued and led to costly penalties. Late in the second quarter, a pass interference penalty in the endzone set up Encinal running back Alexander Martson (#5) for a short rushing touchdown. At the end of the first half, the Eagles trailed Encinal 28-0.

Beyond football, the homecoming game also serves as an important celebration of American High School’s senior class. Members of the homecoming court, a group of 10 seniors selected by a polling process of the student body, were honored for their contributions to AHS in a halftime ceremony.



*Outgoing seniors like Alejandro Velasquez have played an influential role in the development of the team’s younger players. “Since day one he’s been a mentor for me helping me learn and teaching me stuff I don’t know. He’s such a great person on and off the field [and] he is popular in the team,” said Kobayashi (Photo Credit: Nanki Kaur (12)).*

Nidish Tekkam, Class of 2025 VP and HoCo court member, said “Being on homecoming court is a dream come true. When I was a freshman, I saw the seniors on this court, and I knew since then that’s that’s my goal. And so working up to that point in time, it’s been really great. It’s really cool that we’re able to get the opportunity to get the recognition that I think we’ve been building up toward.”

After a field performance by the marching band and colorguard and the announcement of the Homecoming Reagles, Ian Budiman and Dillion Hsiao, Encinal’s ground attack seamlessly continued into the second half of the game. Scoring 9 touchdowns and converting every extra point attempt, the Encinal Jets cemented a 63-0 victory.

Still, players shined light on the camaraderie among the team. As seniors ended this chapter of their playing career, many looked fondly upon their mentors. “I want to shout out Eddie Ulloa (#53). [He’s] been here for four years. I’ve known him through these four years, but I’ve never actually gotten a chance to play with him. It’s a crazy experience getting to play next to him,” said Nawabi.

He continued, “Although I didn’t get a memorable outcome, it was still a memorable experience. I’m not going to forget this day. All these people here watching me and hoping for me to succeed, it really means something.”

## Recent temperatures impact fall sports

*Teams adapts to heat-related protocols set by CIF*

**Angelica Guerrero**  
*Staff Writer*

Fall is traditionally known as a season for cooler temperatures, putting on coats, and layering up your clothes, but spikes in heat have created unexpected challenges for AHS sports teams. The recent heat wave has left players and coaches of fall sports trying to adjust practices to conform with safety protocols.

The California Interscholastic Federation (CIF) sets the rules and guidelines that schools must follow to ensure fair play and the safety of student-athletes.

There are roughly three levels at which the categories based on the heat are divided into, with the green level being below 82F. Under these temperatures, CIF lays out a set of protocols that all teams must follow, starting with the green level. “Normal activities are allowed, but athletes must have at least three rest breaks each hour with a minimum duration of 3 min each during each workout,” CIF rules prescribe.

These restrictions change as the temperature gets warmer. Under the yellow level (82.2F-86.9F), teams must use discretion for intense or prolonged exercise and provide multiple rest breaks.

Once temperatures reach the orange level at (87.1-90.0F) outdoor practice is capped at two hours. During this time, athletes must have four rest breaks per hour, each break lasting at least

four minutes. “Football players are restricted to wearing helmets, shoulder pads, and shorts during practice,” said Mr. Oviatt, the athletic director.

Finally at the red level being the hottest, (above 90F) stricter guidelines are enforced. “Contests are still permitted, but additional water breaks are mandatory. Outdoor practice is limited to one hour, and no protective equipment is allowed during practice. Conditioning activities are also prohibited, and athletes must have 20-minute rest breaks spaced throughout the session,” Mr. Oviatt continued.

These guidelines are followed and enforced by the athletic director and coaches to ensure players stay protected from the dangers of the heat during outdoor activities. “Sports like water polo aren’t as affected by these protocols, and these heat protocols are more effective towards outdoor sports like football, where they had to alter practice so they couldn’t train in protective gear like pads and helmets,” said Mr. Oviatt.

Despite rising temperatures, teams and coaches are trying to adapt to suit what’s best for players. “The first thing I do is check in with the athletic director and make sure it’s okay to hold open field, so I check in with him to make sure we are in the green or yellow,” said Coach Pat of the Varsity Girls Soccer team. As temperatures vary, these guidelines will continue to stay in place for years to come in order to maintain safety while allowing players to train at their best.



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Ganesh Balamitran is one of the candidates to represent Area 4 on the FUSD Board of Education (Photo Credit: Balamitran Campaign Website).

