



the Torch

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Is there privilege at Pine View?

by **Leo Gordon and Naina Chauhan**
Editor-in-Chief and Asst. Editor-in-Chief

Pine View has long been the center of discussions of privilege. Across the county, teachers, parents and students make assumptions and claims about this alleged privilege. In reality, however, does Pine View really receive more funding than other Sarasota County public schools?

In a 2012 piece for The Observer, Sarasota High School teacher Dean Kalahar spoke of Pine View's perceived exclusivity.

"Take a look at the numbers and you decide if Pine View has become Sarasota's semi-segregated elite public prep school for the not-all-gifted," Kalahar said.

Pine View also received criticism last fall for being gifted of 130 air purifiers, seen as an advantage over other Sarasota County schools, following a parent-led fundraiser that raised over \$70,000 in two weeks. The fundraiser was so successful, that the parents donated several purifiers to other schools, as well.

Perceptions of Pine View's advantage in financial standing, though, are multi-faceted. For Booker High School student Leela Sundarum, Pine View's perceived financial privilege has no bearing in reality.

"I was a student at Pine View for eight years, and I haven't noticed a difference in ability between Pine View and Booker to provide their students all that they require. I feel like both schools receive the support they need," Sundarum said.

According to Pine View Principal Dr. Stephen Covert, Pine View receives neither more nor less than other schools in accordance with the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP) and local budgeting.

Pine View's assigned Sarasota County's Budget Specialist, Rob Macaluso, clarified that school funding is not determined on a school-by-school basis.

"The FEFP assigns funding based on full-time membership to calculate funding for programs to ensure all funding is equitable," he said.

This equity is assured by the Florida Department of Education in a variety of ways. One method is the Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) factor, which is determined by student enrollment numbers.

According to the Florida Department of Education, "FEFP funds are primarily generated by multiplying the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) students in each of the funded education programs by cost factors to obtain weighted FTE students."

There are also bonus FTE programs, like International Baccalaureate (IB), Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE), and Advanced Placement (AP). Pine View is provided an additional 0.16 FTE funding per student who passes an AP exam, which equates to a \$50 bonus earned by an AP teacher. These funds must be used to off-set the functions of the AP program. But as any school can engage in AP testing, these funds are not unique to Pine View. Sarasota High School's AICE program and Riverview High School's IB both benefit from bonus FTE programs, as well.

Another way by which the state ensures equal access to funding is through discretionary and nondiscretionary funds. Discretionary funding, based on historical district and state formulas, goes towards operations like instructional materials and capital funds. Non-discretionary funding, on the other hand, is assigned based on enrollment. Much of the funds are used to pay school staff, or for reading allocations

and supplemental materials.

In addition to state-wide funding, Pine View receives funds from the Exceptional Student Education or ESE Program. Any school can receive ESE funding, but Pine View is unique in that all its students qualify for ESE classification due to the entire school's gifted status. ESE funding is provided to account for needs deemed necessary for ESE student success.

Macaluso said, "These programs are used to ensure uniform funding across the board."

In addition to the state, county and capital funds, the Pine View Association (PVA) contributes significant financial support to the Pine View campus.

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GRAPHIC BY LILY QUARTERMAINE



Universal screening's effect on school's diversity

by **Joanna Malvas and Faith Bossman**
Focus Editor and Spark staff member

With a notable racial and socioeconomic gap within Pine View's demographics of students, Principal Dr. Stephen Covert has promoted universal screening as one of the solutions to this issue. Since the summer of 2017, this test, which Sarasota County has supported, has been made accessible to second graders from Title 1 schools. Still, the universal screening process has not been the ultimate solution in amplifying diversity, having both shortcomings and successes on varying levels.

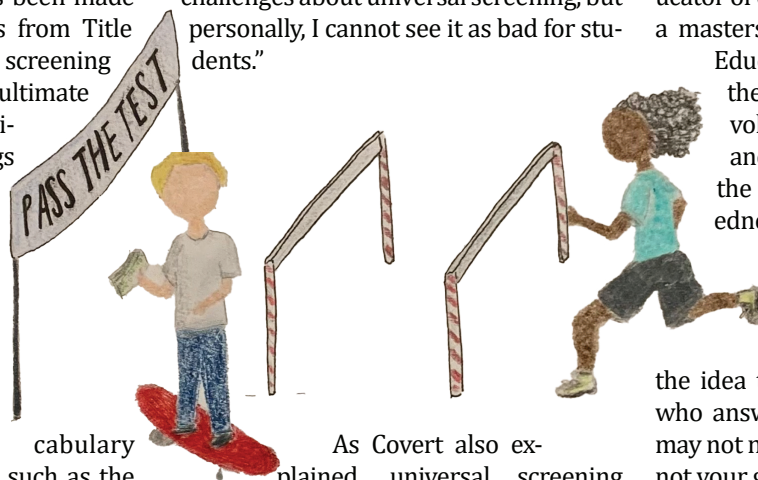
Fundamentally, universal screening has directly alleviated the issue of biased identification. Students that don't have access to higher level resources inherently have a disadvantage in vocabulary and language-based IQ tests, such as the KKBIT-2 Kaufman Brief Intelligence Test. With Universal Screening employing the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test, students are more likely to exude giftedness in visual and nonverbal evaluations.

"It is a challenge, because the kids that we're trying to reach aren't even here yet... It's about giving those [Title 1] schools, and those schools' teachers tools to help close that opportunity gap for their students," Covert said.

The Co-Coordinator of Diversity in Gifted Schools (DiGs), twelfth-grader Vincent Pascasio has expressed a positive outlook on universal screening as well.

"A great example of the universal screening method working is in Orange

County, where several years ago they decided to offer universal screenings in economically depressed schools," Pascasio said. "What they saw was an almost 8% increase in identifying gifted students of color followed by an over 5% increase the year after that among diverse students. I don't pretend to know all the angles and challenges about universal screening, but personally, I cannot see it as bad for students."



As Covert also explained, universal screening skips the step of teacher and parent recommendations. Ongoing implicit and racial bias has played a factor in recommendations, leaving racially diverse students to not be considered for screening in the first place. The principal of McIntosh Middle School and the school district's recently named first Director of Innovation and Equity, Dr. Harriet Moore, has witnessed such bias firsthand, with her son's own giftedness being called into question.

"[My son's teacher] stood beside me one day, and she said, 'I don't know if your son is gifted, or is just quick...' If he had been blonde and blue-eyed, would she have said that to the mother? Why should we even question if he should be identified

or even looked at as gifted?" Moore said.

Additionally, recognizing 'gifted qualities' is a skill that the majority of teachers and parents are not fluent in. This was a key discussion point in the "Access and Equity in Gifted Education" webinar, hosted by Covert Jan. 20. The keynote speaker of the webinar, Joy Davis, is an educator of over 40 years and an expert with a masters and doctoral degree in Gifted Education. She had explained how the first step in limiting the gap involves "peeling back layers of bias and past experiences," eliminating the limited perception of what giftedness is not.

"We need to open our minds to what giftedness can be in any population. I think so many times, teachers have the idea that a gifted student is the one who answers all the questions, and that may not necessarily be the case... They are not your goodie-two shoes, apple-of-your-eye kind of kid all the time," Davis said.

Similarly, Pettey Taleisa, a gifted educator at Title 1 Gocio Elementary School, asserts that there is a lack of knowledge as to that gifted education works between teachers and parents. This has further worked against families of ethnic minorities that have unidentified potential gifted kids.

"Teacher education needs to happen districtwide... We're required to take [End of Course] classes for certifications, we're required to take certain things, and I think gifted training should be one of them. Because, otherwise, we're missing out on identifying children because we don't know what to look for," Taleisa said.

Within her own community, Taleisa has further started teaching an informative course for parents this January, with once-a-month sessions educating parents on how to recognize giftedness.

For Tuttle Elementary, another Title 1 school, there are only 10 gifted students in K-5. Gifted-certified teacher at Tuttle, Tara Green, understands the underlying issues. At the school, 97 percent of students qualify for the free lunch. The school supplies families with their needs, and for a lot of parents, that is something they can not afford to lose. Green explained why students may not have the resources to prepare for screening tests, as compared to other affluent families that have the means to do so.

GRAPHIC BY MAHITHA RAMACHANDRAN

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Pine View Pride OR PRIVILEGE?

GRAPHIC BY LILY QUARTERMAINE

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by Leo Gordon and Naina Chauhan

Editor-in-Chief and Asst. Editor-in-Chief

Each year, approximately \$160,000 to \$210,000 are raised by the PVA (this year as an exception). These donations are sourced from corporate sponsorships, advertisement spaces, family donations, and fundraisers. Funds go towards funding requests by teachers and clubs, planning events, Agenda books, Pine View Pride, Student of the Month, Proud Python, and five senior scholarships, among other things.

Former Vice President of the PVA, Susan Harris, said that while PVA likely handles more money than the average Parent Teacher Association in our coun-

ty, the difference in funding is due to PVA's management of elementary, middle, and high school directed funds, unlike parent organizations at other schools.

"Comparatively [the funds are] likely not very different from other schools," Harris said.

Covert explained that in his view, from a financial perspective, Pine View receives appropriate funding.

"We have benefitted magnificently from the more than \$50 million in local capital investments in our campus, and I applaud our district, our School Board, community, and leaders for making these investments for our students and school," Covert said.

Much of these funds, Covert explained, will go towards a new three-story instructional building on campus. The new

building and subsequent funding, he explained, will allow Pine View students to reach their full potential. Without the funds provided by the state and county, such improvements would not be possible.

"[The building] will truly help those students who follow in older students' footsteps to stand on their shoulders, and reach even higher. From the third floor of the new building, these giants will see much farther," Covert said.

Ultimately, the root of Pine View's perceived financial advantage is unrelated to district or state funding. The demographics of Pine View's student body — and the financial circumstances of a large portion of that body — are what lead to these advantages.

Factors preventing diversity

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by Joanna Malvas and Faith Bossman

Focus Editor and Spark staff member

"They aren't getting any enrichment out[side] of school... their vocabulary is much more limited, the type of stuff you would learn at the dinner table, they just aren't exposed to that in their daily life," Green said.

