



Tension builds regarding FUSD labor negotiations

Exploring the opposing sides' perspectives and current state of the process

Aruna Harpalani | Staff Writer

Since the previous labor contract for FUSD employees expired on June 30th, 2024, negotiations have been going on between the district and the Fremont Unified District Teachers' Union (FUDTA) to secure a new contract. The two parties remain at an impasse, causing the possibility for a teachers' strike to move closer.

Mr. Howard, an English 9 and 10 Honors teacher who is active in FUDTA as a member of the union's Outreach Committee explained the main issues of dispute from the union's perspective. One major concern teachers are holding is the prevalence of larger class sizes. Mr. Howard said, "The more students I have, the more essays I have to grade, the less time with each individual student I have, and you're essentially competing with all your classmates for air time."

"Then there are issues like counselor caseloads," he said. "Counselors see about 400 to 450 students each, which is over the recommendation from the American School Counselor Association." The ASCA recommends a 250:1 counselor to student ratio.

Of course, issues such as salary and healthcare coverage are also union concerns and affect staff retention. Mr. Howard said, "If we don't pay teachers well in comparison with surrounding school districts, then our teach-



Special education teacher Mr. Kimo stands outside the drop-off loop in the morning holding a union sign. "I was approached by an administrator to not hold the sign, and so I worked with the administrators to allow me to be out here with this," he said. "I'll be holding it until we figure out what's going on and the public has a better understanding" (Photo Credit: Aruna Harpalani (11)).

ers will leave for those school districts."

On the district side, Superintendent Zack Larsen was recently appointed on February 26th to replace previous Superintendent Erik Burmeister who unexpectedly resigned on February 12th. Larsen outlined some of the district's fiscal concerns, including those specific to this year's budget. He said, "For the 26 years I've worked here and many, many years before that, many of the same issues have circulated every budget cycle. Some of the challenges we're facing

right now are the ending of many one-time funding sources we had coming out of the pandemic."

Larsen expressed continuing difficulties with getting necessary funds from the state. He said, "When we get chunks of money from the state, our history has been that we pass it along to our employees, but unfortunately it is a continual challenge in the state of California."

The union has a different perspective on the district's finances. Per an interview

with FUDTA President Victoria Chon, while the district claims that it does not have the money, the union contends that it does.

Mr. Howard described one union argument supporting this conclusion. "There's about 75 million dollars in the budget that the district isn't doing anything with. The district is saying, despite there being 75 million dollars in the budget, they just don't have the money to give any of what we want."

Larsen responded to this argument by saying that this money, known as the ending fund balance, was left over from the previous school year, and part of these funds are restricted to only some uses, which do not include teacher salaries.

The district and the union are at the stage of fact-finding, in which both sides present facts to a fact-finder appointed by the Public Employee Relations Board. After the fact-finder presents their report at a public school board meeting, the district may present its final offer, after which FUDTA will be legally permitted to go on strike.

Larsen hopes the fact-finding process will result in progress toward a deal. He said, "I'm hoping that the cases for both [sides] are persuasive and that both parties come away with a greater understanding of where each other are and why the asks or the restrictions are what they are so we can move forward."

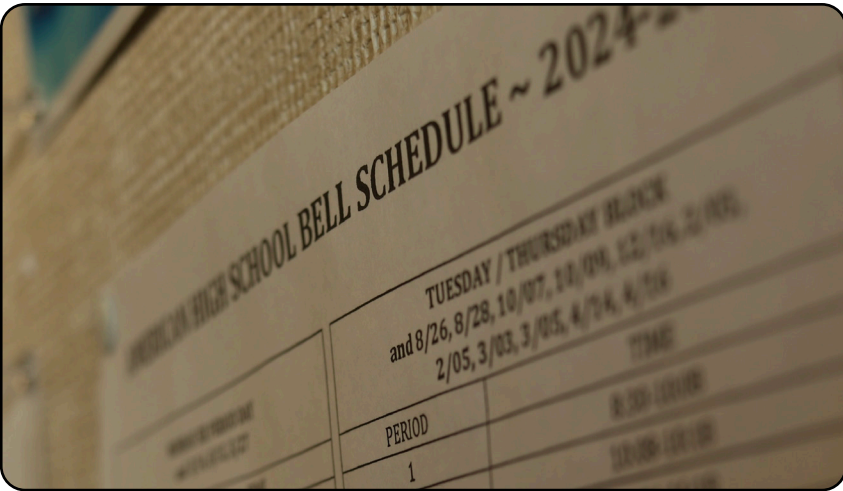
Teachers vote on next year's bell schedule

As the end of this school year approaches, teachers focus on the vote for next year's bell schedule, with results to be available in the coming months

Sanika Yadav | Staff Writer

Towards the end of each school year, teachers have the contractual right to vote on the bell schedule for the next academic year. This year's ballot opened on Monday, March 24th, and closed on Friday, March 28th, giving teachers a week to vote on their preferred schedule in terms of the number of block periods and whether to implement a late start. Two weeks later, a follow-up ballot will be held, allowing teachers to decide on the number of FLEX periods within a week. The different options of schedules include having three six-period days with two block days, incorporating FLEX into six-period days, and maintaining the current schedule.

Teachers' schedule preferences come down to various, competing factors including concerns with the appropriate use of time during FLEX and the length and breadth of curriculums for different subjects. Ms. Martinez, a dance and PE teacher, said, "Personally, I like our old schedule with three six-period days and two block days. It's



The AHS bell schedule for the 2024-2025 school year. This schedule may change for the upcoming school year (Photo Credit: Muhammed A. Ali (12)).

hard to have activity classes that are over an hour long as kids struggle to focus and usually need more breaks during class."

On the other hand, Mr. Baker, an AP Biology teacher, favors a schedule with more block periods. He said, "With

science being lab-based, block periods are essential because many labs cannot be paused halfway and continued the next day, especially when working with certain chemicals or live specimens."

Diya Kulkarni, a junior, believes that FLEX during block periods is crucial to students' academic experience. She said, "I like the current bell schedule because the FLEX time allows students to get a head start on their work, and longer periods allow more information to be taught to students rather than rushing through a short period."

Mr. Baker also believes that students should be able to vote on which schedules they like. To play his part in this, he has his students vote in a poll during class on which schedule they like best, and he places his vote according to his students' majority vote. Mr. Baker said, "I encourage other teachers to ask your students. One of the most disappointing things is that so many (continued pg. 3)

Fremont approves Lake Elizabeth water quality improvement project

What the project is and how it will improve Central Park

Sampan Mehta
Staff Writer

On March 4th, the Fremont City Council approved a pilot program aimed to improve the water quality in Lake Elizabeth, the city’s central recreation area. The primary goal of the pilot plan, which was designed after consultation with an environmental professional, is to prevent future fish die-off events.

In July 2024, Lake Elizabeth, along with the broader East Bay region experienced an intense heatwave that led to reduced dissolved oxygen levels and increasing water temperatures. The effects of the heatwave, combined with the increased sediment build up at the lake floor, significantly raised the water temperature, leading to a significant amount of fish dying. In addition to the fish dying, the decreased water depth puts the lake’s function as a form of flood protection and stormwater storage at risk. The reduction in lake depth and poor water quality also caused boating and other water activities to be closed off.

Although the lake’s issues with water quality have been recently stabilized, city recreation and environment staff proposed the plan in order to prevent the effects of extreme heat waves in the future. According to the city, this plan consists of surface aerators for increased oxygen, nine floating islands for shade and temperature regulation, and water monitor probes, coming in at a sum of about \$175,000. If the initial pilot is successful, the city said it would consider expanding the program to other sections of the lake.

Environmental Services Manager Kathy Cote provided the city council report which further explained the roles and procedures of different city departments that are collaborating on improving water quality and performing general maintenance. The report, published on February 27th, says, “Routine lake maintenance activities conducted by the City include maintaining lake levels during the summer months with additional water from the irrigation system at Central Park and controlling the bird population which has the potential to present bacterial contamination.” The report also outlined that Fremont conducts many water quality compliance activities through its participation in the Alameda County Clean Water Program.

In terms of the lake’s recreational use, Community Services Director Kim Beranek said, “Boating requires a specified depth depending on the type of vessel. Paddle boats or surface floating boats [require] much less depth, while sail boats that have a keel require 4+ feet of depth. Lake Elizabeth’s historical maximum depth is 7 [feet] at the deepest location.”