### Balamitran’s bet for board seat

*Ganesh Balamitran is a candidate running to be a member of the Fremont Unified School District Board of Education to represent area 4.*

**Caleb Truneh** | Staff Writer

Ganesh Balamitran discusses his vision in an interview with the Eagle Era.

**Editor’s note:** Rinu Nair, Mr. Balamitran’s opponent in the race to represent FUSD Area 4 on the Board of Education, was extended the opportunity to participate in a similar interview with the Eagle Era. She did not return a request for comment.

**Q:** What goal is at the top of your priorities list?

**GB:** Student success and student wellness are at the top of my priorities, as well as recruiting and retaining the best talent from our students.

**Q:** If elected, how do you plan to work with the district to address issues affecting Fremont and its residents such as the 28-40 million dollar deficit which the district is facing?

**GB:** So how this works is that the school district and the community has been informed that these issues are arising and the district is openly collecting inputs from members of the community regarding what they would or would not want to have cut. The board eventually votes on a final decision with all this information taken into account.

**Q:** What prompted you to run for district board member?

**GB:**I am a strong proponent of public systems and public education is a very important part of society. I have always been interested in ensuring that the system remains strong. One of my sons also just recently graduated from Irvington High School which is one of the many reasons I chose to run. Another inclination for me is the opportunity to help bring more equity and create a nurturing environment where every child in FUSD is able to grow and develop their skills and interests.

**Q:** And what do you think about learning?

**GB:** [School] is a place of learning and you should enjoy your learning, it is a plank from where you potentially go into further learning, like if you are interested in going to a University. I want to engender in students a desire to learn and create an environment where we don’t promote students thinking that they must follow a specific path in to college and that they must do many different activities and classes for that.

**Q:** How do you want these students to succeed?

**GB:** I want students to succeed in their own unique ways, when I saw my sons go through middle school and high school I realized that there is a rigid definition of success, where students feel anxious trying to fit into one way of success which usually looks at getting into a good college.

## California bans legacy admissions

*How a ban on legacy admissions will affect admissions for California students*

On September 30, 2024, Gavin Newsom signed Bill AB 1780 into law, banning legacy and donor admissions at California’s private universities from September 1, 2025. AB 1780 was introduced by Assemblymember Phil Ting from San Francisco, and Ting expressed his support for the legislation, “We must level the playing field. That means making the college application process more fair and equitable. Hard work, good grades and a well-rounded background should earn you a spot in the incoming class—not the size of the check your family can write or who you’re related to.”

Governor Newsom reiterated Ting’s views.“In California, everyone should be able to get ahead through merit, skill, and hard work. The California Dream shouldn’t be accessible to just a lucky few, which is why we’re opening the door to higher education wide enough for everyone, fairly.”

According to Forbes, California is now the fifth state to ban legacy admissions, following the lead of Colorado, Virginia, Illinois, and Maryland. This ban will act as a complement to the state’s legacy ban for the UC public colleges signed by Governor Pete Wilson in 1998.

The Class Action organization, an

**Sampan Mehta** | Staff Writer

advocacy group against legacy admissions, praised Newsom’s decision to sign the ban, “This is a victory for students across the country who cannot rely on family connections and net worth to access top colleges and universities.” Additionally, the Lawyers for Civil Rights organization published a statement, “As the organization that filed the federal civil rights complaint

against Harvard University for its discriminatory legacy and donor preferences, we applaud California’s move.”

Students on campus have also voiced their support for this legislation. “I support the California legacy admissions ban. I don’t think that just because someone’s parents went to a college, they should have better chances to go to that college. They should also be admitted based on merit. That way, it’s more fair to everyone who applies to that college,” said Qingxin Zhang (12).

However, some groups do not support or see the benefit of the legacy ban. As presented by CalMatters, Julio Mata, president of the Western Association for College Admission Counseling, said in a statement, “It’s not going to have as big an impact as people think it will. It’s more symbolic. It might open up a few spots for regular students, but it won’t completely change the landscape.”

Adding on to the concerns, Stanford Law School professor Ralph Richard Banks explained his problem with the ban during an interview conducted by Sharon Driscoll on Stanford Law School’s blog. “Despite the unfairness of legacy preferences, private universities should be permitted to rely on them, as they are absolutely central to the fund-raising model on which universities rely,” he said.