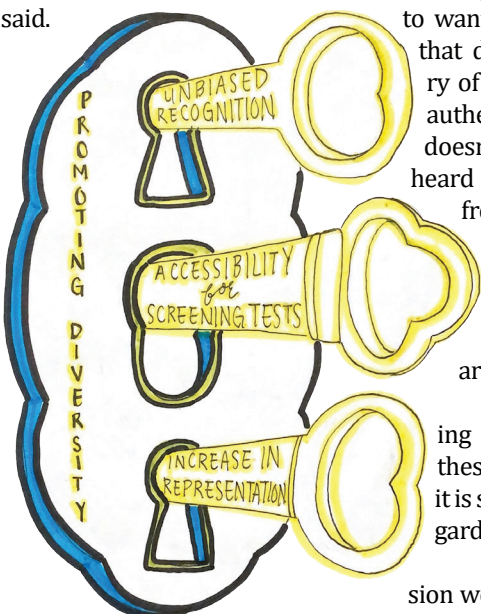
Inevitably, universal screening has not fully resolved other aspects that have contributed to the lack of diversity at Pine View. While the gifted screening process has been reformed, this is only half the battle. Encouraging students of lower income groups, as well as racial minority groups, requires further action. Moore clarifies that there is a hierarchy of needs that students must have when transitioning into a new, gifted environment; in this sense, for students to be incentivized to stay and achieve, they must have a sense of belonging within the program.

"When you look at the hierarchy of needs... Before you can get to Self-actualization, the step below it is Achievement, and the step below that is Belonging. If students don't have a sense of belonging, then how are they ever going to achieve? So, it really becomes, not an achievement gap, but a belonging gap," Moore said.

However, Moore does allude to such students reaching achievement when the parents are involved in the process. This is still problematic, because with the majority of students of color coming from the north end of

the county, parent involvement is difficult when people lack the transportation.

"Sometimes, the kids that get into [our gifted] program, just like some of the kids that get into Pine View, when they start feeling that they don't have a sense of belonging... they start doing things to self-sabotage so that they can be removed or that they are forced to leave," Moore said.



Moore has pursued building a support system for students of color and lower income students within McIntosh Middle School in order to encourage diversity throughout the school and its gifted program, such as hiring teachers of color and utilizing a mentorship system. By the same token, Pascasio believes that recruiting a more diverse staff and administration at Pine View would be a positive step to create a more inclusive environment that is representa-

tive of racial minorities.

In another light, Davis has involved previous DiGs club members and Pine View alumni in writing the first chapter of her book, "Empowering Underrepresented Gifted Students: Voices from the Field." This book is set to be published in the summer of this year.

"People who are very bright and very sensitive aren't going to want to be in programming that doesn't tell the true story of their history, that is not authentic or if the material doesn't represent them. I've heard it over and over again, from students and parents, about the lack of representation in materials, the lack of authenticity that students are exposed to," Davis said.

While universal screening does not address all of these multifaceted concerns, it is still a progressive step regardless.

"I can tell you, it's a mission worth continuing, because whether it's one student who is identified that wouldn't have been identified, or whether it's a 100, you still change the potential life trajectory of that student," Covert said. "So, every student that can be identified, whether they end up in Pine View or not... our goal has simply been to open the doors and close the opportunity gap. We would love for there to be more diversity at Pine View, but our goal is to simply close the opportunity gap."

GRAPHIC BY MAHITHA RAMACHANDRAN

Humans of Pine View



"My mom, she is a really hard worker, and she sacrifices a lot for our family. She works a lot, like seven days a week, and the most I see her is around thirty minutes a day. She has to support my three siblings and me as a single parent. She also has to support my grandma too. She has to support her brother's family who just moved out of Florida as well...I guess I have kind of dealt with it. [She has been working like this for] my entire life. I have gotten used to it now, and I'm usually fine until something really bad happens." *To see other posts from Humans of Pine View, go to the instagram page @humansofpineview and the Facebook page @humansofpineview.* PHOTO AND INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY SARAH HASSAN

IN BRIEF

Program plans to discuss social media's effect on the mind

by Zoe Merritt

Entertainment Editor

The brain's response to social media has been an ongoing discussion and area of research. In order to bring attention to the growing concern for this issue, the Brain Health Initiative (BHI), a multidisciplinary group looking to bring a new approach to studying brain health, will be hosting a public viewing of "The Social Dilemma," a documentary that explores the manipulation and exploitation of users that has resulted from the rise of social media. Those at the Brain Health Initiative found this conversation surrounding cell phones and brain health-relevant and in need of attention.

Members of the Brain Health Initiative, Brain Health Scholars, were invited to join a Zoom showing of the 2020 documentary Dec. 30, 2020, to familiarize themselves with the film and begin thinking about the connections between social media and the

brain's ability to function. Suggested questions included thinking about the ways social media and the internet are linked to depression, stress, and sleep — all important aspects of brain health.

"[We] chose this documentary since we haven't had a generation grow up with social media/technology until the 21st century, and there haven't been any longitudinal studies on its effects on youth and their development," twelfth-grader Max Banach said. "The use of what some people consider somewhat manipulative techniques via specific algorithms to keep us returning to the same applications is especially effective at younger ages since we're more vulnerable to external influence."

Later this winter, Brain Health Initiative will be hosting a broader community-wide Zoom showing of the movie and following discussion of the documentary. Date is pending.

Sarasota County implements Spring Learning Plan

by Sebastian Genelhu-Bazan

Humor Editor

A new education plan is being put into place for Sarasota County Schools for the start of spring. This learning plan is to further the continuation of goals such as the 2020-2021 District Reopening Plan, which, to put in layman's terms, is the plan to get all students back to the brick-and-mortar lifestyles of normal years.

The following four goals are outlined in the Spring 2021 Learning Plan: building on the successful reopening of all public schools to in-person instruction, promoting parental choice while everyone is making adequate academic progress, providing financial continuity to schools to help benefit all students (especially those from low-income families, families dealing with disabilities, and other challenges), and to focus on

resolving the large achievement gap between online and in-person students.

In efforts to reduce this gap, the School Board plans to implement extra hours after school for additional instruction, weekend and/or summer classes, and 30 extra minutes of instruction per day. The plan additionally seeks to encourage remote learners to come back to school if they show a decline in academic progress, such as failing classes and missing school Zoom calls. The plan also outlines the possibility of parent-principal conferences and other pathways for those students with disabilities and mental health problems.

The plan also includes increased professional development for teachers, as well as fulfillment of technology needs by the district and enhanced outreach for remote learners lacking in attendance.

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COVID-19 affects student organization finances

by Alyson Mizanin
Sports Editor

Pine View—alongside the rest of the world—has had to adjust to COVID-19 in ways that were previously unimaginable. The finances of clubs and classes have been greatly affected by the pandemic—some for the good, some for the bad.

Pine View's premier Model United Nations (MUN) and Speech and Debate teams have benefited from the reduced prices of their respective events. Registration for these events, transportation, and hotel costs quickly added up for members in previous years. What once cost several hundred dollars has been reduced to \$10-60 dollars while offering the same competitive experiences.

MUN members don't pay membership fees; rather, they pay only for each conference they attend. MUN's fundraising—be it annual merchandise sales or booths at the Pine View Fair—goes toward money that is used to subsidize delegates' conference fees based on need. In previous years, MUN President Julia Kourelakos noted that roughly one third of the club applied for partial financial aid, and that only a handful would apply for full aid.

Because the costs of conferences have been "drastically reduced," according to Kourelakos, financial aid has not been needed this year. MUN solely pays set flat fees to enter competitions, which has lessened the possibilities of financial turmoil.

"Next year, we will have to do some slightly more aggressive fundraising to make up for the fact that COVID has put a dent in our ability to fundraise, but thankfully, we've had wonderful years in the past and support from PVA," Kourelakos said.

Speech and Debate has experienced a similar situation. Returning members pay \$25 as a flat membership fee, while new ones pay \$50. This is because it costs \$25 to open a National Speech and Debate Association (NSDA) account, which is required for compet-

ing. The other \$25 is used for Speech and Debate's general fund, which is redirected to coaching, league membership fees, and financial aid.

The financial aid process for Speech and Debate resembles MUN's.

"We offer scholarships to students presenting need due to financial hardships and consider assistance on a case-by-case basis. The financial aid program is pretty straightforward. While there isn't an established application process, save for just reaching out to us, coaches

been affected. Tenth grade was cited by the treasurers of all the classes as being one of the most important fundraising years. After the Class of 2023's ninth-grade year was cut roughly in half by COVID-19, fundraising has been limited.

The Variety Show typically brings in a couple thousand dollars for the tenth-grade class as tickets, advertisements, and snack sales add up. The estimated revenue for the Variety Show this year has decreased because of limited capacity, but Class of 2023 treasurer Nathan

been selling snacks at the middle school volleyball and basketball games, but the profit is minimal. Merchandise is still in the works and branching off into restaurant fundraisers is something they plan on pursuing, according to Class of 2024 treasurer Carlos Rodriguez-Gonzalez.

Rodriguez-Gonzalez' message is echoed by the Class of 2022's treasurer, Connor Lafo. Whether Cobalt will happen is still up in the air. The Class of 2022 had major monetary success with various restaurant fundraisers, merchandise sales, the Variety Show, and mother-son scavenger hunt, but still have a ways to go before reaching their financial goals.

By the end of their eleventh-grade year, the Class of 2021 surpassed their monetary goals. It was for this reason that treasurer Pragnya Govindu says the Class of 2021 came to the decision to not hold fundraisers this year.

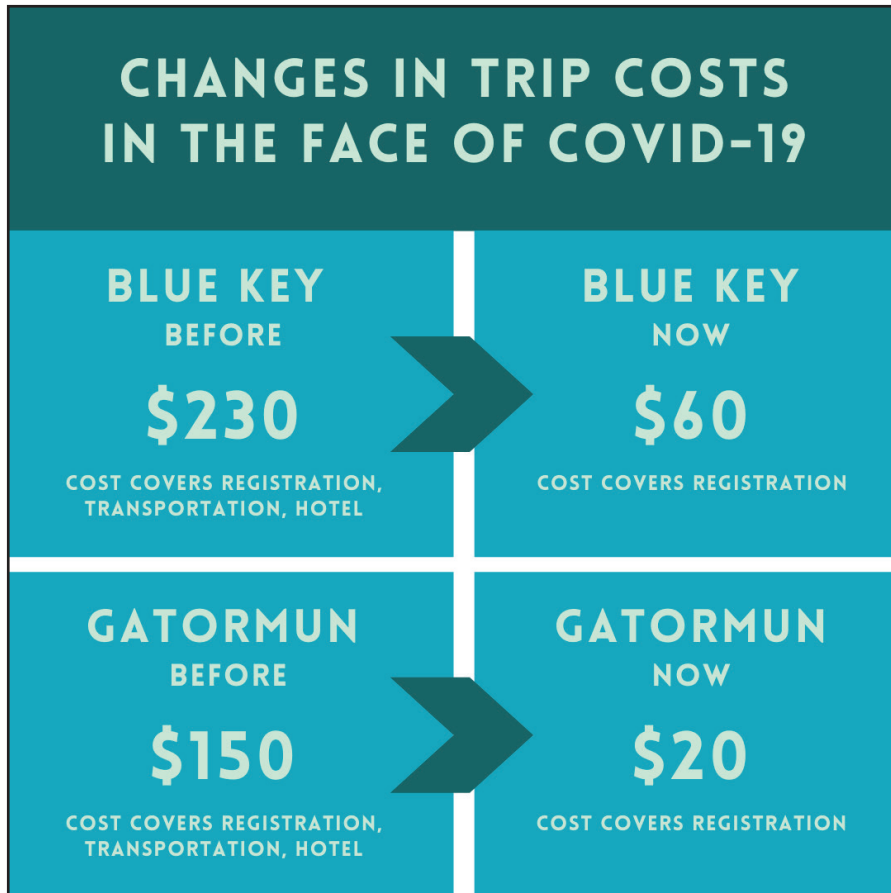
"We're financially stable for graduation and we figured that the underclassmen could take the opportunity to fundraise," Govindu said.