Explaining the challenges to supporting boating activities, Beranek said, “According to a 2023 bathymetric study and the 2001 construction documents for the dredging project, Lake Elizabeth’s [depth] has decreased two to three feet depending upon the location. This depth issue directly impacts the ability of the lake to support boating operations.”

With concerns over the lake’s ability to serve as a flood-prevention mechanism, Beranek said that the Alameda County Flood Control & Water Conservation District, a local group that overlooks flood-mitigation measures, assured that changes in depth did not impact its ability to prevent floods.

In response to the effects on the community, Beranek said, “It is the City’s desire to have a healthy vibrant lake that supports both the environmental and recreational use of the lake and the needs of the Fremont community.”



Lake Elizabeth, located in Fremont’s Central Park, has been a popular spot for boating and picnics, and the improvement in water quality will help ensure the city can continue to provide these services (Photo Credit: Sampan Mehta (12)).

Don Edwards Refuge hosts an extensive clean up event to protect the local environment

Scouts and volunteers clean up Don Edwards National Wildlife Refuge

Ivan Chu | *Staff Writer*

On March 15th, almost 100 volunteers, mostly students at local high schools, gathered at the Don Edwards National Wildlife Refuge to help protect the local ecosystem. This event, organized by the Scouts of America, the Greenbelt Alliance, and the refuge, aims to protect the San Francisco Bay’s few remaining wetlands by enlisting volunteers to help weed out invasive species and pick up trash around the refuge.

The event took place early in the morning, from 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM, and the volunteers were divided into two groups: the weederers and trash



Volunteers dig up and collect invasive species such as mustard and thistle into a giant pile (Photo Credit: Ivan Chu (11)).

cleaners. For three hours, Scouts traveled along the trails and used pickaxes to pull out the nearest patches of weed. Others traveled across the marsh to collect any plastics and cans they could see.

“I came here to be a role model,” Parnika Bhat (9) said, “It’s my friends’ first time doing environmental work, so I hope they become more interested so we can do work like this.”

Another set of volunteers piled weeds into a giant stack. “We started at the bottom and cleaned up a whole area of thistle and mustard. It’s crazy how many invasive species there are,” Abheer Krishnanand (10) of Mission San José HS said.

In an earlier speech, the organizers shared a similar message to raise this kind of youth awareness about the need to conserve the environment of Don Edwards preserve. Invasive species steal resources from native plants, which results in the destruction of the ecosystem.

“This event is all about community engagement and bringing youth [into] nature,” Aidone Kakouros, a botanist and ecologist, said as she watched the Scouts hard at work.

Victorina Arvelo, the resilience manager for the Greenbelt Alliance, commented on the importance of this cleanup. “We’re giving native plants a chance,” she said. “This helps maintain the wetlands and allow them to act like a sponge and absorb extra water from the rising sea levels. If we lose them, then we’re going to be more at risk of flooding the sewer system or our homes.”

“Don Edwards is directly in our backyard and it is such a unique ecosystem. It could be gone within a couple of years if we don’t take care of it,” Eve Marie Little, Newark’s Vice Mayor and organizer of

this event, said.

The volunteers at this event shared a similar sentiment. “Most people come here to hike and I feel like it’s just as important to give back if you hike here or hang out. Flooding is getting worse and even just cleaning up really helps with protecting our environment,” said Saanvi Harish (8), a member of Thornton Middle School’s Environmental Science Club, and of Scouts Troop 2273.

As the event winded down, some attendees surveyed all the work they accomplished. “I want all of the Scouts to really appreciate the beauty that we have around us,” Little said. “This place is gorgeous and it’s just such a blessing to have something like this so close by.”

The Don Edwards Refuge plans to host another cleanup event on April 19th.



The organizers of the cleanup proudly display the giant pieces of trash that the volunteers collected during the event (Photo Credit: Ivan Chu (11)).

Teachers vote on next year’s bell schedule (cont’d)

teachers say, ‘No, I refuse to ask my students what schedule they prefer.’ And while you don’t have to go with their choice as your vote, at least ask them. Students’ opinions matter.”

Like students, parents also do not have a say in the scheduling process. While no process to formalize parents’ input currently exists, Ms. Martinez said, “Parents don’t always understand what’s happening in the classroom. I do think that [their] voice is an important thing to consider. So, if there was a formal way to get information from [parents], that would actually probably help our debates.”

As teachers figure out their votes regarding the upcoming bell schedule, students and parents await to see what next year’s bell schedule will be. “I just think that it’s bizarre that teachers know that they are going to dictate what these students will have as a schedule, and still not ask their students what schedule they prefer. We want you guys to feel empowered by being a part of the decision-making process,” said Mr. Baker.

UC workers on strike following an impasse in bargaining

- POLITICS -

Union members participated a multi-day strike near the end of February to voice their concerns on negotiations

Tegbir Kaur | Staff Writer

Starting February 26th, thousands of technical workers from two unions—American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees Local 3299 (AFSCME Local 3299) and the University Professional Technical Employees CWA Local 9119 (UPTE CWA 9119)—began striking after negotiations with UC failed to produce an agreement. AFSCME Local 3299 members took to the streets for two days and UPTE CWA 9119 members for three.

The unions represent thousands of UC employees, including pharmacists and mental health workers who, according to ABC News, went on strike over alleged unfair labor practices, staffing shortages, and compensation-related disagreements.

This strike came after the UC proposed wage increases that were not accepted by the unions. Per KQED reporting, the unions suggested that the wage increases proposed did not accurately reflect the increased cost of living, leading to them deem the proposals as insufficient.

The issue of short-staffing is contested between strikers and the UC. While UC Chief Financial Officer Nathan Brostrom warned in 2023 that the rate of unfilled positions had tripled after COVID, the UC Office of the President denied

this claim. According to KQED, “[The office of the President] said university data indicates that the headcount of UPTE [CWA 9119] members has increased and turn-over rates are flattening.”

ABC News reported that Michael Avant, the President of AF-

SCME Local 3299, said, “Instead of addressing the decline in real wages that has fueled the staff exodus at UC Medical Centers and campuses at the bargaining table, UC has chosen to illegally implement arbitrary rules aimed at silencing workers who are raising concerns while



The strikes were high-energy at the UCLA campus. “I think that as a student, it’s inspiring to me to see my peers, my professors, and my campus community stand up for protecting people’s rights,” said Gokhale (Photo Credit: Daily Bruin).

limiting their access to union representatives.” The unions call for more transparency in such matters, alongside filling the alleged vacancies and providing higher wages.

However, in a statement, the university claims it has been the unions who have been negotiating in bad faith, beginning preparations for a strike early on in the negotiating process and refusing to consider proposals put forth by UC. “The [UC] will do everything possible to ensure strike impacts on patients, students, faculty and staff are mitigated,” it said in a statement.

Representatives from AFSCME Local 3299, UPTE CWA 9119, and the UC Office of the President did not respond to the *Eagle Era*’s request for comment for this story.

Reva Gokhale (AHS Class of 2023) is a UC Berkeley sophomore who has seen the strikes impact the campus by modifying the bus schedule. “I think that definitely impacted a lot of students, but no one that I know was upset about it. I understand what [the unions are] protesting for is important. They are simply exercising their fundamental rights—to not stand for what they consider to be unfair working conditions,” said Gokhale. “I think that this attitude is quite reflective of the general student population.”

California Homeless Union and advocates sue Fremont over controversial camping ban

The lawsuit was followed by the recent removal of the contentious aiding and abetting clause

Sampan Mehta | Staff Writer

In February, the City of Fremont City Council passed one of the strictest camping bans in the country in an effort to combat the city’s worsening homelessness crisis. However, the city has received backlash from homeless advocates and unions, which have criticized the broad language in the ban. One such group, the California Homeless Union, has filed a lawsuit challenging the ban.

Within the ban, the “aiding and abetting” clause has received significant disapproval with advocates as its language is interpreted by these groups as criminalizing helping any unhoused resident living in an encampment. CalMatters reported that three city council members as well as the mayor had been reconsidering the language of the clause. However, City Attorney Rafael Alvarado said, “The aiding and abetting clause would target people who help unhoused people set up illegal camps, not people who give out food.” This clarification led to the passage of the clause in the initial ban without further debate.

After the passing of the ban, the Fremont Police Association thanked Mayor Salwan, the city council members, and residents and business owners who supported the ban. Its statement said, “The Fremont Police Association remains dedicated to working with our city leaders, first responders, and community members to ensure this ordinance is implemented fairly and effectively while continuing our outreach to those in need.”