California’s private universities, such as Stanford (pictured above) and USC, will no longer be allowed to accept legacy/donor admissions (Photo Credit: The San Francisco Peninsula).





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# The journal of a journalist: Part I

*Pulitzer prize-winning science journalist Ed Yong shares his journalistic process*

**Daniel X. Davis**  
*News/Sports Editor*

Like many Bay Area residents, British-American journalist Ed Yong was initially academically geared towards STEM, but Yong now praises an interdisciplinary process that has led to widespread success.

“I was actually meant to be a scientist. I’ve always been interested in science. I graduated with [a bio-chemistry] degree and started a PhD program, but then very quickly realized that I was much happier writing about science than actually doing it,” said Yong. “So I dropped out [of the] PhD program and started writing.”

Yong, journalism fact-checking institute Pontyer’s “most important and impactful Journalist of 2020,” described his first step in covering a topic or event. “Something stokes my own curiosity and makes me interested in the world,” said Yong. “I’m writing about parts of the world that are really important, but sort of hidden from our view.”

Yong was awarded a Pulitzer Prize for his unique coverage of the Pandemic and tendency to seek out the “hidden.” “To really understand the pandemic, you need to not only understand epidemiology and virology, but you need to understand history, ethics, sociology, anthropology, and psychology. That’s true for many of the big stories and existential crises of our time,” said the author of “How the Pandemic Will End.” “You can’t understand them simply as problems alone. That gives you a very partial view of the world. Embracing different areas of expertise, lots of disciplines, is the way forward.”

To any AHS students who wish to avoid narrow scopes, Yong said, “Read widely when you work on stories, interview widely, try and find as many sources in [as many] different kinds of places [as] you can. Don’t just get locked into one area, one group of people.”

Next comes putting the piece together. “Writing is not this nebulous practice that you either do well or you don’t. Writing is just intentionality times practice,” said Yong. “So from the level of a sentence to the level of a chapter or book, when I write, I’m very deliberate about which bits of information I include, which I leave out, what I lead with, and what I keep for later.”

The twice New York Times bestselling author said, “I think [my

voice built] gradually over time. Some of it is influenced by the great writers and communicators who I resonated with. I grew up watching David Attenborough documentaries. And then a lot of it is just intuition.”

Yong’s process has won accolades such as the George Polk Award for science reporting, the AAAS Kavli Science Journalism Award for in-depth reporting, and the Pulitzer Prize for investigative journalism, but education, not recognition, is his motivator.

“I think the success is almost immaterial. I almost don’t care. I’m just trying to protect the integrity of the work,” said the science journalist. “To be honest, it certainly helps. It’s a nice title, a nice descriptor on my book cover, which I’m sure makes it a little bit more sellable. But ultimately, the award was awarded for a body of work, and that’s what I think matters. I just want to do good work and then leave it alone.”

“I think if that body of work tells us anything, it tells us that doing deep coverage that actually addresses questions and problems that people have, coverage that aims to be an act of service, that helps people root themselves in times of chaos, that helps to shine a light on underserved populations,” said Yong.

However, Yong sees a barrier for journalists to complete this work. “Sometimes we get caught up in almost producing work for its own sake. It just creates more and more content that’s small and fragmentary,” said Yong

Above all else, Yong credited his coworkers for combating this culture and creating an environment at The Atlantic where his success was possible. “I was given very free reign by my editors to take these big swings. I was told ‘take the time you need and do the big stories that are going to matter,’ and that’s what I did,” said Yong. “Having that environment that makes those stories possible is crucial. This is another reason why I sort of push back against the focus on prizes, because they’re usually awarded to individuals. It’s the group of people I worked with: the editors, the fact checkers, the copy editors, the artists, the audience team. All of them who made that work possible and who gave me the space and time I needed to do my best possible work.”

Yong said, “If other publications look at that type of coverage and think ‘yes, that’s what we want.’ Well, you’re going to have to create an environment where that’s possible.”