In times of need, any organization on campus can turn to Pine View Association (PVA) with funding requests. Due to volunteer restrictions on campus, PVA has not been able to fundraise the way they had before. Their virtual Read-a-Thon fundraiser was successful, but annual events like Permathon and Pinnacle were canceled. However, financial stability from years prior has allowed PVA to fund an inflatable and transportable planetarium for science teacher Dr. Dylan Bell's earth science and astronomy classes, as well as the purchase of the new virtual Nearpod interface.

"PVA is still here. We're still trying; we haven't given up. We're going to continue pushing forward, looking for newer and better ways to raise money so that in circumstances like this, we're prepared," PVA treasurer Lisa Stern said.

Ultimately, engaging with each organization's fundraisers is the only way to bridge their financial difficulties. Even a little goes a long way.

GRAPHIC BY BRIANNA NELSON



and sponsors have always been open to giving aid," club sponsor James Froelich wrote in an email.

Not every organization on campus has benefited from the circumstances of this year. The class offices have been negatively affected. Fundraising is integral to paying for the preceding class' Cobalt and one's own class' graduation.

Underclassmen have particularly

Widjaja remains hopeful.

"We were pretty successful last year, so that's why I'm confident that regardless of how this year turns out, we'll be able to hit the ground running," Widjaja said.

The Class of 2024 is in a similar predicament. Even in normal circumstances, ninth grade is a year of minimal fundraising. The current class has

Construction Updates on the Legacy Garden

by Lily Quartermaine
Spark Asst. Editor-in-Chief

A palm tree casting shade above your head, the gentle strum of your peers playing some tunes, a beautiful, open area that fosters a relaxing and student-approved environment, and your chemistry textbook sitting on your lap as you lean forward and laugh with some of your friends: this is the future of Pine View's Legacy Garden.

The Legacy Garden is one of the most highly anticipated aspects of the current construction on campus. The concept of this project has always sat quietly in the back of students' minds, but there are some crucial updates and changes.

It is projected that the Legacy Gar-

den will be finished around the end of the new building construction, which is either this summer or the following.

Originally, the garden was going to be near the office, but the location would have obstructed the view of the new building by haphazardly sticking out into the quad area. Instead, the location was changed to a spot near the technology building, so that the quad's essential line of sight wouldn't be blocked.

The garden will have a modern design and layout that is currently in the works. It will be adorned with two large serpentine-shaped structures that can be used as seating, along with other seating options. Florida-friendly flora and fauna will tower over the garden and cast an area of shade for students to study and relax between classes.

Additionally, the plaques on benches will be able to be dedicated to donors, engraved with the names of former staff and students. Other ideas include the engraved bricks that once formed a pathway outside administration being incorporated into their own, exclusive portion of the garden.

Social studies teacher Jenna Molinaro and former Pine View teacher Patti Gerlek, who both created the idea of the Legacy Garden, amassed the first sum of funds collected by them that is strictly reserved for the Legacy Garden; however, if funding is a struggle, more money will be collected through parents or alumni. Although social distancing does affect the way schools interact with these groups, the garden presents itself as a perfect vehicle to reach out and establish a stronger bond, especially with alumni.

When asked about what he hopes the Legacy Garden becomes, Principal Dr. Stephen Covert had an expansive and thoughtful response.

"We hope that this area...[is a place] where students can sit, maybe socialize, study, do homework, play guitar, just relax for a few minutes, and as they're seated, hopefully they'll notice these plaques on the benches and think of those students," Covert said. "Twenty years from now, they'll think of those giants whose shoulders they are standing on; that those kids from 2023, 2026 were the giants, and it will inspire them to make a difference, too, and plant their own tree or start their own garden."

In the spirit of Pine View's ever-popular motto, the hope for the Legacy Garden is to show current students that achieving the extra degree is possible.

Hopefully it reinforces the idea that everyone can make a difference in the world, even if it starts with something as small as a brick or plaque in the Legacy Garden,"
Dr. Stephen Covert,
Principal

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Exam alterations bring change to the classroom

by Isabella Kulawik
Web Section Editor

With Advanced Placement (AP) exams set to occur in May, teachers and students continue to prepare while facing the obstacles presented by COVID-19. Pine View is greatly impacted by decisions the College Board makes, as the facilitator of 34 AP courses.

Throughout the year, there has been an air of uncertainty surrounding College Board's exams. In the beginning, many teachers and staff members did not know details such as the formatting of the test, testing dates, and whether there would be a remote option. However, as exam dates near, teachers, staff, and students have an idea of how the tests are being administered and the level of preparedness the students need.

It is known that AP exams will take place over two weeks, from May 12 to 23. On those days, the tests will be administered on campus, with the remote and in-person students separated. The exams are still being carried out on normal dates even with the late start of this year, placing students and

"In the beginning I didn't think I was going to have enough time, but I think that we've managed our time pretty well," Pre-Algebra and AP Calculus BC teacher Shane Melton said. "We had to go a little quickly through some of the material, but I will be left with a few weeks maybe even a week and a half before my students take the mock, and then they will have an additional two weeks after that before they take their actual AP exam, so we will have plenty enough time to review."

With some students taking five to six AP courses, the coming months will be crucial to whether they will succeed or fail. Teachers were unsure of what the structure of the test would look like, leading to the question of whether it would be abridged like the test during the 2020 school year.

"We only recently got information from the College Board. It is definitely going to be the normal structure and will be given in-person. So now, as of January, I am having my students handwrite essays. We also don't know if there will be an online option, and so if that's the case are some students going to be typing online?" AP Literature teacher Pamala Novak said.

The uncertainty surrounding the tests has been a struggle, but teachers and students continue to prepare for the inevitable two weeks of exams regardless of the formatting. Naturally, students

have begun to stress about the exam and the amount of material that needs to be learned. Even with this anxiety, some students remain confident about the next couple months of learning.

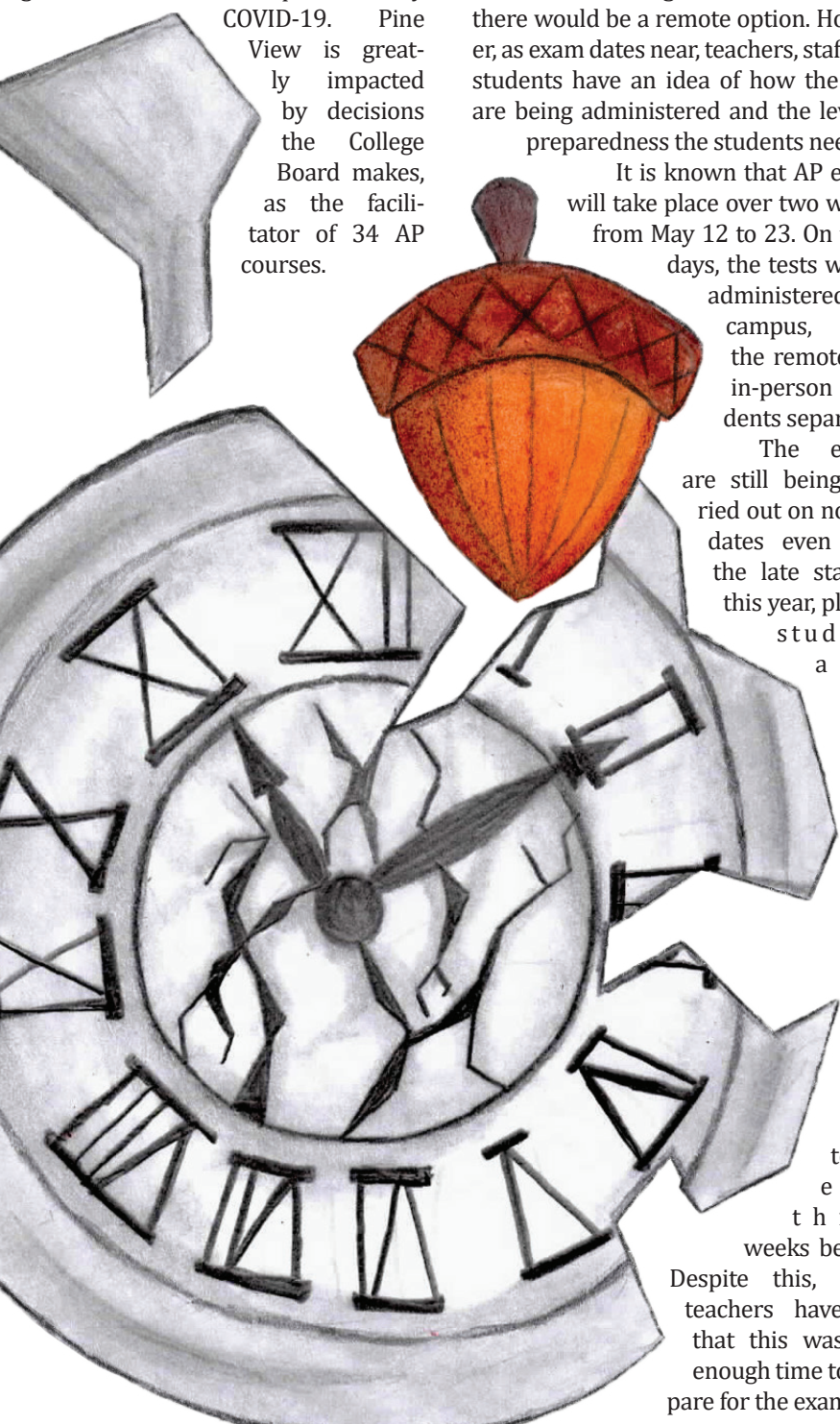
"I feel like they're preparing for the worst and hoping for the best, so they're able to teach you and make sure you understand the concepts that could be possibly tested on the exam. And they're just working with what they have," ninth-grader Claire Opal-Levine, an AP Biology student, said.

Now, Pine View's administration is waiting for more information on the tests, which is being released on March 2. The school is continuing to work with College Board to organize the exams and spread information as soon as possible.

"Pine View will be working closely with the district over the next several weeks to create a clearly articulated testing plan that is optimal for our students. The final testing plan will be shared with students and their families, and the PV community via multiple mediums," Lori Wiley, the Assessment and AP Program Coordinator said in an email response.