The California Homeless Union decided to put forward a lawsuit towards the entire camp-

ing ban on March 4th. California Homeless Union representative attorney Anthony Prince said, “The lawsuit, as filed, [takes] the position that the entire ordinance is unconstitutional. In other words, the court would not have to look beyond what’s actually written, expressly provided that it appears through the language alone that it is unconstitutional.”

A spokesperson for the union, Robbie Powelson, said in a statement to ABC7 News, “Fundamentally, when you’re unhoused, the laws that protect you [are] the laws that protect the human body. Because when you’re unhoused that’s what you really have—just your humanity.



Fremont’s camping ban targets local encampments scattered throughout the city, such as this “homeless encampment near the corner of Osgood Road and Washington Boulevard in Fremont” (Photo Credit: Dai Sugano, Bay Area News Group).

And you’re not protected by ownership of property.”

According to a report by *CalMatters*, city council member Raymond Liu voted in favor of the ban and said, “Our public spaces belong to the entire community and it’s really not compassionate at all to cede our public spaces to a select few individuals at the expense of everyone else in the general public. Families should be able to take their children to the parks, to the libraries, without fear, and all residents should be able to use our public spaces without encountering any unsafe conditions.”

During the March 18th city council meeting, the council voted to remove the controversial clause, possibly in part to the pressure of the lawsuit. In a statement to ABC7 news, councilmember Tersesa King said, “[This decision makes] sure that our organizations or people extending their hands to help the unhoused are not being punished.”

Liu said, “We’ve repeated so many times that this whole aiding and abetting thing was never meant to you know to refer food water, medical supplies, any of that to people.” In a citywide email to Fremont residents, Mayor Raj Salwan reinforced councilmember Liu’s statement.

Prince, speaking on the union’s opposition efforts, said, “We are trying to get a restraining order [on the ban] that will [hopefully] come long before we get to a trial on our civil rights case. A motion for a restraining order, simply requested in court, says [to the judge] to intervene now [in order to] stop the city from what they are doing. Otherwise, it will be too late to prevent [the unhoused] from being put at greater risk and losing valuable possessions.”

The current schedule is best choice for the student body

Teachers vote on the bell schedule every year, and some options are better than the others as shown by student polls taken on the matter

Aditya Padinjarel
Staff Writer

The AHS bell schedule is voted on towards the end of every year by the teachers on campus. Although, since this is a contractual right for teachers, students have no voting power in the matter. However, some schedules proposed are not as favorable to students. Because block periods would improve outcomes in various ways, the current 4-block-day schedule would be the best for AHS students.

In an informal survey conducted over the course of six months to present students’ opinions on bell schedules to teachers, more students showed satisfaction with the current bell schedule than any alternative. Out of 233 students surveyed, over 95 percent preferred the current schedule over the options of the two block day

ments during class time, FLEX allows students to make up missing work without sacrificing understanding of course content.

While FLEX allows students to catch up on work that they may not otherwise have time to complete due to extracurriculars or other obligations, it also helps them recuperate and relax before the next class of the day. In the previous survey, 92 percent of students said that they received a mental health benefit from FLEX. In a time where the pressures of education keep students sleep deprived and exhausted, some relaxation during the school day helps students stay more focused during class time—ultimately improving their overall academic performance.

Some arguments made by teach-



Removing the extended block periods and eliminating FLEX would be harmful for students’ ability to learn and digest concepts long-term (Art Credit: Kingston Lo (12)).

or five 6-period day schedule.

The current bell schedule gives more students leeway in terms of time to complete assignments, as well as allows them to put more effort into their work. With the gap day in between classes, students can produce more thoughtful and less rushed work, resulting in higher levels of long-term retention. The longer class periods also allow more extended learning on a subject, such as in AP classes which have more content to cover in a shorter amount of time. In contrast to the regular 60-minute period, a block period allows more content to be covered, with more time between class days to digest information.

Another recent informal survey, this one conducted by the *Eagle Era*, also confirmed this preference, where over 91 percent of 83 students surveyed preferred the current bell schedule.

Another major reason for this preference is the four days of FLEX, a time meant for academics and extra support from teachers. Rather than forcing students to miss important lectures and make up missed assess-

ers regarding the removal of FLEX include students wasting their time on non-academic activities. Academics can span across a vast variety of subjects, including building social relationships, time management skills, and scaling mental capacity. FLEX offers the opportunity to collaborate on group activities, or mentally recuperate for those who need it. For those who don’t, it teaches the important lesson of responsibility and time management.

The current bell schedule holds significant benefits to students that the other options presented fail to account for. There are vast educational opportunities through the use of block periods and FLEX than there are from a move towards more 6-period days. And the presented data shows that more students prefer the extended periods, fewer classes, and more FLEX time in comparison to the reduction of block days. If the teachers’ criteria to choose a bell schedule emphasizes promoting student performance, there is no reason to deviate from the schedule that fulfils this criteria most strongly.

The stages of AP testing season

- HUMOR -

Pay \$100, suffer for months, and forget everything by July

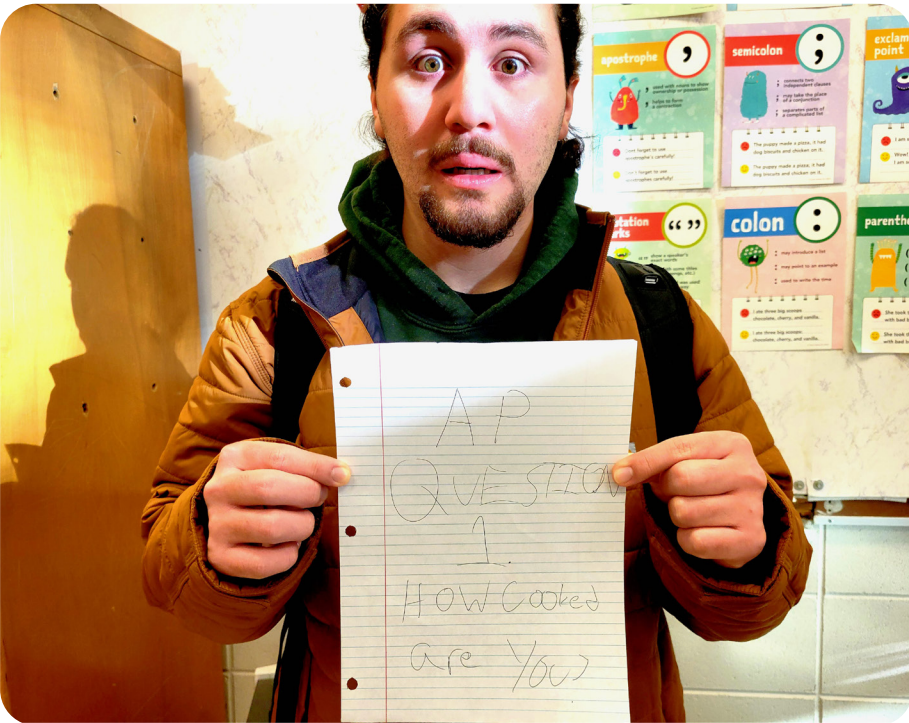
Lance Wang
Staff Writer

AP testing is starting in a month, and while April could be wisely spent praying that AP teachers don’t assign a project at the end of the year instead of giving free periods, the AP routine dictates that the following weeks be spent with a frantic mix of studying, complaining, and questioning life choices.

The impact of AP testing on students begins well before the tests actually begin—when many students enter a state of denial. It starts with blissful ignorance, a time when students assume that their study routine of reading through their textbook

like a semi truck, with students trying to negotiate their way out of earning a 1 or 2. While some might try to recall obscure facts, hoping a vaguely familiar term could be used to answer a question, others might resort to throwing everything they can at a question in the hopes it might score partial credit. Then there’s the ultimate act of desperation—trying to justify a completely incorrect answer.

“I just started drawing historical figures at the end of my second free-response question last year,” said Ami Cookd (12). “It was the AP Physics 1 test, so I don’t think it would be exactly appropriate for that situation. Although,



Students only realize how unprepared they are for the AP test after they start seeing the questions (Photo Credit: Lance Wang (12)).

for ten minutes a day every week is sufficient to cover the entire year’s worth of material. Unfortunately, unbeknownst to most students, skimming through the textbook while scrolling Instagram on the side isn’t the best study method. A month seems like a long opportunity to study. Yet, when the first few practice exams start being assigned, what seems like an easy review turns into a brutal wake-up call. Still, morale stays strong for the most part because of the common sentiment that “the grading scale will be generous, and I only need a 3 on the exam.”