# Boo! Feeling scared?

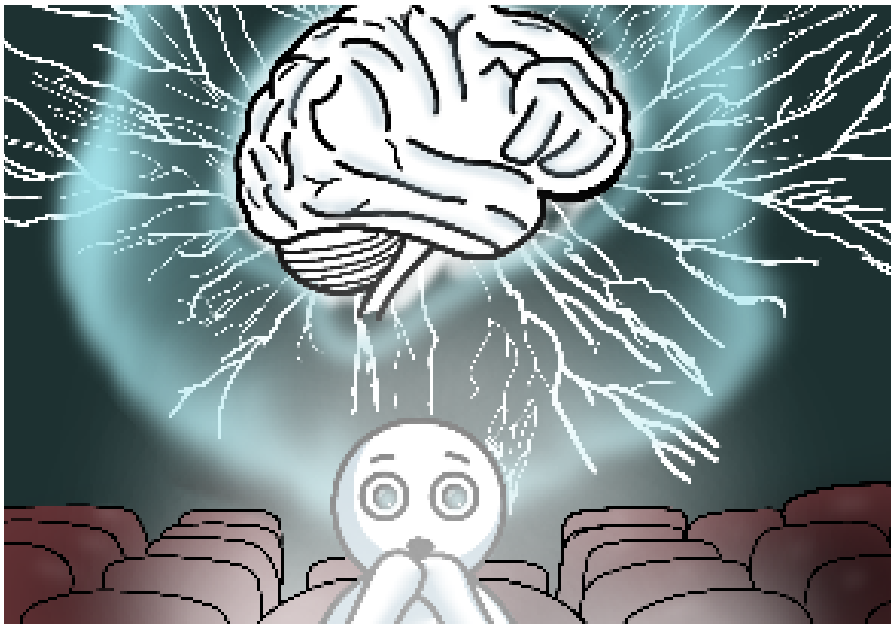
*The psychology behind the love of fear*

**Carolyn Baskar John**  
*Staff Writer*

Horror movies have long fascinated people, providing a glimpse into human psychology. What draws some to the thrill of fear while others avoid it? Why would people watch horror movies, visit horror attractions, or engage in other fear-inducing experiences? The reason lies in how our brains respond to the surge of horror and

ogy teacher Mrs. Franklin, “Some people might enjoy being scared because of the strong adrenaline rush they experience.”

This rush takes different forms in people. Mrs. Franklin stated, “Humans react differently; the fight, flight, or freeze reaction comes into play. While some people don’t know how to react to being scared, for many, it’s an energy boost.” She continued, “This sensation can make people feel truly alive.” In this context, fear transforms into a rousing experience, a dynamic interplay that is



*A person sits wide-eyed in a dark theater, gripped by both fear and excitement as their brain processes the thrill of horror. Mrs Franklin explained, “The amygdala is the most active part of the brain,” showing how fear triggers the nervous system in our brains to release neurotransmitters such as dopamine or adrenaline. (Photo Credit: Carolyn Baskar John (11))*

frightening experiences.

Ritishia Saxena (11), finds horror movies exhilarating. “I like it because of the feeling of excitement it gives me.” Despite the common belief that people watch horror films only during Halloween, Saxena said, “I watch horror movies year-round because I like them a lot.” She believes the thrill comes primarily from the music. “It is the scariest part of a horror movie because it builds suspense.” Yet, Saxena draws the line at films like The Human Centipede. “It’s not even scary, it’s disgusting,” she said, highlighting the difference between fear and revulsion.

So, why do people like Saxena revel in fear? According to Psychol-

a compelling source of stimulation for many and keeps audiences returning to horror films.

Much of this fear is connected to the brain’s complex chemistry. During intense scenarios, the amygdala is vital in processing fear. When feeling fear, “the amygdala is the most active part of the brain,” said Mrs. Franklin. Activity in the amygdala triggers physiological reactions. “Your heart beats faster, you sweat, and even [involuntarily] scream,” she added. Through such primal reactions, fear becomes something people find thrilling and electrifying.

Mrs. Franklin noted, “Halloween, for many people, is their favorite holiday because of the adrenaline rush they receive and the fear they can cause in other people.”

# The story behind the sets

*Understanding the effort behind the huge rotunda displays of Spirit Week*

**Aruna Harpalani**  
*Staff Writer*

Archita Khandelwal (10), the set design co-lead for the sophomore class, described a student’s first introduction to spirit week. “When you first walk in during Spirit Week, it’s filled with these beautiful paintings everywhere.” These sets—huge posters and props meant to showcase each class’s theme and school spirit—require months of preparation in advance.

“We started in July or August,” Khandelwal said, describing the process. “All three directors called and decided what we wanted the set to look like. We sketched it out, used measurements, and decided how many panels we’d have. We planned out everything.”