"Everyone is looking for answers and directions — we intend to provide these and appreciate the continued patience, understanding, and most of all the trust of our community as we diligently work toward creating the best possible testing season. Our goal, always, is to ensure that students have every possible opportunity

GRAPHIC BY KAI SPRUNGER



teachers three weeks behind. Despite this, some teachers have felt that this was still enough time to prepare for the exam.

Uday Goyat recognized as Sunshine State STEM Scholar

by Sarah Catalano
Features Editor

Following a qualification process involving essays, awards, test scores, STEM courses, and one local interview, eleventh-grader Uday Goyat was recognized as a Sunshine State STEM Scholar this past month. Goyat is one of two Sarasota County students to be recognized with the award.

Alongside his work in advanced STEM classes at Pine View, Goyat was recognized for his membership in the world champion Pine View Moody's Mathworks Challenge Team and for his research assistantship in computational linguistics at New College of Florida, a project still in progress.

Goyat, Dr. Fahmida Hamid (an assistant professor of computer science at New College), and one other student are working to create an algorithm for summarizations of social studies and world history textbooks. Inspired by his own experiences in Pine View AP history classrooms, Goyat said he hoped this work would be beneficial to

students later on.

"Usually we read a research paper that we're trying to implement and usually the people who did the research... don't provide us with the code, so we try to implement it ourselves and we fail ten, 20 times before we get something working," Goyat said. "It's a lot of fun. Just trying different things, and it's funny when we fail. It's just a very good bonding experience."

Principal Dr. Stephen Covert presented Goyat to the Sarasota County School Board Jan. 20, highlighting his unique accomplishments.

"[He] is one of those students who, when you review their academic profile, you are simply amazed, and when you couple that with their volunteer work, their passions outside of school, and their hobbies, you gain insight into the truly remarkable nature of a young gifted mind," Covert said.

In addition to his computer linguistics project, Goyat is currently involved in a second research project at New College on polyphonic pitch detec-



PHOTO PROVIDED BY DR. STEPHEN COVERT

Uday Goyat poses with his parents and Principal Dr. Stephen Covert at a Sarasota County School Board meeting. Goyat will participate in a "think tank" at a STEM networking summit in April in Orlando.

tion, an advanced computer function that allows complex audio files to be transcribed as sheet music.

"For example, Western music usually has music sheets, but a lot of folk music in the east and south India don't have that," Goyat said. "It's all oral, so a way to preserve that can be really helpful."

In April, he will participate in a networking STEM summit in Orlando, where he will share his work in

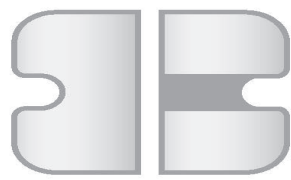
the STEM field with 103 fellow award recipients and participate in a "think tank" on what the Florida Department of Education terms, "tough Florida challenges."

"I have a whole list of these projects—I have 20, 30 projects which are similar to these and can probably help people, and have not been already done...my goal is to finish all of them before I graduate from college," Goyat said. "Let's see how it goes."

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Health Education Initiative Club organizes blood drive

Pine View experiences highest blood donor turnout to date, with over 40 donations

By Felicity Chang
Multimedia Editor

Pine View is being considered by SCBC as a poster school to encourage other high schools to increase their efforts in hosting blood drives.

For the past two years, the Health and Education Initiative (HEI) Club has taken up the task of organizing blood drives, increasing the number of blood donations at Pine View. During the fall semester of the 2019-2020 school year, the club started running advertisement campaigns through posters and classroom presentations for quarterly blood drives that are held in cooperation with SunCoast Blood Centers (SCBC).

The vice president of the HEI Club, eleventh-grader Edward Shen, helped initiate the project.

“Before, the blood drive at Pine View had a really low turnout. I believe the average was around 10 people and most of those were teachers,” he said. “So, we talked with nurse Banco to try to improve this turnout ... We had an increase from around 10 people to over 40 people donating each time at the blood drive, which was huge.”

At the start of each academic year, the club reaches out to teachers who have twelfth-graders in their classes to schedule presentations about

the upcoming blood drives. Then, they provide students and faculty a link to a SignUpGenius page with time-slots to donate blood at a vehicle parked on the service road.

SCBC provides the blood buses and volunteers that take blood, and it also gives information for presentations and brings donations to hospitals.

Every blood drive the HEI Club hosts is a team effort: each of the members have unique roles and responsibilities. The president, eleventh-grader Ricky Siwicki, is in charge of speaking with the coordinator of SCBC and advertising, including handing out surveys on the day of the blood drive to gauge public opinion on how to improve their presentations. Shen puts together presentation timetables, along with contacting teachers. Tenth-grader Krystal Tran is the historian, focusing her efforts on creating the PowerPoints and posters needed to get the club’s message across, while ninth-grader Shanika Farah, the treasurer, manages the financial components of funding the blood drive.

“Working together as a team is very, very important,” Farah said. “We basically have our own jobs, and we know our jobs and we help each other if we need any help.”

As a team, the club had to overcome a myriad of ob-

stacles, one of which being the COVID-19 pandemic. There are not as many students on campus, so the blood drive bus is inaccessible to a large portion of the student body. In addition, not all teachers are willing to have in-person speakers in their classrooms.

“With COVID-19, we know that people are scared to donate blood. You’re going to be...enclosed...with other people, and you’re going to have medical [equipment] on you,” Tran said. “And it’s just, people are scared of that process, especially with COVID-19. So, as a historian, I wanted to make sure that people aren’t afraid of that process. And the way I did that was by informing people through the PowerPoint.”

Despite these challenges, the club’s continual efforts did not go to waste. According to Shen, the club’s Dec. 8 blood drive had its highest turnout, with over 40 blood donations. Those donations were crucial, especially in the midst of a pandemic.

“COVID-19 has gotten hundreds of blood drives canceled. And basically, what that means is that blood banks are at a loss,” Shen said. “The number of people who need blood isn’t decreasing, anywhere near as much as the amount of blood that’s available. So right now, during the pandemic, it’s much more imperative for Pine View to donate blood, as high schools make up a significant fraction of blood donations. And that’s another reason why we need to step up.”

With an increased need for blood, the club has emphasized the importance of blood donation in their presentations.

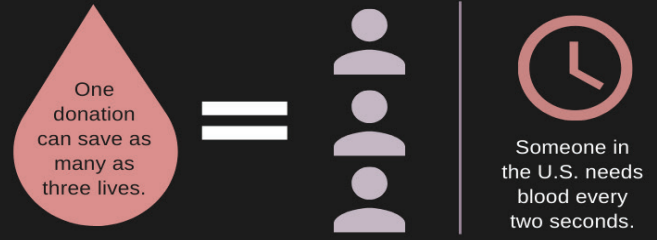
“When somebody donates blood, that blood can be used for somebody who really needs

HEALTH AND EDUCATION INITIATIVES CLUB

ORGANIZING BLOOD DRIVES

An in-depth look at the process and impact of blood donation

SOURCES: SunCoast Blood Centers | American Red Cross



BLOOD DRIVES AT PINE VIEW

2019 2020 2021

The HEI Club took over the task of organizing blood drives at Pine View, increasing the number of blood donors fourfold.

With the COVID-19 pandemic, blood donations decreased. However, the HEI club continually made efforts to host blood drives on campus.

The most recent blood drive at Pine View was on Feb. 9. It was the fourth drive the HEI club hosted, completing a quarterly year.

BENEFITS OF DONATING BLOOD

- Free health screening**
Along with checking pulse and blood pressure, trained staff also conduct a COVID-19 antibody blood test.
- Improved mental health**
Acts of altruism, such as donating blood, can reduce stress and improve emotional wellbeing.
- Potential scholarship**
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25%
Did you know? Local high school student donations account for 25% of our communities' blood supply.

GRAPHIC BY FELICITY CHANG

Coming This Fall to Pine View School Starlab's Portable Planetarium Funded by PVA for the education of Grades 2-12



Joey Chen is Creatively Asian

Pine View senior uses her time and skill to create an organization for Asian-Americans to embrace their cultural identity and express their creativity through the arts.

by Sarah Hassan
News Editor

When the summer had extended last year due to the pandemic, many people had idly used their time to relax. However, twelfth-grader Joey Chen had used the prolonged vacation to create her own high school organization, Creatively Asian, with just one friend to help lay the foundations.

During the summer, Chen had seen a growing aversion toward East Asians on social media due to the pandemic, which was one of the components that prompted her to create Creatively Asian. She wanted to correct the stereotypes and shallow perspectives about Asians.

"I remember distinctly seeing this cartoon caricature of this Asian girl with tiny eyes just jumping around saying 'I have COVID,' and that was just so disturbing to me," Chen said. "At least for me, what I've seen in mainstream media growing up and all of that has really influenced my confidence like who I am as a person, and I personally think the arts and the media...has such a huge influence on not only what people think of themselves, but how society perceives each individual."

Another factor that came into play for making the organization was that Chen grew up feeling isolated because of being an Asian-American who wanted to pursue the arts, which is not as common. However, as Chen had read through applications for her officers,

she had realized that she was not alone with this feeling growing up.

"I felt like I had to be very silent and be a lawyer or pursue STEM, and I felt really pressured to do that. Especially through reading the officer applications, hearing how people had said, 'Oh my gosh, I wanted to apply to this organi-

zation because I related to its values," Chen said. "I guess this made me realize that this is definitely needed, and I want to continue the work of creatively Asian."



GRAPHICS BY HALEY MA

zation because I related to its values," Chen said. "I guess this made me realize that this is definitely needed, and I want to continue the work of creatively Asian."

Twelfth-grader Meera Nair, the Performing Arts Creative Director, also had a similar experience to those within the organization.

"The message [of empowering Asians in the Arts] stuck with me...Growing up my parents, they let me do dance and piano, but they definitely advocated more for studying. They didn't find my arts really important, so doing this lets me explore that area a little more," Nair said.

Creatively Asian started with just Chen and twelfth-grader Angela Nguy-

en, her friend from Key Club. Wanting to have someone help her lay a foundation for the organization, Chen reached out to Nguyen for help. They worked for an entire month assembling a google drive and creating one of their first posts.

When the time was right, Chen and Nguyen posted an application for officers and directors on their Instagram page. They spread the word to their Key Club friends and received 40 ambitious applicants from the officers. However, they first selected 10 to 11 directors before picking the officers, who would work under the committees that directors are responsible for. Currently, Creatively Asian has 60 members worldwide and more than 1600 followers on their Instagram page.

When creating their first post, Chen had to think of a certain color scheme, and with her prior experience with graphic designs from her position, she came up with the aesthetically pleasing pastel colors. She looked through other Instagram pages for inspiration. The graphic designs are made with Canva, and she has two graphic design directors who take content from the other officers and translate them into actual posts.