A week before the test begins, this denial turns into rage. Copi Yum (10) said, “I’m actually about to crash out. You’re telling me I spent over a hundred dollars on taking this test, and I still only have a chance to get my score counted for college credit? I tried venting to my friend about how stressed I was feeling, and he just laughed at me and told me to read my psychology textbook for a solution! If one more person tells me how they haven’t started studying for their seven consecutive AP tests yet, and how they’re confident they are getting a 5 on each one, I’m gonna lose it.”

On the day of the test, reality hits

it was a pretty fire image of Abraham Lincoln skateboarding down a thirty-degree incline.”

After testing, students enter a depressed state, trying to process how well they might have scored. Students compare answers, only to realize that none of their responses match.

“I just sat in my car for thirty minutes after my AP Biology test,” said Nomor Hope (12). “I just sat there processing. I think I’ll just spend the entirety of the AP Physics 1 test playing tetris on my TI-84.”

As students begin to accept their performance on the test, it begins to fade from the mind completely—until July, where scores are released. For some, checking scores is a moment of triumph.

“I was so nervous when I checked my College Board account, and when I saw a 1 on my AP World History score, I almost fainted,” Delu Shin (10) ecstatically exclaimed. “I can’t believe I got first place. Of course, I already knew I would ace that test.” For others, it’s a painful confirmation of what they already knew.

“I opened the email, looked at it for 5 seconds, and then went back to sleep,” said Cookd.

Regardless of the outcome, the cycle continues. Many students, despite swearing they would never put themselves through this stress again, keep finding themselves signing up for more AP tests the following year.

The summer program hype is fake

Considering how cost and time constraints play into whether programs are worthwhile or not

Ryan Liu | Staff Writer

As the second semester begins, high school students rush to apply for summer programs, most of which promise academic enrichment and new opportunities. Oftentimes, these programs are associated with prestigious universities, marketed as required experiences for students that will boost their college applications and serve as the foundation for future academic success. But really, they aren't worth all the attention they are given. Although some programs offer unique experiences, most are overpriced and don't provide much that a student cannot achieve themselves using the same amount of time.

The price tag is a major factor to consider. Many programs charge thousands upon thousands of dollars for only a few measly weeks of participation, making those without financial aid programs immediately inaccessible to families that cannot afford them. These programs are, in nature, pay-to-win, creating a boundary between those who can and cannot afford

it under the guise of selecting only the most talented of students. A summer camp should foster learning and exploration, yet most programs choose wealth over merit, creating financial barriers limiting access to true enrichment. Jacob Wang (11), a student who has attended multiple programs, said, "A lot of the programs I attended weren't as rigorous as I expected. It felt like they were created more for the reason of making money rather than teaching meaningful lessons. I forced my parents to pay so much money for this cause, yet I didn't learn or achieve much at all."

The other major selling points include the unique opportunity to work with experts, sometimes even college professors, while creating networks with other students around the country. While it certainly is appealing, the reality is that most students leave without establishing lasting major connections. Many programs cover material that can be learned from YouTube videos and textbooks, and as for networks, the few weeks of collaboration

rarely leads to long-term professional connections. Even though most students are conscious of the downsides of applying to summer camps, and even though some of these students understand that it isn't the best use of their time, societal pressure and the fear of falling behind their peers often force them to anyways. The competitive nature of college admissions causes students to feel they must always be doing something productive, even if they understand that they can better spend their time on other activities.

Still, some programs are worthwhile. In particular, those which are free or, even better, provide pay can be valuable to students in terms of experiencing professional, job-like settings which provide valuable experiences for future careers while simultaneously respecting participants' time and personal goals. However, students need to think carefully before automatically assuming a summer program will benefit them. Ultimately, students should focus on accumulating meaningful experiences that align with their interests and goals, since the best summer is one which promotes the type of growth that really matters.

When you accidentally get distracted from TikTok and start doing homework

- HUMOR -

If you really think about it, locking in can just mean scrolling some more on social media (send this to someone who doesn't appreciate your social media addiction)

Tegbir Kaur
Staff Writer

"I'm going to lock in today and delete TikTok," claimed Brian Rot (10), echoing the same words uttered by countless students since 2020. We've all heard it before; as AP exam season begins to peek over the horizon, it's natural for the pressure to build and to feel like social media is standing in the way of your academic comeback. But this is your sign to put down your textbook and pick up your phone again—you just might see that the latter is what truly milks your brain cows, helping you score an "A" in your class and a 5 on your exam in May.

You can actually learn a lot from your For You Page. "I fell asleep in math the other day, but it's okay because later I watched a Tiktok of an AI Sabrina Carpenter explaining the unit circle," exclaimed Chill Guy (12). Guy admitted he did not watch the video all the way through, getting sidetracked while contemplating what he calls "the existential threat AI poses on the sociopolitical and economic state of the world today," but insisted that it helped just the same. "It's like they always say: it's the thought that counts," he explained.

On an unrelated note, when pressed on the value of $\sin \pi$, Guy muttered in a trance-like state, "The mitochondria is the powerhouse of the cell," and then abruptly ended the interview, refusing to continue.

"Certain viral audios can sometimes be a godsend when I blank in class," added Nurr D (11), citing Drake's new song "Meet Your Padre" as the sole

reason for his 85 percent on an in-class Spanish essay. "What words beside madre, padre, and amor could I ever need?" You can also thank said audio for being stuck in a certain writer's head (against her will) while doing Spanish homework and inspiring this article in the process.

While writing his Spanish essay,

a traumatic incident scarred D. "I was so enthusiastic while writing that my pen ended up slipping and crashing onto the floor when I only had a minute left to finish." Shedding a single tear, he recounted regretfully, "Had I spent some more time on Instagram Reels strengthening my finger reflexes while scrolling, perhaps I could have saved those

0.4 seconds and added the accent on the 'o' which cost me that 28 percent." (D's teacher refused to provide a comment, pleading the Fifth.)

Critics also often bring up the point that doom-scrolling drastically reduces a student's attention span and worsens their posture, but they just need to shift their perspective. Think of the time you would save by lowering your attention span! After all, why spend 3 hours studying when you can learn everything you need to know in 7.43 seconds? "My productivity has skyrocketed ever since TikTok reduced my attention span," declared Skee Bidi (9), all in one breath. "In a single hour, I studied for my history test, started a business, shut down said business, and was responsible for the entire stock market crash. What a record!" he announced proudly. (This stunt was performed by a trained professional. Please do not try at home.)

As for the alleged bad posture, what could better teach us science than real-time backwards evolu-

tion? Plus, it would literally be history in the making. That's two killings, and one stone-bird. Apologies, I have not gotten my daily dose of reels yet and am not fully functioning—which just might say something about how social media usage can fry the brain. Perhaps a return to our original roots—even if that means less of evolving into hunchbacks and more of controlling our social media usage—is exactly what we need.



Social media has taken over so many parts of everyday life, making it understandable that many argue about its negative impacts (Art Credit: Ivan Chu (11)).