Planning is key. Khandelwal helped with set creation last year too, when planning beforehand was lacking. “It was really chaotic last year,” she said. “We got the information that we had to make a set three weeks before Spirit Week. It was really bad.”

Organizing enough people is also crucial. Mike Nandan (11), who worked on set creation for the class of 2026 this year, recognized the importance of having enough help, something they fell short with in their sophomore year. “Many people signed

up but didn’t show up. Every session, we had at most five people. The only people participating were forced to participate. A lot of it felt lackluster and without passion. That’s why we opened it up to more people this year.”

After planning and recruitment, the next step is to create the set. “In our first few meetings, we started cutting everything up and sketching the design,” Khandelwal said. “We planned, then we started. We ordered the materials, we painted everything, and now we’re taping it.”

Nandan described the creation of the large posters in the background of each set in more depth. “We had a bunch of rolls of poster paper and rolled them out until they met the required width and length. Then, we taped those poster papers down. It’s really big—36 to 18 feet.”

Despite the effort needed, those working on set believe the work is worth it. “You don’t get to see what’s inside until you see the front of it,” Nandan explained. “Sets give you a first impression of the group that is involved. It requires the management of different parts to bring it together and make a good set piece. It’s really important that when you see all the stuff in the rotunda, you can get a sense of the quality of the class and of their performance during Spirit Week.”



*Science Journalist Ed Yong is well-known for his Pulitzer-Prize winning coverage of the pandemic, but advises against the praise of prize over quality. “The success is almost immaterial,” said Yong. “The award was awarded for a body of work, and that’s what matters.” (Photo Credit: Penguin Random House Speaker’s Bureau)*



# Teaching the next generation: celebrating AHS teachers

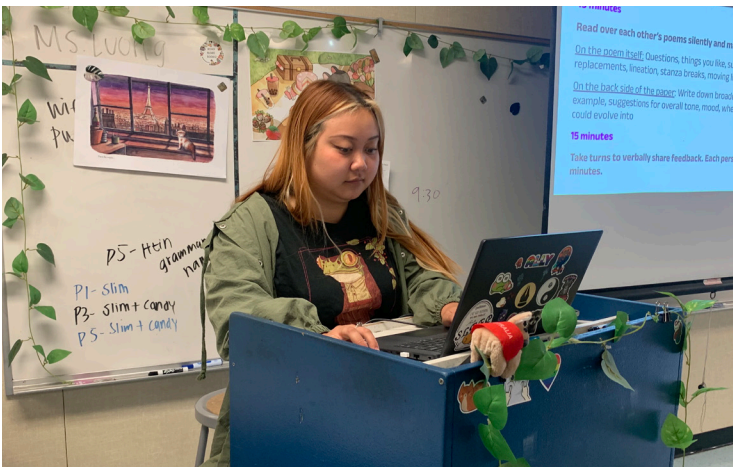
Varied teaching experiences at American in honor of World Teachers’ Day

Tegbir Kaur | Staff Writer

Beyond the brief introduction slide in the beginning of the year, students rarely learn more about their teachers’ experiences. Yet, Ms. Luong, the English 9H, 12CP, and Modern Poetry teacher advised, “Having rapport and a relationship with your students or being able to joke around inherently makes them more engaged with the material being taught.” Thus, it is incredibly important for students and teachers alike to learn more about different “teaching experiences,” from the reasons why they became teachers to the lessons that they have learned since.

For example, Señora Reid, Spanish 3 and AP teacher, detailed what subjects she had been drawn to teaching. “Spanish was always the first choice,” she said. “I did want to teach English, which I have taught during summer schools in the past.” She also explained why languages have always appealed to her. “What I love about English is that I can go over literature, stories, and poetry. It’s one of my goals to take advantage of AP Spanish and do that in a Spanish class. I want to delve into different stories and narratives.”

Ms. Luong explained the influence the media can have on defining the role of a teacher for her. “There are a lot of films in which teachers are monumental for the growth of students,” she said. “I watched Dead Poets Society when I was in high



Ms. Luong looks ahead at material to cover in her Modern Poetry class while her students work on their assignment. “I spend so much time researching each era that we study, and knowing my students, I think about what kind of poems would engage them or which they may identify with,” Luong said. (Photo Credit: Tegbir Kaur (11))

school, and I really admired Mr. Keating. I don’t think that I teach like him, per se. I don’t think I have the same demeanor. Yet, I think we both have the same purpose in teaching, which is to broaden students’ minds, as opposed to just teaching to the book, for example.”