Some of the content on the Instagram page highlights different Asian-Americans in the media, entertainment industry, and politics. An example is a spotlight on Kamala Harris, one of Chen's favorite post ideas from the Cultural Civic Engagement director. Another favorite of Chen's is the Black Lives Matter post, which they spent many hours on.

"It talked about how Asians can use their creativity

and just, in general, can utilize the arts to help support this really important movement, so I really enjoy the civically engaged posts we create," Chen said.

As the executive director and founder of Creatively Asian, Chen had faced struggles when first thinking of making the organization because of self-doubt, but she still pushed through.

"I'm like a personal believer if you want something, and if you have the drive to do something, then you're able to create it, the only thing that is stopping you is self-doubt... There were definitely times where I was like, 'I have no idea what I am doing,'" Chen said. "Especially when adding directors onto our team, I was like 'Oh my gosh, how am I going to delegate work, how am I going to make sure that this still functions smoothly,' and I had to sit there at my computer. 'There's a way other organizations are able to do it, why can't I figure this out?'"

Nguyen, who has seen herself grow more with her position as Public Relation Director, has also seen Chen further improve her leadership skills over the time the organization has grown.

"I think that Joey has always been a good leader, but this is her first really major

project because she had to start an organization and also plan everything out," Nguyen said. "Whereas Key Club, we already have a structured plan placed and a lot of documents are already there, but with Creatively Asian, she had to start everything from new... [She's] trying to improve her leadership in any way that she can so everything is connected and all of the officers can work well with our directors."

As for a mission, Chen sees the organization as not only a way to promote Asian-American creative voice but also for them to "civily engage in creative ways." An example of Creatively Asian's community involvement was having an



online fundraiser on YouTube, which consisted of artwork and different performances. They raised a total of more than \$w200 for UNICEF.

In the future, Chen hopes to see the organization become a global non-profit that holds campaigns and fundraisers for communities that need arts programs.

You can find the Instagram page at @creativelyasian.

Racism in The Grammys: what miscatagorization means for musical artists of color

by Peyton Harris
Opinion Editor

Since 1959, the Recording Academy Grammys have been heralded as a marker of success in the music industry. Artists are nominated and awarded by the Academy: an elusive team of professionals that, according to the website, are "all involved in the creative and technical processes of recording." The Recording Academy's mission statement is as follows: "The Academy's mission statement is simple, but represents the heart and soul of the organization's efforts: to positively impact the lives of musicians, industry members and our society at large. The Academy can be proud of its accomplishments on behalf of its constituency."

The Grammys have been long accused of harboring anti-blackness in their show. Following 2020's spread of social justice movements, the debate has moved some artists to decline nominations altogether for this year's awards show March 14, 2021.

The award for best children's album of 2021 features five nominees — all white. Three of the five have

declined their nominations, citing the tone-deafness of the Academy's lack of diversity in the category after the movements for racial equality in the past year.

Despite breaking Billboard Chart records throughout 2020, The Weeknd was not nominated for any Grammys for his chart-topping album "After Hours" or single "Blinding Lights". Justin Bieber also expressed displeasure at not being nominated under the R&B category for his album Changes, saying it was "unmistakably R&B." The Grammys has long been accused of categorizing nominations based on racial stereotypes. In 2019, Tyler, the Creator, spoke out against his album "IGOR" winning best album of the year in the "rap" category — despite music critics praising it for its versatility and incorporation of elements from various musical genres.

From 2013 to 2020, the Grammys had a "Best Contemporary Album" category in which

almost only artists of color were nominated. The term "urban," with undeniable racial undertones, prompted black artists to speak out about the problematic nature of the category's perceived compartmentalization of Black artists versus the

rest of the show.

In 2020 the category was renamed "Best Progressive R&B Album," a move many artists have cited as performative.

Black artists are also often nominated for smaller and more specific categories than "the big four" top awards of the Grammys: Album of the Year, Song of the Year, Record of the year, and Best New Artist. Since 2015, 3 of 20 of those award winners have been Black.

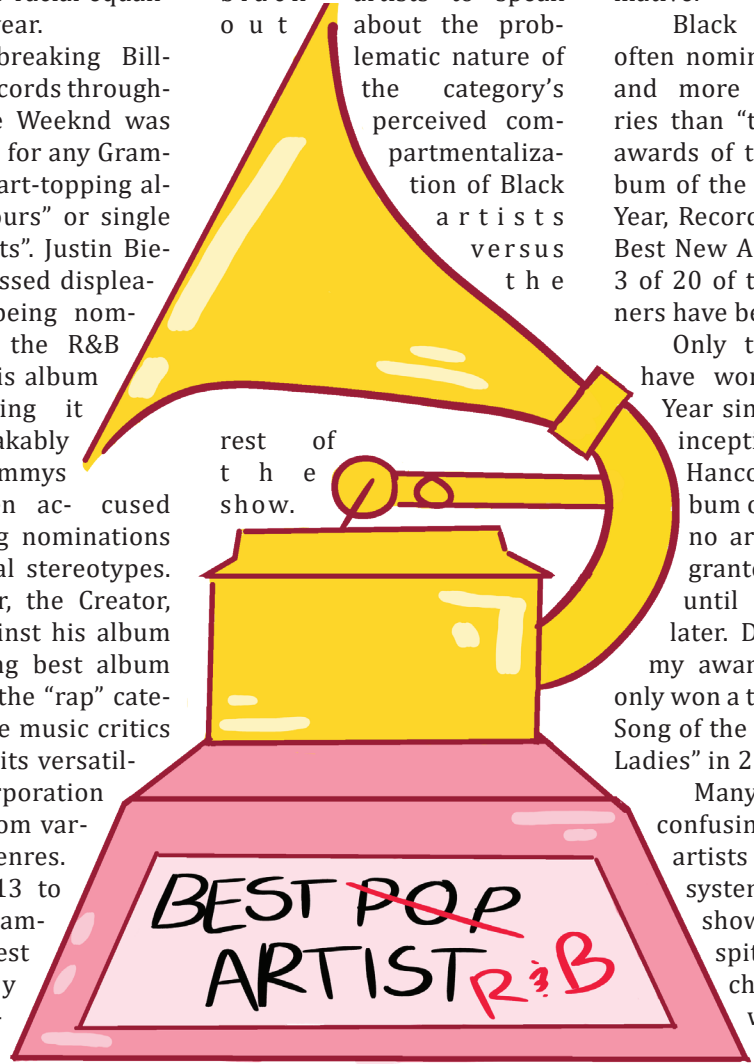
Only ten Black artists have won Album of the Year since the Grammy's inception. After Herbie Hancock's 2008 album of the year award, no artist of color was granted the title again until 2018, a decade later. Despite 24 Grammy awards, Beyoncé has only won a top award once — Song of the Year with "Single Ladies" in 2010.

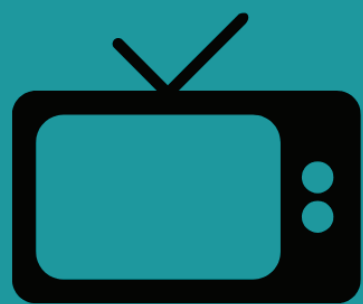
Many bring up the confusing snubs to black artists as evidence of systemic racism in the show. In 2012, despite leading the pop charts, Nicki Minaj was denied any nominations.

Another example is the infamous 2016 moment in which Kendrick Lamar lost the album of the year to Taylor Swift. In 2017, Adele broke her Grammy in half to protest winning over her self-professed idol Beyoncé.

Days before the 2020 show, the first female Academy CEO, Deborah Dugan, accused the board of trustees of rigging the awards and ignoring her recommendations from the diversity and inclusion task force, created in 2018.

In 2020, the show's viewership declined from nearly 18 million to 16.5 million, as viewership has trended downward for several years. The Grammys can't afford to lose artists and their respective audiences any longer — the lack of transparency between the Academy and artists and the lack of an open discussion on the prejudice found within the show need to be addressed. POC artists have and will continue to have an important space in music and it's cultural influence, but without change from the Grammys they will continue to struggle to get the credit they deserve.





Battle Of The



STREAMING PLATFORMS

by Gabriele Navickis and Eva-May Elmer
Asst. Entertainment Editor and Match Layout Artist

Netflix :

This service costs \$8.99 to \$17.99 per month depending on the plan. It has something for all ages and has 34+ genres. It contains movies and tv shows as on-demand content. It has a reasonable selection of languages for both audio and subtitles. It has its own original content, Netflix originals. Some titles you might recognize on this platform are: "Bridgerton," "Stranger Things," "You," "Outer Banks," "Riverdale" and more. It allows for multiple profiles on one account, airplay, apple tv connection and up to four devices to stream simultaneously.

Hulu :

The monthly cost of Hulu with ads is \$5.99 but has a discount price if you

pay for the year, at \$59.99. Hulu also has three other options to choose from, them being Hulu without ads at \$11.99 per month, Hulu and Live TV at \$64.99 per month, and Hulu with no ads and Live TV at \$70.99 per month.

"Booksmart," "9-1-1," and "I, Tonya." Hulu has shows and movies for all ages and offers most media in a variety of languages. Six people can watch Hulu simultaneously.

Amazon Videos :

Amazon Videos prices range from \$5.99 to \$12.99 per month. Amazon Videos includes popular titles like "The Truman

titles, but not many different language options other than English, if any other languages are provided.

Philo :

This service costs \$20 per month and has something for all ages. There is probably most genres you would want, with over 60 channels to choose from. It has TV shows and movies, both live and on-demand. Some titles you might recognize on this platform are: "Peppa Pig," "RuPaul's Drag Race," "The Walking Dead" and more. It allows for up to ten profiles and three devices to stream simultaneously.

Disney+ :

This service costs \$6.99 per month, but can be discounted when bought in a bundle with Disney+, Hulu and ESPN+ for \$12.99. There is something for every age (Disney is timeless of course) and contains around ten genres. There are movies and TV shows from Disney, Pixar, Marvel, Star Wars and National Geographic. The content is on-demand and has a very sizeable number of languages for audio and subtitling purposes.