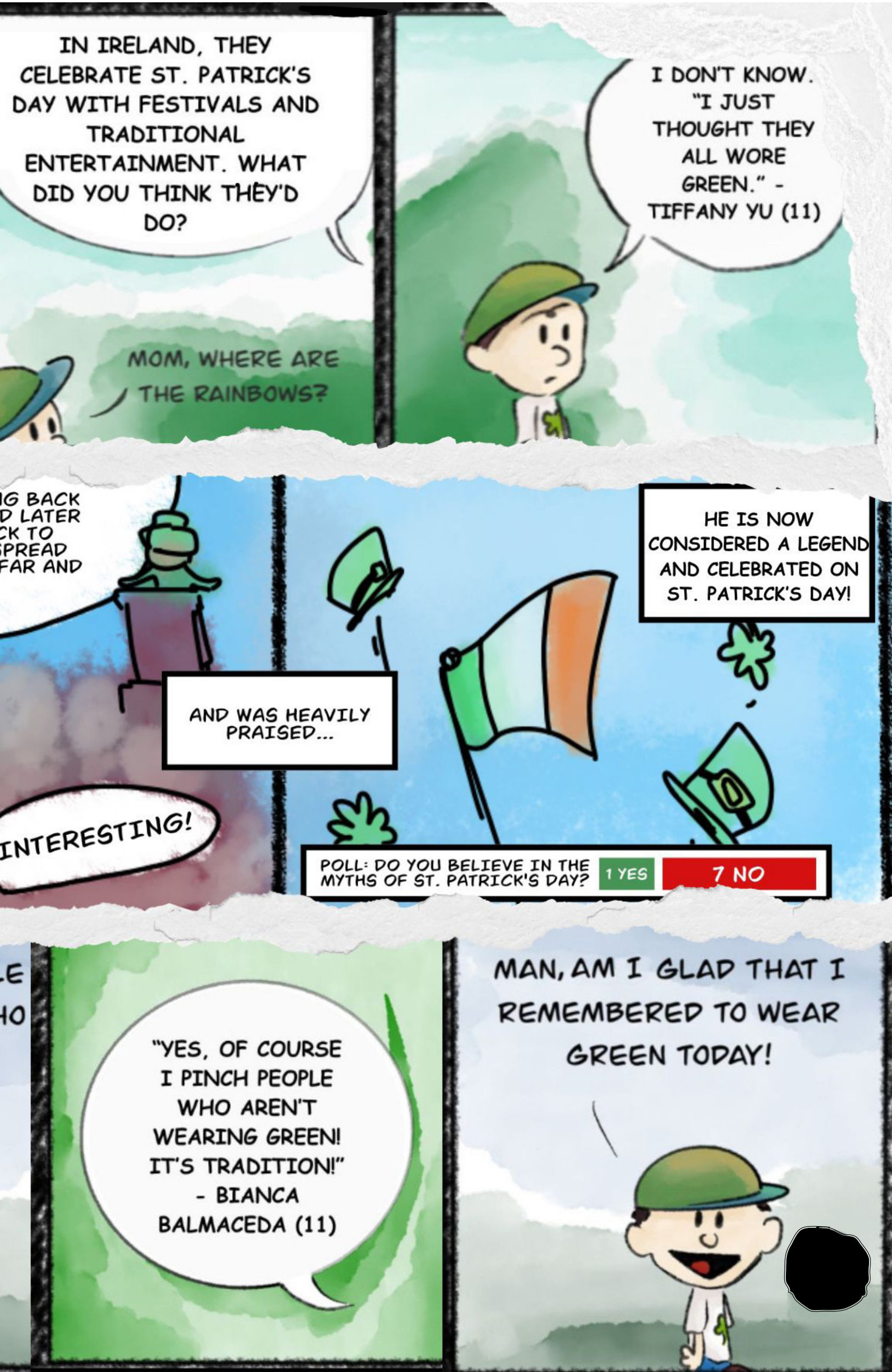


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Several varsity teams experience mixed results, others break records with spring season in full swing

An overview of pivotal moments, scores, and statistics from the academic year’s final athletics season

Rohan Bhagra & Amrita Venkatesh | Editors-in-Chief

March:

2	3	4 Softball: AHS v. Mission San Jose HS AHS loses 0-20	5 Baseball: AHS v. Gunn HS AHS loses 1-2	6 Softball: AHS v. Overfelt HS AHS wins 1-0	7	8
9	10	11 Badminton: AHS v. James Logan HS League opener AHS wins 15-2 Boys Volleyball: AHS v. Mission San Jose HS League opener AHS loses 0-3	12	13 Badminton: AHS v. Washington HS AHS wins 17-0 Boys Volleyball: AHS v. Newark Memorial HS AHS wins 3-0	14	15
16	17	18 Badminton: AHS v. Irvington HS AHS wins 9-8 Softball: AHS v. Mt. Eden HS AHS loses 2-13	19	20 Badminton: AHS v. Mission San Jose HS AHS loses 7-10 Boys Volleyball: AHS v. James Logan HS AHS loses 1-3	21 Baseball: AHS v. Mission San Jose HS AHS wins 5-4	22
23	24 Baseball: AHS v. Amador Valley HS AHS loses 2-15 Softball: AHS v. San Leandro HS AHS loses 0-13	25 Softball: AHS v. Washington HS League opener AHS loses 7-15 Boys Volleyball: AHS v. John F. Kennedy HS AHS wins 3-1	26 Baseball: AHS v. Washington HS League opener AHS loses 0-2	27 Badminton: AHS v. John F. Kennedy HS AHS wins 17-0 Boys Volleyball: AHS v. Irvington HS AHS loses 1-3	28 Baseball: AHS v. Washington HS AHS loses 1-4	29

Swimming:

The swim team celebrated the achievements of its 18 seniors during its senior night meet against John F. Kennedy HS on March 28th. The team won its league-opening meet against Irvington HS on March 7th with a final score of 364-312, and it ends its league season against Washington at home on April 17th.

Track:

During the Castro Valley Relays on March 29th, boys varsity track & field members Aneek Mandal (11), Shaun Matthew (10), Aden Zhang (10), and Evrin Wasser (10) broke AHS's 4000 meter distance medley relay record—finishing with a time of 11 minutes and 12.18 seconds. The team hosted its senior night to honor the class of 2025 on March 22nd during a weekend meet at Tak Fudenna stadium.

Baseball:

Finishing last season 6th in MVAL, the baseball team began this league season with two consecutive games against Washington, dropping both matchups. According to data available on Maxpreps, Dillon Hsiao (12) currently leads the team in batting average and runs scored. Sophomore Drew Tondag leads the team with a 0.58 ERA. The team, despite struggling offensively, is among the top of the league in run prevention so far this season.

Boys Tennis:

The boys tennis team opened its league season with a 4-3 win against Mission San Jose HS on March 4th, its first win against the school in several years. It remained undefeated until its rematch against Mission San Jose HS on March 27th, ending a 7-game undefeated streak. The team also won the Freedom High School Tournament in Oakley on March 15th.

Badminton:

Sophia Cao (11) and Niyati Yalamati (10) of the badminton team took second place in the Girls Doubles section of the Newark Memorial Varsity Tournament. Seniors Henry Cao and Matthew Luoh also earned second place in the Boys Doubles section. The team has also notched several other tournament victories during its exceptionally strong season—its only loss thus far has come to Mission San Jose HS, one of MVAL's best-performing teams.

Editors note:

All scores, information, and statistics presented are accurate as of Sunday, March 30th.

March Madness at AHS

The lunchtime basketball tournament was reworked to improve player experience

Aruna Harpalani | Staff Writer

AHS’s rendition of March Madness was a three-week, single-elimination basketball tournament named and modeled after the prominent NCAA event with the same name.

The tournament was three weeks long, and games were hosted during lunch in the gym. The 16 teams were made up of AHS students who signed up together, and each team had five players.

The first week consisted of 2 games per each day from March 4th through the 7th. The next week, March Madness was on pause due to International Week. The second round took place with 1 game per lunch during the week of the 18th through the 21st. The last week included semifinal games on the 24th and the 25th, then the final game on the 28th. In the final game on March 28, the Aaravengers won 14-13 against Yunggunnawanna.

AHS Leadership’s Athletics Committee hosted the event and played a significant role in organizing the teams. Akarsh Ranjan (12) participated in March Madness last year, and as a member of the Athletics Committee, he called upon his prior experiences to implement several changes to improve the tournament. “This year, I’ve made it a statement to come here to come here and change everything that made it not

so good last year.”

One major change was limiting the number of teams that could sign up. “I feel like last year, it got too hectic,” said Ranjan. “So I put a cap on 16 teams, just like how March Madness does it. It’s so much easier.”

“Another complaint last year was that there’s too many games,” said Ranjan. “Normally, there are 2 games going on at once on the side courts, and those courts are smaller. They’re not that good in comparison to the full court.” This explains why March Madness shifted to having only 1 game per day starting in the second week, allowing for the use of a full-size court.



Audiences watch the second semifinal game on March 26th, in which Yunggunnawunna won 8-7 against Cokebuttacheese (Photo Credit: Aruna Harpalani (11)).

Yet another new addition to March Madness this year was that teams could select coaches. Raghav Sharma (11), a coach for the team Cokebuttacheese, described how he saw his role in the team. “I was there to make sure my team knew exactly what to do. Just being there, monitoring them, and making sure they know what to do, especially in tight games like March Madness where we have less time and we need more points.”