Additionally, Ms. Reid described her career goals. “I want to grow more as a teacher,” she said. “We are learning at the same time we teach the students. I always learn new ways of teaching certain concepts that I did not realize before. So, even as a teacher, I am continuously learning with my students.”

According to Mr. Pepper, AP US History and AP Govern-

ment/Economics teacher, he tries to take into account how his class may factor into a student’s life. “School may not be the most important thing in a student’s life. Sometimes we, as teachers, forget that there is stuff going on in people’s lives outside of the classroom,” he said. “I keep that in mind while I am teaching.”

With their years of experience, many teachers have gained insight into engaging students. “I think lessons that are more interactive and allow the students to come to conclusions are more engaging than the very outdated model of a teacher filling in students’ brains with information and then testing them on it. I don’t think lecture tests are very engaging,” said Ms. Luong. “In my Modern Poetry class, it is more student-based learning which makes it more fun for them. It is less like a teacher lecturing students, and more so giving them the right prompts or questions to think about, that gets them to the understanding, as opposed to just giving them the answer.”

“Bringing things that have to do with students’ personal lives sometimes really helps to engage them,” added Ms. Reid. “It builds connections between what they experience daily and what they’re learning.”

Summarizing her role in students’ lives, Ms. Luong said, “Being a teacher goes so much beyond the content teaching that you do. We wear so many hats,” she said.

## From wheels to heels

The significance of International Walk and Roll to School Day

Ryan Liu | Staff Writer



Shiven Patel (10) walks to school instead of taking the bus or driving to school, contributing to reducing pollution. Abhinav Shivalli (10) said, “Seeing Shiven walk to school really inspired me to walk as well and contribute to a greener environment.” (Photo Credit: Ryan Liu (10))

The morning air is cool and crisp and the usual surge of cars honking and squealing at the drop-off zone is instead replaced by the rhythmic hum of bicycle tires and the enthusiastic chatter of students walking hand in hand with all their friends. Backpacks bob up and down with every footstep and the traffic guard greets a steady stream of students. It seems like a particularly peaceful morning, but something is different. It is International Walk and Roll to School Day, an event where countless students worldwide ditch their cars and pursue a more active way to get to school.

The International Walk and Roll to School Day is always in early October, with this year’s International Walk and Roll to School Day being on the 9th. According to Shiven Patel (10), this event aims to reduce pollution through biking or walking to school. “International Walk and Roll to School day encourages students to walk, bike, take transit, or use other non-motorized transportation to get to school,” Patel said. “It promotes a healthier environment through alternative ways of transportation to school such as non-motorized vehicles, reducing carbon dioxide emissions and contributing to creating a sustainable environment.”

Similarly, Dr. Julie Mirshad, the AP Environmental Science and Living Earth teacher, elaborated on the advantages of alternative transportation methods for the ecosystem. “This event makes people contemplate other modes of transportation other than just hopping in your car for everything that is close,” Dr. Julie said. “By not just jumping in your car and choosing a different form of transportation, we would be creating less pollutants, and this event can help create a healthy habit of using alternative means of traveling.”

Despite the benefits toward the ecosystem that this event brings, Dr. Julie also suggests that participation in this activity may not be feasible for certain individuals. “I would acknowledge that some students do live far away, and some teachers live really far, so they don’t have much of a choice,” Dr. Julie said.

Abhinav Shivalli (10) who has participated in this event before, added that the event benefits people in ways beyond reducing emissions. “Even though reduced pollution is a big effect of this event, it is important to take a look at other positive effects. For example, with less cars on the road, there is less traffic and thus less danger for students. Plus, walking or biking to school pretty much guarantees physical activity for five days of the week,” Shivalli said.

Additionally, Patel claimed how ditching the car can also be pleasurable to many. “Walking instead of driving isn’t just good for the environment, it is so much fun as well,” Patel said. “Who doesn’t enjoy walking with their friends while goofing off every once in a while?”

Walk and Roll to School Day is not just an opportunity for students to take steps— figuratively and literally—toward a cleaner and more sustainable future; it is also an opportunity to establish deep connections with others and have fun. Although it is just a single morning out of 365 each year, it demonstrates the potential that communities have, where students safely navigate to school while keeping the environment clean, setting a precedent for the future and demonstrating what could eventually become daily life.

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