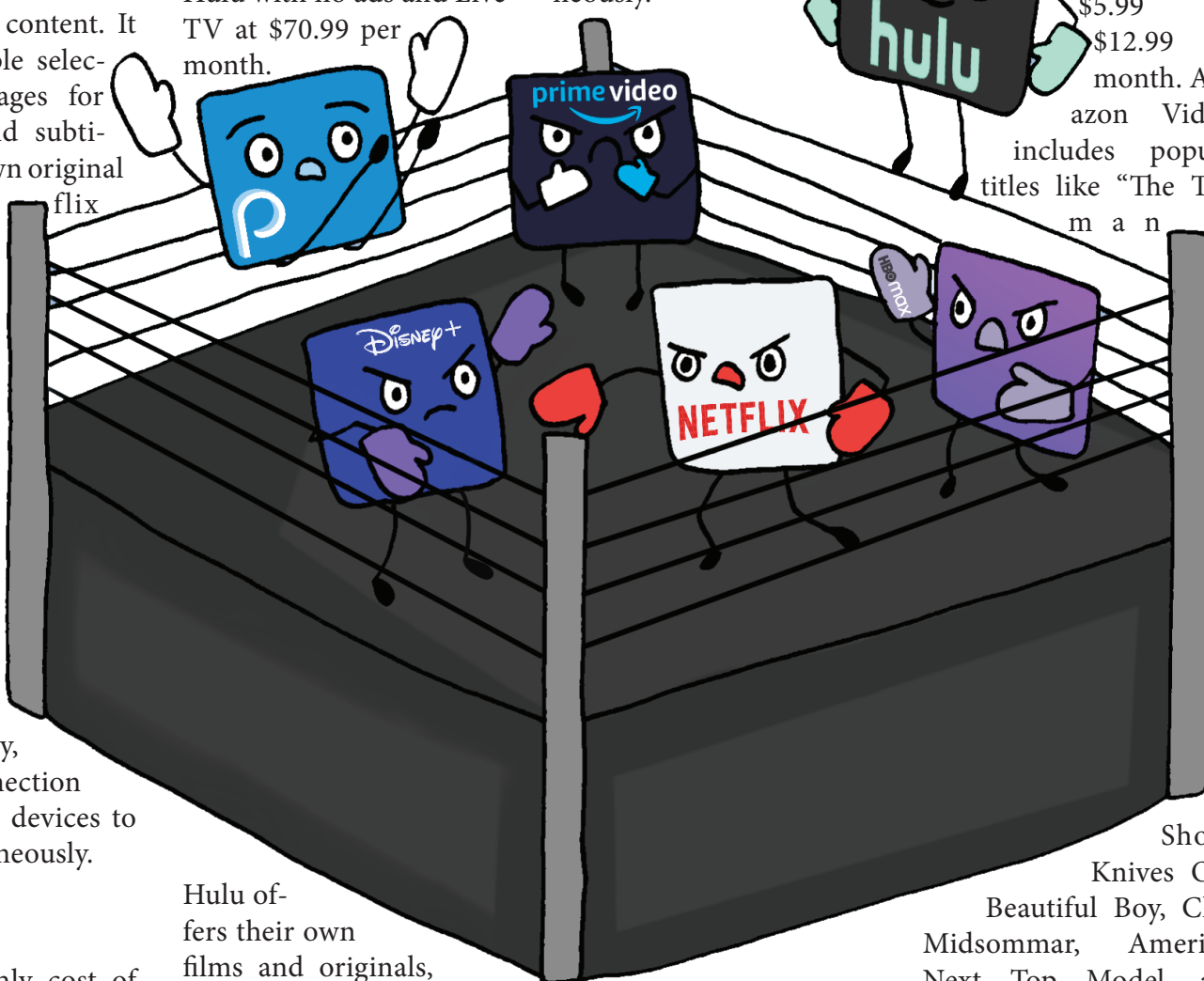
It has a decent selection of original TV shows and/or movies. Some titles you might recognize on this platform are: "High School Musical," "Star Wars," "The Simpsons," "Alice in Wonderland," "Mulan" and more. It allows for multiple profiles on one account, airplay, apple tv connection and four devices to stream simultaneously.

It also has a Disney+ feature called GroupWatch, where multiple people can watch the same thing, together, even when they're apart.

HBO Max :

HBO Max costs \$14.99 per month, but is accessible to whoever already has HBO. On HBO Max you can find popular titles like "Euphoria," "Spirited Away," "Friends," "Game of Thrones" and many others.

You can find something for all ages and can access the media in different languages and with subtitles. You can have five profiles in total for this service.



GRAPHICS BY KAI SPRUNGER

Hulu offers their own films and originals, as well as popular titles like "Parasite,"

Show," Knives Out, Beautiful Boy, Clue, Midsommar, America's Next Top Model, and Hell's Kitchen. Amazon videos does provide sub-



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Meet Instagram, Everyone's Favorite Features Thief

by Sarah Catalano
Features Editor

With the vague acquaintances of Facebook, the fleeting images of Snapchat, and the mindless short video consumption of TikTok, Instagram forms a massive ground for influences to overlap in a tangle of messages and media. It's newest feature, a mini-me version of TikTok called Instagram Reels, follows Instagram's classic pattern for success — but has yet to prove as effective in eliminating competition.

Reels was added to the app August 5, 2020. News was still circulating about the Trump administration's possible ban on TikTok, and creators were eager to inundate a new platform, one without the risk of an executive ban. After the first burst of media at Reels' creation, however, content with captions like "all of us migrating to reels after trump bans tiktok" became more sparse, and eventually faded away.

With less options for editing and far less of the wild, eccentric, and strangely niche content so abundant on TikTok, Reels received broadly negative user feedback. It's difficult to scroll through any Instagram explore page without encountering at least a few Reels with the TikTok watermark flashing in the corner, and amidst the warm-milk mass media videos popular only for their inherent ability to go viral, many popular TikTok creators use the function only to repost their

own TikToks.

Reels' situation isn't unique — Instagram has a history of pilfering successful features from other apps that sprawls back before TikTok was launched in 2016. That same year, the now-frequently-used Instagram "Story" function was copied from Snapchat, soon to be followed by disappearing photos and messages.

Users responded with just as much indignance in 2016 as they did four years later. With all the complaints of unoriginality, it seemed Instagram was a doomed platform, unlikely to surpass Snapchat in popularity; however, the timeline unfolded differently.

In 2015, the year before the introduction of Instagram Stories, Snapchat hosted 110 million users, while Instagram hosted 400 million. Instagram Stories' daily users skyrocketed — by 2018, it was vastly more popular than Snapchat, and in 2020 Instagram reached 854.5 million users, while Snapchat lagged behind at 75.8 million.

Instagram Stories' daily users skyrocketed — by 2018, it was vastly more popular than Snapchat, and in 2020 Instagram reached 854.5 million users, while Snapchat lagged behind at 75.8 million.

Meanwhile, TikTok has welcomed 800 million users to its platform since its start in 2016 and consequent rise in popularity.

One clear benefit to Reels is its accessibility — it allows older media-consumers to access the trendy short-video formatted content without learning a new app or gaining a working knowledge of complex "Zoom-er" culture.

Ultimately, this pattern raises the question: Does Instagram have an expiration date? Is it possible for the app to keep gobbling up features indefinitely? Maybe, maybe not. Like Facebook, Instagram caters to a set age bracket and will gradually be replaced as hordes of tomorrow's youth flock to a newer, cooler app.

Whether it's the lack of niches — no intense rabbit holes of frogs, skating, and cottagecore — or the general mushy recycled-paper-straw feel of Reels, it hardly seems to pose a threat to TikTok as it did to Snapchat. And even without attracting new users, it can still be a success for Instagram. For now, it seems unlikely that Reels will stomp out the raging fire that is TikTok.

GRAPHICS BY SARAH CATALANO

[a column] Media Meta: an actor's influence

Despite being one of the most prevalent aspects of films, something I think goes far too overlooked is the role of the actor.

A movie can be perfectly written and directed, but if the actor can't get the audience to resonate with their character, the movie will ultimately fail.

Obviously, there are far too many amazing performances to cover the tip of the iceberg in this article, so I'm going to focus on some personal favorite performances. And if you know me, you know that means I am going to talk about "Inception" starring Leonardo DiCaprio.

Now, when you think of amazing performances, "Inception" might not be the first movie to come to mind. It might not even be in your top list of Leonardo DiCaprio's movies.

But his performance is, in my opinion, what makes "Inception" the iconic movie that it is. At its heart, "Inception" is a daring action film with stunning visuals and a captivating story, and I applaud Christopher Nolan for his amazing technical work. But what made the movie truly stick is my emotional investment in the characters, specifically Dom Cobb.

DiCaprio's portrayal of Cobb makes him more than an action hero. He shows how Cobb is really just a man living with immense guilt and trauma, trying to return to his kids. The way that DiCaprio shows Cobb's interactions with his antagonistic late wife shows amazing complexity within



Isabella Gaskill
Web Administrative Editor

Cobb's character as he has to fight his instincts to protect her. When Cobb speaks to his kids I forget I'm watching an action movie because the scenes are so heartbreaking. As fascinating as all the sci-fi elements are, when I think about "Inception," I'm thinking about Dom Cobb more than anything else.

There are many other performances that made movies what they are, such as Heath Ledger as the Joker or Jake Gyllenhaal in "Nightcrawler." The bottom line is most movies can get by with decent acting, but a truly spectacular performance can be what takes a movie from good to great. E

specially in sci-fi and action, the right actor can add a level of emotional depth that leaves a mark on the audience.

Recommended movie: "Nightcrawler" (2014)

The Broader Benefits of Accessibility in Today's World of Video Gaming

by Brianna Nelson
Spark Editor-in-Chief

For the longest time, game developers have operated within a framework that has been proven again and again to be false — that their fanbases are able bodied, cisgender, heterosexual and white men. These assumptions have shaped how not only the stories that games tell but the way they are played.

Perhaps, after years of activism the narrative has begun to shift. Beyond diverse characters, stories, and perspectives, 2020 was a landmark year for accessible games where developers

customizable features first to ensure all players can enjoy the storytelling that these studios have to offer.

For context, "The Last of Us Part II" is an action-adventure game in the survival horror genre, dealing with the ramifications of the first game and telling a story of the cycle of revenge.

It's gameplay surrounds resource collection, gunplay, stealth, and platforming elements to en-

The game has over 60 customizable accessibility options to ensure that players with all man-

ner of disability are able to enjoy the story and gameplay of such a long-awaited game. These features

to concerns around common gameplay mechanics like button mashing and hardcoded controls.

These can present issues for players with conditions ranging from arthritis to cerebral palsy. Button remapping and shortcuts were instituted in "The Last of Us Part II" but also in games like "Spider-Man: Miles Morales" and more. These accessibility features benefit not just those with motor disabilities but also provide comfort and ease of play to all gamers.

Beyond visual and motor disability, auditory accessibility options allow for clear

subtitles for both dialogue and combat, controller vibration cues, and other prompts and cues to indicate when a player needs to dodge or perform other gameplay actions.

"The Last of Us Part II" represents the future of games where all players can enjoy the stories, characters, and interactive gameplay of this burgeoning medium. When we look back at 2020, we see a landmark year in accessibility for gaming but also a jumping off point for making features like the ones in "The Last of Us Part II" the standard, across developers and budgets and genres.

GRAPHIC BY LILY QUARTERMAINE



features represent changes that can be made in games for 2021 and beyond.