Ranjan described the inspiration for adding coaches. He said, “Why not try to create the same atmosphere as a high school basketball game, or maybe an NBA game where there is a coach on the sideline?”

Overall, March Madness was a popular event on campus, an opportunity for students to come together to play and watch basketball. Emily Su (12), a Leadership student and Class of 2025 Senator who assisted with crowd control, observed the appeal of the event. Su said, “It’s a nice way to bring friends together, especially since a lot of people are involved in basketball.”

Sharma agreed that the event fostered a sense of community. He said, “It’s great that people are coming together to watch sports, especially during lunch. Just being there with everyone and supporting your team is a lot of fun.”




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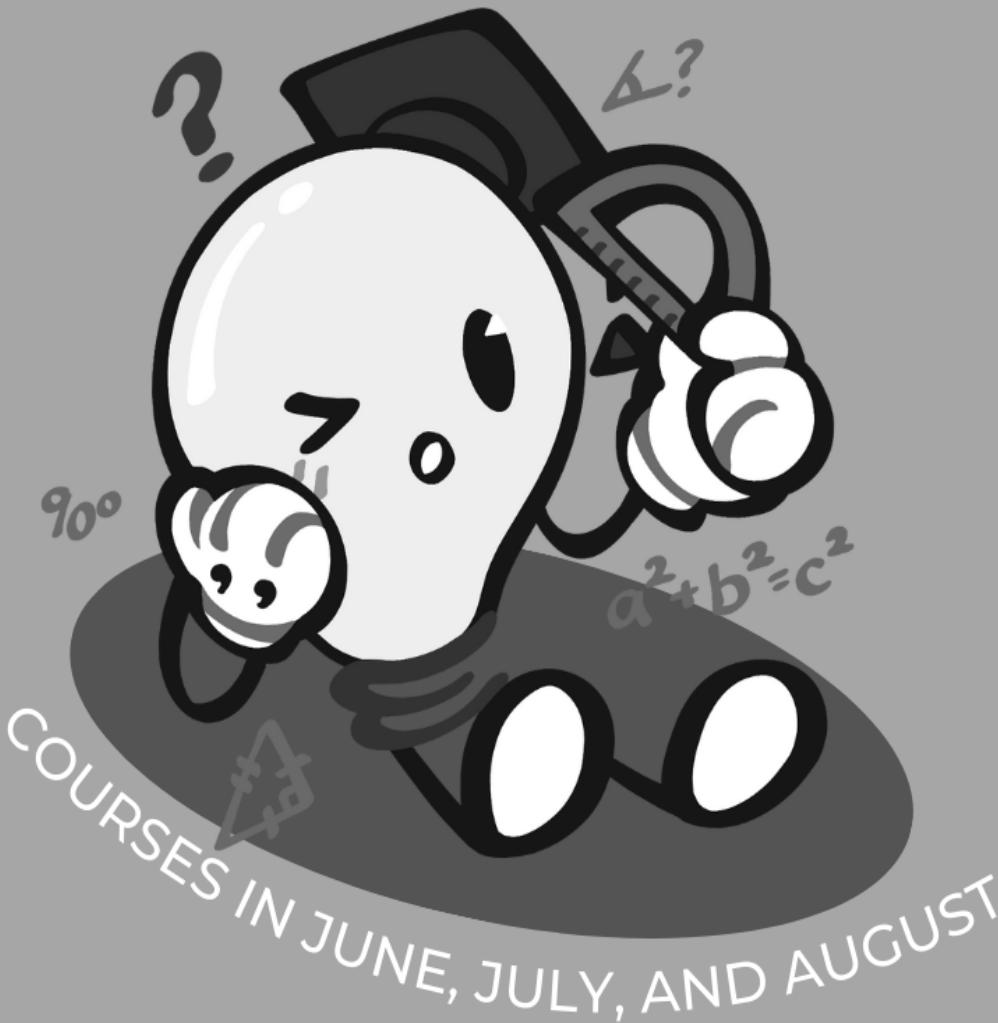
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Stepping into the spotlight

Tanvi Bhide and her journey in theater from freshman to senior year

Sanika Yadav | Staff Writer

“If you believe your character acts the way they do due to their backstory, your character is more believable to the people that are watching you as well,” said Tanvi Bhide (12). Beginning in freshman year, Bhide has performed in 3 productions with AHS’s Performing Arts Department (AHSPA), playing Lydia and Lady Catherine De Bourgh in *Pride and Prejudice*, Hannah in *Freaky Friday*, and Titania in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. She also recently attended the Lenaea High School Theater Festival and Competition, further expanding her experience in theater.

Bhide’s journey into theater began in 2020 through her interest in classic literature. She said, “During quarantine, I had a period drama phase where I watched *Little Women*, *Pride and Prejudice*, and all romance period dramas.”

The following year, when she came to school as a freshman and learned that AHSPA would be producing the play *Pride and Prejudice*, she was excited to join the theater community as she had already read the book. “I knew the plot, and I knew all the characters, like, from the back of my hand.”

Bhide described the roles she has played to be quite similar in varying ways. Her role as Lydia in *Pride and Prejudice* correlates closely to Hannah in *Freaky Friday*, while her other role in *Pride and Prejudice* as Lady Catherine De Bourgh is similar to Titania in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. She said, “I feel like my acting has evolved with the charac-

ters that I’ve been given. Since freshman year, I’ve become more like Titania in that I’m more calm and collected. Whereas in freshman year, I was literally crazy, and I felt that, at the time, Lydia was the embodiment of me.”

This year, Bhide and her castmates went to the Lenaea High School’s Theater Festival and Competition, representing AHS for the first time. Alongside performing her monologue at the festival, Bhide also enjoyed taking part in sword fighting and backstory-creating classes.

Ms. Benedetti, the theater’s director and Bhide’s mentor, attested to Bhide’s growth as an actor and person following the festival. In terms of what makes Bhide stand out as a performer, Ms. Benedetti said, “She’s not afraid to do the weirder things on stage and to take those risks. She is also very responsible and respectful when it comes to being an actor. She’s willing to share her ideas but also take mine into consideration.”

Cast members of AHSPA also agree that Bhide’s diligence in theater stands out. Vanessa Hinh (12), who worked with Bhide in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, said, “Tanvi is super hardworking, and she knows what she’s doing. She is also always so fun to work with because she’s super bright and energetic so it’s really fun to just joke around with her.”

Nathan Kao (12), the choreographer for the current musical *Urinetown* also said, “I remember watching Tanvi playing Titania in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, and she was really, really good at embodying her character.”

As a senior, Bhide also inspires younger students in theater to step out of their comfort zone and take responsibility. “She is definitely a model student and I know younger students look up to her, wanting to do what she can do,” said Ms. Benedetti.

Bhide’s favorite aspect of the productions she has participated in is being a part of the larger theater community and performing with people. She

said, “I love the pre-show adrenaline because we have put in so much hard work, and it is so rewarding to be able to finally show that to the audience.”

As Bhide prepares to graduate, she reflected on the lasting impact theater has made on her high school experience and the strong sense of community she has found within it. When asked about pursuing theater in university, Bhide said, “I don’t know yet. We’ll see where the wind takes me.”



Tanvi Bhide playing the role of Titania in the fall 2024 play, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (Photo Credit: Rishaan Joshi (12)).

Bringing a game to life

The creative process behind game development club’s latest projects

Lance Wang
Staff Writer

This semester, the AHS Game Development Club is creating three unique games to be released at the end of April. Rayan Ghosh (12), became president of AHS’s Game Development Club three years ago and has been leading it ever since. “I look over everything in the Game Development Club,” he said. “We teach all our members Unity and C# (a coding language) in the first semester, and in the second semester, we split into three groups with 7 to 8 members each and create games based on a theme I assign.” This year’s theme? “Keep it Alive.”

The theme was intentionally left broad in order to encourage unique interpretations. “I wanted to keep it vague to leave room for creativity,” Ghosh explained. “It’s kind of an experiment on human creativity. Everybody’s really unique, and when they come together, they can create completely new, unique, interesting things, right? By isolating all these groups and having to brainstorm individually, they all come up with completely unique takes on the topic of ‘Keep it Alive.’”

Each group is currently taking the theme in completely different directions. “One group is creating a tower defense game where you have to protect a certain object by placing down towers. Some people are taking the theme of “Keep it

Alive” in a more story-based fashion. A lot of different game ideas, different game mechanics as well,” Ghosh explained.

However, with the creative process comes different roadblocks. “The challenge right now is consolidating ideas. We had so many interesting ideas going into it that it was really



Game Development Club president Rayan Ghosh reviewing this year’s game (Photo Credit: Lance Wang (12)).

hard to pick one specific idea that we were going for,” said Ghosh.

Working in teams has also introduced logistical challenges, such as in managing code as a group. “We use GitHub to collaborate with a bunch of people to work on the same project, but when two people are working on the same file, it causes a merge conflict,” Adrian Yuen (12) explained. In order to fix this error, developers need to manually edit the files in order to decide which ones to keep.

Justin Wang (10), is the concept artist for his group, but he also faces his own unique obstacles. “Sometimes I don’t know what idea to use or what ideas to put together, so I just have to find the right idea and then it’ll get me started really fast.

For members like Yuen, the hands-on aspect of making a game is part of what keeps game development thrilling. “Every single meeting, you get to learn something new, you get to do something new, and you get instant feedback. You click the run button, and you see what you made come to life. It’s really exciting.” For others, the exciting part is how active the club is. Dylan Ashraf (10) said, “In some other clubs, you just learn things. But in the [Game Development] Club, we’re actually making games super showing them off.”

Croffles and concerts

How Tamper Room Café uplifts Fremont artistry

Saanvi Deshini
Staff Writer

Tamper Room Café and Gallery hosts about two concerts or community events each week, and since its creation in 2022, has hosted events ranging from concerts to nonprofit events, open mics, and art exchanges. What seems to be just another croffle place transforms into a third place for artists after-hours, as small businesses organize events and musicians, coffee shop concerts.

A third place is defined as a public place that is not home or work, and exists to promote a sense of community. Tamper Room’s Creo Noveno-Najam, the Artist Liaison and Gallery Director, said, “A lot of us started out doing art just going to cafés randomly and seeing and meeting other creatives. I think from that experience, we wanted to build upon those experiences from our own lives and make that accessible to people, especially younger people. In the suburbs, like, there’s not really a lot of other, cool creative spaces out here to do that kind of stuff. So it’s really nice to be able to provide that for younger kids, but also creatives who live out here and who are willing to come out and support.”

On Saturday, March 8th, independent metal band Devil Can’t Cry headlined a Tamper Room show alongside four other bands. They held a sold-out show that be-



Kathleen Daiman’s charity event held an event to platform local creatives. She said, “[It was possible because] Tamper Room was so helpful and accommodating.” (Photo Credit: Mikee Patterson).

gan after normal café business hours, and Tamper Room stands out as one of the only venues that could support such an event for small artists in Fremont. Lead vocalist, Kyle McDonald said, “I mean it’s a coffee shop, so we aren’t playing on this huge stage, and usually that means we’ll have lower energy because everyone’s so cramped together. The positive of [performing] here was just that you felt like you were talking to everybody.”

Bass player, Noah Behl, added, “Yeah, there’s that social aspect to it where you’re just socializing with literally everyone [here]. You get to meet so many cool people, and it’s like a warm, nice time where everyone’s friends.”

More than just concerts, the café hosts frequent events for the community, giving a platform to other kinds of artists. Influencer, artist, and model, Kathleen Daiman, hosted an event in support of the College of Adaptive Arts, the Middle East Children’s Alliance, and Filipino American History Month, inviting local businesses. Daiman said, “[Tamper Room] really platforms local creatives, [and] I had people asking me about how they could do an event with them. Everyone’s networking, and Tamper Room was so helpful and accommodating. Being that the space is so intimate and the decor is so perfect, it makes for a great vibe while you’re there too.”

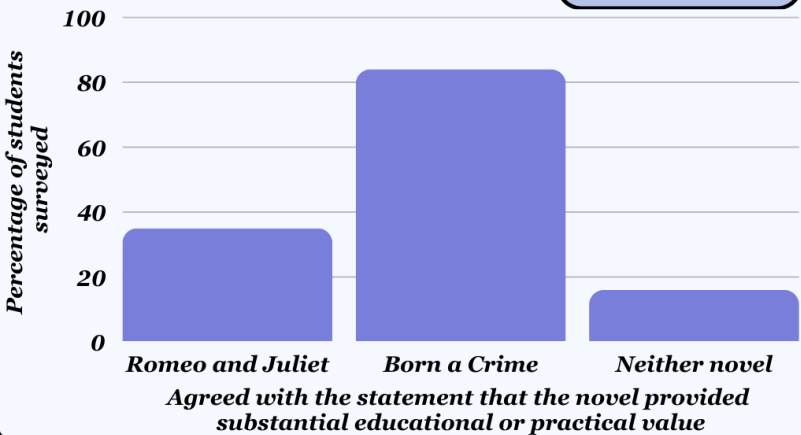
Noveno-Najam added, “The intent within the space is to specifically support artists. Part of our business, of course, is just selling coffee, but the larger part of it is just giving space for newer artists to sell their work. The main group of people who opened Tamper, they’re artists themselves. We realize the importance of knowing that beyond just school or home, you get to find another community to engage with, just working on and appreciating art together.”

Students share perspectives on required reading

9th and 10th grade students evaluate required readings for their substantial educational or practical value in a survey

Staff Writer | Shiv Gurjar

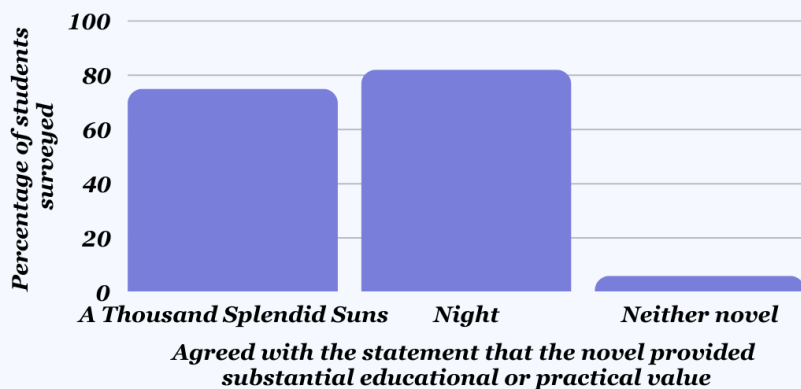
9th Grade



Editor’s note: The Eagle Era did not include data from students who had not yet read the required readings as part of the 9th-grade curriculum. This unofficial survey displays the proportion of 95 9th-grade students who agreed with the following statements:

- 1) **Romeo and Juliet** holds substantial educational or practical value.
- 2) **Born a Crime** holds substantial educational or practical value.
- 3) **Neither** of these readings hold substantial educational or practical value.

10th Grade



Editor’s note: The Eagle Era did not include data from students who had not yet read the required readings as part of the 10th-grade curriculum. This unofficial survey displays the proportion of 96 10th-grade students who agreed with the following statements:

- 1) **A Thousand Splendid Suns** holds substantial educational or practical value.
- 2) **Night** holds substantial educational or practical value.
- 3) **Neither** of these readings hold substantial educational or practical value.

Setting up for Springfest

Tracking the progress of Springfest preparations and an overview of the Battle of the Bands

Ryan Liu | Staff Writer

With just a few days until Springfest, AHS is deep in preparations. The annual event, known for its exhilarating student-run activities including, but not limited to, the Battle of the Bands, takes months of planning. As the countdown dwindles, ASB members, performers, and volunteers are making final pushes to ensure that everything is ready.

Planning an event of such a large scale is not a simple task, with the coordination of logistics beginning months prior. ASB President Avishi Baldwa (12) said, “Preparations for Springfest had begun all the way in January, where we reached out to class executives and established the dates for all the events. As executives, we must make sure we delegate tasks efficiently for the week itself so we can cover all bases, such as counting dress-ups and switching out daily backdrops.”

While ASB members are setting up the logistics, the performers, most notably the Battle of the Band competitors, are in the thick of rehearsals, with even and odd classes practicing rigorously for their performance. Ishan Parekh (10), a percussionist in his class’s band, said, “I love playing music with other people and competing against others, which Battle of the Bands provides. It is this passion which has driven me and many of my peers to rehearse as much as possible, tweaking small, specific details every time we meet.”