As mentioned previously, the game was played-through completely by blind player, reviewer, and accessibility consultant Saylor. The game has options to use text-to-speech to narrate critical gameplay information such as ammo and resource supplies and health. Lock-on aiming, edge detection, and audio cues options are also critical options provided by the developers to make the game visually accessible.

The game caters to a variety of players, not just those with visual disability. For all ages, activists with motor disabilities have brought light

sure the survival of the main characters as they progress the plot.

The game, however, brought blind game reviewer Steve Saylor to tears, telling CNN: "This is a first time we have seen a game where every piece of text on screen had text to speech in it," Saylor said. "Anyone without visual impairment could actually close their eyes and be able to play this game with all the settings turned on. That's how powerful it is."

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"A sound mind in a sound body is a full but short description of a happy state in this world."

COVID-19 Vaccination Rollout Begins in Sarasota Community

by **Alyson Mizanin**
Sports Editor

After months of lockdowns, mask wearing, and social distancing, beacons of light in the form of Moderna and Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccines came out of multinational laboratories to ease the darkness of the novel coronavirus pandemic. The vaccines have made their way to southwest Florida, affecting students, senior citizens, and healthcare workers alike.

Moderna and Pfizer's unique mRNA-based approach to the vaccines is the reason for such quick rollout. By mid-December, the U.S.'s Food and Drug Administration (FDA) officially authorized use of the vaccines. Distribution follows a three-phase plan, as issued by the Center for Disease Control (CDC). As of February, the first phase—which limits vaccine distribution to healthcare workers, first responders, and those who are 65+ years old—is still being enacted.

Registration protocols vary across the country. In Sarasota County, the process has been streamlined via the county's official website, scgov.net. Users are directed to register for vaccination by creating an account on the website. A call support center is offered but is staffed with only 50 representatives.

Users are contacted via call, text, or email when appointments are made available. Appointment slots are then scheduled on a first-click, first-serve basis. Those who miss out on appointments are sent future updates on availability.

Social studies teacher Scott Wolfinger has firsthand experience with the appointment-making process. Wolfinger and his family have been especially cautious when it comes to COVID-19 because his wife is at high-risk, so he jumped on the opportunity to get his mother-in-law vaccinated.

"Scheduling a vaccine took a lot of time and effort on our part as people who are technologically savvy," Wolfinger said.

Wolfinger reached a point in which he, his two children, and his wife had seven devices shared among them that they were constantly refreshing at 3:29 pm every day, the time when appointment slots were being opened. Wolfinger's son, fifth-grader Tyler Wolfinger, ended up securing an appointment for his grandmother in the middle of class.

"[Tyler] told the class he got the appointment and they all gave him an ovation. Everyone was excited. It was like we won the lottery," Wolfinger said.

Though Wolfinger's experience has been echoed by others, getting an appointment wasn't laborious for everyone. Dr. Susan Shin-Harris is an optometrist who works at Tille Eye Care in Sarasota, which is an advertiser in the Torch; her position qualified her for phase one of the vaccine rollout. She was able to schedule an appointment without any issues.

"I think it's just luck. I just lucked out. Since then, I know others have had really hard times. The other doctors I work with and technicians and assistants we have, they have not been able to get vaccines," Shin-Harris said.

Shin-Harris ended up getting the Moderna vaccine Dec. 31 at the William Little Health and Human Services

Center, a branch of the Department of Health in Sarasota County.

Shin-Harris' appointment fell in the 9 to 10 a.m. slot. After the doors opened at 9 a.m., she was given a ticket and waited in the lobby before being called to the vaccination area with about 30 other people. Patients were each given a card that listed which version of the vaccine they were getting and the date of vaccination. She was then vaccinated and put in a recovery room, where each patient sat for observation for 15 minutes to make sure all was well. She was given the follow-up date for her booster shot before leaving.

"The process was really quick," Shin-Harris said. "The longest part of it was just waiting for the doors to open."

Shin-Harris cited "a little soreness in the arm where they injected" as her only reaction to the vaccine, which "only lasted about a day and a half—that was it."

Now, Shin-Harris volunteers at COVID vaccination clinics in Sarasota to give back to the community.

The observation period following vaccination may seem inconsequential to some, but it was significant for twelfth-grader Cecelia Plass, who received the Moderna vaccine Jan. 6.

Plass has been volunteering at Sarasota Memorial Hospital for four years, but her volunteering ceased at the start of the pandemic because of safety precautions. Her volunteer coordinator reached out to her toward the end of December, telling her that Moderna vaccines were available at Sarasota Memorial for volunteers who were 18 and older. She decided to seize the opportunity, but her circumstances were unique; in 2019, she had a severe allergic reaction to the flu shot. It was for this reason that she had to be observed for 30 minutes after her COVID-19 vaccine.

"I ended up being totally fine. When I got home, I was feeling fatigued. My left arm—where I got the vaccine—hurt a little bit. The next day, my arm was pretty sore, but normal with other vaccines. I felt a little feverish but it was nothing extreme," Plass said.

Plass received her booster shot Feb. 3 and plans to return to volunteering as soon as possible.

That wish to give back to the community is shared by Bradenton-based pharmacist Renata Kulawik, PharmD. Prior to the pandemic, Kulawik worked full-time at Ellenton Family Practice Direct, where she managed medication and volunteered as a pharmacy school adviser. She now works there only part-time because of her volunteering.

Kulawik herself received the Moderna vaccine Dec. 31 through a drive-in program in Manatee County. All went well for her and her husband, who also is a healthcare worker. She got her booster shot Jan. 26.

Following vaccine rollout, Kulawik began working alongside other pharmacists through the CVS Caremark organization to distribute and administer the Pfizer vac-



Twelfth-grader Cecelia Plass poses after receiving the first dose of the Moderna vaccine Jan. 6 at Sarasota Memorial Hospital. Plass received her second dose Feb. 3. PHOTO COURTESY OF CECELIA PLASS.

cine to those living in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities.

Registration for the vaccine is different for those living in these facilities, as many of them—especially those suffering from conditions like dementia—are clueless of the situation. In those circumstances, previous arrangements for consent—typically on behalf of a family member—must happen before the pharmacists are able to vaccinate.

Kulawik's organization functions as a mobile clinic; each day, they're in a different place within an hour's drive from Bradenton.

"I've been to Sarasota, Venice...What I've learned is in our area, there's a very high density of long-term care facilities. The need is very big here," Kulawik said.

The one thing each facility has in common is their strict limitations on visitation, which makes Kulawik's job hard.

"A lot of the people, they have a hard time making connections with the employees and don't even have access to family members. It's just so sad, so depressing," Kulawik said. "Sometimes when you walk into a room and see the situation, you have to be strong and not let your emotions take over and do your job."

continued on pvtorch.com



Minecraft's Comeback

by **Isabella Gaskill**
Web Administrative Editor

Most videogame enthusiasts probably remember their first foray into Minecraft. Whether it was hopping into Survival mode before there were even hunger bars, or messing around in Creative mode on Pocket Edition, it is a game that almost everyone has played. While Minecraft has maintained its prevalence for over a decade, that popularity has recently surged. But what is it that has made Minecraft so timeless, and why has its popularity suddenly skyrocketed?

One of Minecraft's best features is its versatility. Within the main game, players can choose Survival, in which they have to survive in a randomly generated world, or Creative, where they can fly and build whatever their heart desires, from intricate castles to an exact replica of Earth. Survival has even more possibilities, such as speed-running, which is beating the game by killing the Ender dragon as fast as possible.

Minecraft already has hundreds of ways to play for every type of gamer, but Mojang, the game's developing company, is also constantly working on updates. Minecraft players who have not touched the game in five years would be shocked to see what has been added and what has been revamped.

Developers are always adding new mobs and changing up different aspects of the game, such as adding new features to the End realm and the Nether. The newest update includes a complete makeover of the caves, something players have been requesting for years.

Outside of the main game, there are also competitive Minecraft servers such as the extremely popular Hypixel. These servers often have minigames that allow players to compete for spots on leaderboards. One of the most popular minigames recently is bedwars, in which players have to protect their bed—which allows them to respawn—while also trying to destroy other players' beds. There are dozens of other games, focusing on everything from building to PvP, once again offering something for every type of player.

All of these components of the game have allowed Minecraft to maintain its popularity, but content creators have also played an incredibly important role in its traction. Minecraft's ini-

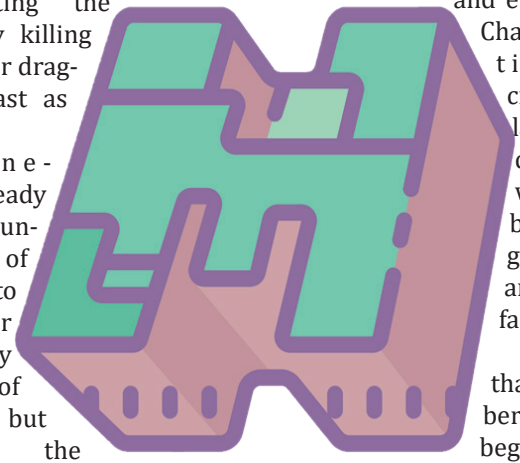
tial success was largely due to early YouTubers such as Stampylonghead, PopularMMOs, DanTDM, CaptainSparklez, and many more. Their content brought lots of kids to the game. It wouldn't be a stretch to say that they are largely responsible for the game's early success after its release in 2011.

Following its initial boom, Minecraft's popularity began to drop in early 2017: the game lost players and Minecraft YouTubers' views began dropping. But the game had a revival in February of 2019 when YouTuber Pewdiepie began his Minecraft series. The game only continued to grow when YouTuber Keemstar began to host Minecraft Mondays in June of 2019, with creators from across the internet coming together to stream the competition on YouTube and Twitch. The competition wasn't just limited to Minecraft YouTubers, as they also had Fortnite players and even James Charles participate, creating a large audience which brought together old and new fans.

After that, YouTuber Dream began to gain popularity from his Minecraft manhunt videos where he speedruns the game while his friends try to stop him. He managed to gain over 16 million subscribers since his first upload in July of 2019. Using that popularity, he created the DreamSMP in April of 2020, a Survival Multiplayer server, bringing together dozens of Minecraft creators such as Ph1LzA, Technoblade, TommyInnit, Wilbur Soot, Tubbo, and jschlatt, who all play characters in the roleplay-based storyline created on the SMP. These creators bring in up to 800,000 live viewers while streaming on the server. The DreamSMP united Minecraft fans from across the internet, creating a massive community that caused the game's popularity to skyrocket.

It is possible that Minecraft is never going to lose its popularity. With the Caves and Cliffs update coming out in 2021 and even more updates on the way, there will always be something new to explore. In addition, new Minecraft content creators are constantly popping up all over the internet, meaning there is also always something new to watch. The game's adaptability and variety results in the large community it will need to maintain its popularity for years to come.