Apart from being extremely fun

and rousing to observe, the nature of the Battle of the Bands makes for an unforgettable experience for performers and the audience alike. Baldwa said, “Battle of the Bands is a tradition that predates my time at AHS, but the event is definitely worth keeping. With all our events, we want to place students at the forefront, and the Battle of the Bands does so through celebrating student musicians at our school. Music really brings students together, adding to the quintessential high school experience; crowding around the stage and singing along to familiar lyrics as the sun sets at the Night Market is a really special memory for attending students.”

Meanwhile, this event helps add more layers to Springfest as a whole, amplifying the energetic atmosphere. Brian Chun (9) said, “Battle of the Bands allows students with an interest in performing music to permeate that interest and excitement onto the non-musician and non-performing student body. It represents the creativity of multiple grade levels while creating a friendly yet competitive undertone, adding to the AHS school spirit and to Springfest as a whole.”

As the performing spaces are being arranged by ASB, energy is building up across the campus with students looking forward to the festivities awaiting. Whether performing, organizing, or simply spectating, Springfest promises to be a major highlight of the 2024-25 school year.

AHS-thetics meet the runway

About the fashion of Fine Arts Fair 2025

Saanvi Deshini
Staff Writer

AHS’s Fine Arts Fair, held on March 21st, planned an editorial and fashion show among other live performances and art exhibits. Months in the making, this year’s fair wanted the aesthetics of an art gallery, taking a more traditional approach to each display.

Chloe Deng (12) and Crow Zhao (12) led the fashion aspects of the fair, including a two-part exhibit with an editorial magazine and runway show. Both have always been interested in fashion, describing how they’ve always felt there was no limitation in experimenting with style.

Deng said, “Both of us have modeled for the magazine before, and organizing it this year, we wanted to focus on more of what a traditional editorial would look like.”

Zhao continued, “The night of the Fine Arts Fair would also have this great atmosphere, and we really wanted it to be grounded in appreciating the art.”

For the editorial, each grade level contributed a photoshoot featuring specific pieces modeled with different themes and pieces. Daniel George (10), described his photoshoot experience, saying, “It was pretty amazing. We had phenomenal scenery, and it was great to work with my friends and get cool photos. I’m genuinely so excited to see how it turns out.”

Sophomore Ayaan Arif, who has par-



Deng and Zhao have always been interested in fashion, describing how they’ve always felt there was no limitation in experimenting with style (Photo Credit: Jaskirat Singh (10)).

ticipated in the editorial for two years, said, “Last year, [AHS Class of 2024 alum] Jalen Dizon asked me to do it. I tried again this year, just because that first experience was so memorable. Like, we’d get to be in a group and have fun, but we’re also putting together something just really cool.”

The Fine Arts Fair’s runway show provides a live and more interactive approach to modeling. Srijani Vutukari (10) said, “I’ve always loved dressing up and taking pictures, and last year, I was so excited by the idea that I could wear this big ball gown. I could be Rapunzel for a day, you know? This year, I’m going more traditional, so experimenting is definitely exciting. The experience is so fun too, and everyone’s so nice and appreciative of everyone else. I was so nervous, but being up there, everyone’s just cheering and so loud, it felt so great.”

This year’s leadership class also hoped to achieve a more specific ambience, and co-head of the art show, Hetanshi Vakhar-ia (12), said, “We want to make sure that exhibits are interactive, like capture a museum. I’m so excited for people to really be able to experience it all—we even got champagne flutes for Martinelli’s and these lanyards to really get that vibe.”

As for the day of, the Fine Arts Fair kicked off with 10 musical performances preceding the runway show. During their catwalks, models sported cultural wear, formal wear, and for some, their own handmade creations. The music resumed, and the film festival was held in Theatre 70. Small business booths and the art gallery lined the Rotunda, and later, the music picked back up. Deng and Zhao’s editorial magazines sold out before the end of the runway show, and the Dance Expo concluded the event.

The layers of an art portfolio

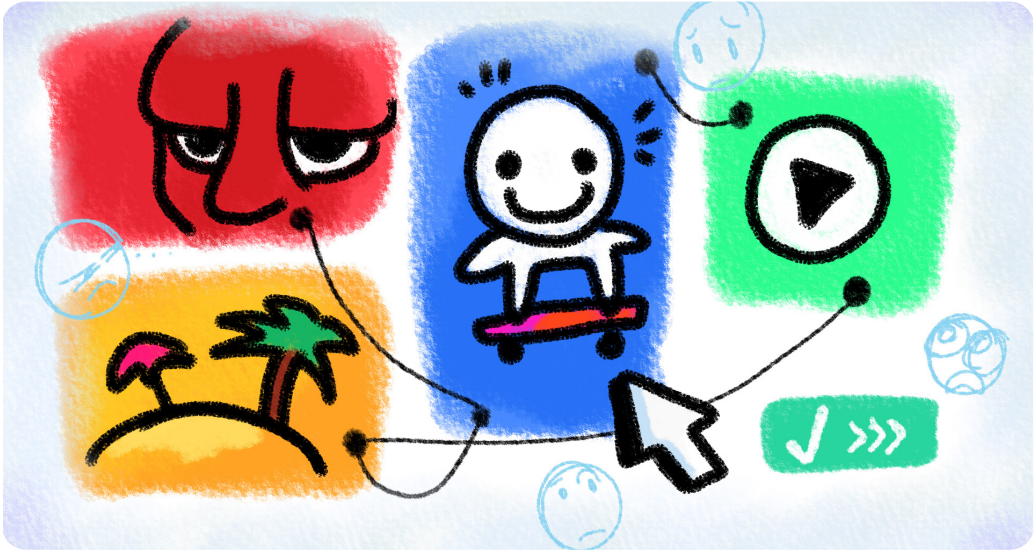
Making an art portfolio is one of the most stressful parts of an art school application

Kingston Lo | Staff Writer

As decisions for art schools are starting to roll out, artists are glued to their emails hoping for an acceptance letter to pursue their art career. Art schools are determined to gather the best group of students, filled with talented applications that are mainly judged by the most important piece of every application—the portfolio. An art portfolio is mainly composed of work that represents the applicant’s talent and creativity, previous work, and sketches. Though it does not seem complicated, it is one of the most stressful parts of an art school application, where applicants have to polish, organize, and hand-pick their best work and compete for admission.

An art portfolio must not only highlight the quality of the artist’s work, but tell a story as well, both being factors art schools look for. Katie Chen, a senior who applied to ArtCenter and many other schools pursuing Concept Art and Visual Development in Games, said, “The most important thing I focus on is storytelling and worldbuilding that holds the portfolio together. You’re inserting yourself into the world of this game or film and thinking in the way that this world works.”

Concept art requires blending characters with a creative narrative. “When I create characters, I make sure to add as much depth to their design, from their basic pose to the tiniest detail in their facial expressions,” Chen said.



Building a portfolio can have a lot of pressure and stress, especially with little time. Even with all the stressful factors, focusing on yourself and your artistic expression is the most important part. “For a lot of time during the making of the portfolio I would focus a lot on the idea of drawing rather than actually being present and drawing. Being present is the best thing you can do for yourself,” Liao said (Art Credit: Kingston Lo (12)).

Picking the works to add to a portfolio can be difficult, as artists want to make sure the portfolio is narrowed down to highlight work that represents their skills best. “The most stressful part about setting up my portfolio was balancing quantity and quality. You can either add lots of content or focus on the quality for less content. I forced myself to leave each piece at around 90 percent, then go back to add the extra 10 percent to each piece when everything was done,” Chen said.

The presence of a clear narrative allows art schools to develop an idea of how an applicant mixes visuals and technical talent with ideas and writing. Nida Shaji, a senior who applied to Laguna College of Art and Design and many other schools for animation, said, “I struggled with picking a story idea, creating the character designs, and creating the environment. I did get help from my art teachers with the process of creating

a proper character design and solid story. It was uncomfortable when I had to start, but I slowly got the hang of it.”

The effort for creating an art portfolio can either be a success or a failure, but ultimately, it trains artists to practice portfolio-building. Even if an artist is not satisfied with their outcome, they can learn from their issues and improve the portfolio for another school. It even opens a new chance to communicate with other artists for critical feedback for their portfolio and apply to an art school as a transfer student. In terms of creating a strong portfolio, Chen said, “Give yourself at least a month before the official deadline and set regular deadlines for yourself. It doesn’t have to be the prettiest thing, as long as you are getting your ideas out, it will work out. For those going to art school, set up portfolio reviews with admissions counselors, they will really help you gear your portfolio towards their school. To all artists, you will face art block, so move on to something else and let your imagination run free!”

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