GRAPHIC BY LILY QUARTERMAINE



GRAPHIC BY BRIANNA NELSON

CELESTIAL UPDATE

CHECK OUT:
The Hubble Telescope Birthday website!

DID YOU KNOW?
There are an estimated 2 trillion galaxies in the universe, and in our galaxy alone, there are about 300 billion stars!

WHAT YOU MISSED
On December 21st, 2020, Jupiter and Saturn aligned to form the "Christmas Star," named after its alleged history of leading the three wise men to Bethlehem. This was the closest together that 2 planets had been in 800 years, and we won't be seeing it again until 2080!

UPCOMING EVENTS!

FEBRUARY 27 - A full moon.

MARCH 6 - Mercury will be at its greatest western elongation; this is the best time to view it!

MARCH 13 - A new moon! The moon will be on the same side of the Earth as the sun, so it will appear invisible. This will be an excellent night for stargazing, as the moon's light won't be interfering.

MARCH 20 - March Equinox: The sun will shine on the equator, and the entire world will have a nearly equal day and night.

Exploring the World of Weightlifting

Recently, weightlifting has taken the world—and Pine View—by storm. Follow the students and science behind the sport below.

Student branches out to the Instagram weightlifting community

by Kai Sprunger

Match Layout Artist

Eleventh-grader Demetri Pappas had no idea that checking Snapchat would begin his weightlifting journey. After three months of daily two-to-three-hour long workouts at local YMCAs, Pappas has found that he has grown much as a person. His weightlifting journey has been documented on the Instagram account he dedicates to it, @demetri_pappas.

While working out, Pappas uses social media to share his experiences. Pappas' weightlifting account was originally his spam that he transformed into the account it is today.

While scrolling through his Snapchat story page one day, Pappas came upon a post from one of his friends.

"I saw he was hitting the gym so I asked if I could join and he said 'yeah.' He has pretty much taught me everything I know," Pappas said.

Inspired by his friend, Pappas began going to the gym

after school for weightlifting. As a result of this hard work, Pappas has seen great improvement; his max squat used to be 185 lbs. and now is 270 lbs.

Often a person's favorite hobby or activity begins to influence how they go through life. Pappas has found this to be the case for himself, as weightlifting has helped gain more than physical strength.

"It has made me more confident. It has made me stronger. It has helped with aesthetics. It has helped with my friendships; I've made more friends through the gym. It's a new chapter in my life," Pappas said.

With this new chapter, Pappas has taken to sharing his story through posts consisting of memes, pictures taken at the gym, short videos, and tips and tricks regarding weightlift-

ing. Posting on Instagram also boosts his confidence.

"Most captions are also mini motivational rants as well, so anytime you are feeling unmotivated, his captions should do the trick," Mate Csepregi, one of Pappas' friends, said.

Pappas has learned numerous tips and tricks during his weightlifting journey. An important tip is form over weight. In weightlifting, the goal is not entirely fixed on the number of pounds one can lift, but also form. Form is the way you lift weights and helps you lift more.

Weightlifting has taught Pappas a lesson that transcends the Instagram timeline: "Just be yourself. If people are hating on you, then you are doing something right," Pappas said.

Even though his weightlifting journey has only just begun, Pappas hopes that he can continue to use his account to make people laugh and inspire others.



Science of the Sport

by Sarah Catalano

Features Editor

First introduced as an Olympic sport in the 1896 Games, weightlifting has been a test of strength since the times of ancient Egypt and Greece. Today, the exercise also serves as a popular muscle-building alternative to bodyweight training. Health and fitness have historically been surrounded by misconceptions.

Combating the misunderstandings associated with weightlifting boils down to knowing the science behind the sport.

Metabolic and mechanical overload contribute to muscle fatigue, which in turn leads to stronger muscles. Metabolic overload occurs when muscle cells run out of energy to complete tasks, and mechanical overload refers to the actual damage sustained by muscle fibers during a workout.

After a workout, hormones and proteins in the body naturally repair the damage and safeguard against future strain by fusing muscle fibers and upping glycogen levels, which causes them to gain mass and volume.

So, is it better to lift heavy weights with low repetition, or light weights with high repetition?

Generally, living beings adapt to habit. What you do determines what your body will be able to do. So, if you're

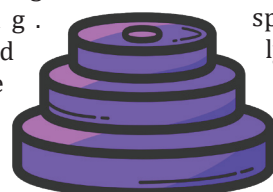
going for muscular endurance, light weight and high reps are a good start. Heavier weight and low reps generally work to increase muscle mass, but lifting too heavy early on can be detrimental to form, which can lead to injury and other setbacks.

Diet also plays a role in muscular gains. The widespread image of a heavily-muscled man holding a protein shake isn't entirely an advertising strategy for "muscle drinks"—while increased protein intake won't magically make a person buff, proteins do serve an essential purpose in building strength.

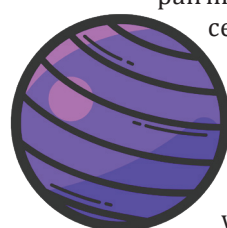
In terms of muscle growth, proteins primarily function by building and repairing damaged cells. Proteins also serve as a source of adenosine triphosphate (ATP) when other energy-giving macromolecules, like carbohydrates and fats, aren't readily available during a workout.

Regardless of your goal, gaining strength is all about consistency and care. The greatest benefits are gained through long-term training. By sticking to a regular schedule, being mindful of your nutritional intake, and allowing time for muscle groups to repair, you can achieve your fitness goals.

Sources: MedicalNewsToday.com, AceFitness.org, GenesisHealthClubs.com, and Olympic.org



GRAPHICS BY BRIANNA NELSON



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Girl's Weightlifting Experience

by Ben Gordon

Web Editor-in-Chief

Developing the physical strength and determination to become a competitive weightlifter is painfully hard work. For twelfth-grader Sam Sineath, it's just part of a regular school day.

Since she first set her hands on a weight in eighth grade, weightlifting has made its impact on Sineath's everyday life. It first caught her attention while doing a regular crossfit workout. Her coach complimented her skills in Olympic lifting, and thus her weightlifting journey began.

"I really wasn't that into fitness when I started Crossfit, but as I progressed in weightlifting, I grew to love it," Sineath said.

Now, it's a significant part of her life. Initially lifting for North Port High School, she followed her coach to Port Charlotte High School for twelfth grade. She trains four days per week, two hours per day.

From November through February, Sineath and her teammates compete at competitions almost once a week.

They compete in two categories: the bench, where the contestant lays down while lifting, and the clean and jerk, which is a composite movement that involves lifting the weight from the ground to above the head with arms fully extended. Each contestant performs the lift three times, and the person with the highest composite score is crowned with first place.

This year, Sineath has won every meet she has attended, and placed first at Districts and Regionals.

The rush of energy she feels when she succeeds in a difficult moment is more than enough to keep

Sineath going.

"I love the adrenaline at meets when you make a heavy lift... seeing your hard work pay off when as you get stronger," Sineath said.

Combined with the regular encouragement and support of her teammates, who she trains with no matter the circumstances—even on Christmas Eve and New Year's Day—Sineath has no trouble pushing through the pain.

At the same time, not everything about weightlifting is exciting. To compete in certain categories, contestants must maintain a certain weight.

For Sineath, that sometimes means cutting her food consumption before a meet. After weighing in, she is allowed to rehydrate and eat before lifting.

"Food tastes better after only eating scrambled eggs for the last 24 hours," Sineath said.

Lifting at meets also requires significant mental preparation. It takes years of mental preparation for weightlifters to prevent the pressure of an important meet from impacting their performance.

Though challenging, the mentality lifters create as they grow more experienced is incredibly useful outside of the sport.

"It teaches us a lot about consistency, hard work, and determination," Sineath said. "It's very common to have days where you can't give up on yourself until you get through the rough spots."

In the future, Sineath plans to continue lifting as a hobby, but not a competitive sport. Because few colleges have weightlifting teams, she plans to train at a nearby gym independently.

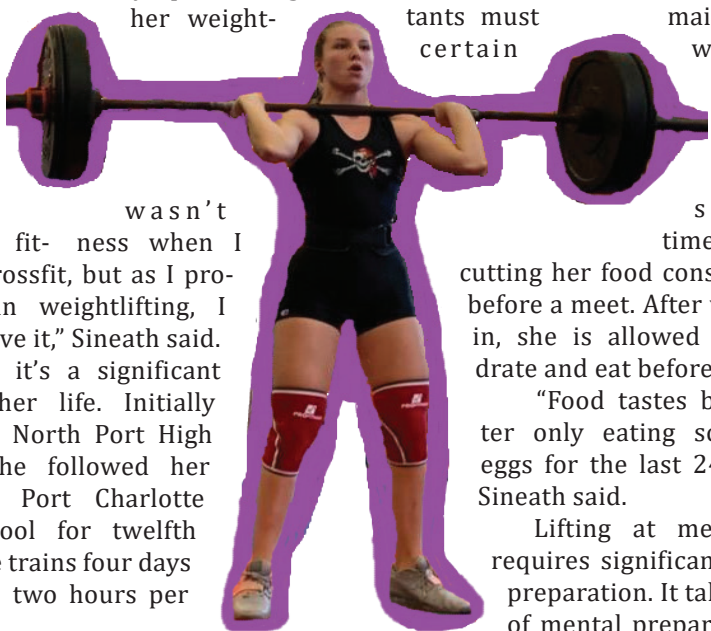


PHOTO PROVIDED BY SAM SINEATH
GRAPHIC BY ALYSON MIZANIN

Boy's Weightlifting Experience

by Madi Holmes

Copy Editor

Setting goals and crushing personal records is key to the sport of weightlifting and twelfth-grader Evan Hannon is no stranger to the process. Hannon is currently competing in his second consecutive weightlifting season for River-view High School's varsity team.

Hannon acquired his love of weightlifting from his father and older sister, Pine View alumnus Madi Hannon, both of whom are avid lifters.

"It's a thrill to see Evan so successful in a sport that has given so much to me," Hannon's father, John Hannon, said.

Hannon's father started his high school's weightlifting program in Ohio, carrying the rag-tag team to the state competition in their first year.

"I look up to my father's determination when it comes to weightlifting; he showed me the importance of consistency over intensity," Hannon said.

Hannon has been athletically active since middle school, taking up various sports like rowing, football, and wrestling, but admits he was always drawn to

weightlifting.

"I like the competition and constant progress you can make in weightlifting," Hannon said. "You can see yourself always getting better and watch the progress unfold, which is unlike many sports."

Weightlifting meets require competitors to perform the bench press and the clean and jerk; each is done three times, progressively increasing the difficulty with each attempt.

Hannon maintains a rigorous schedule, typically working out five days a week either on his own or with the team during the season. Being consistent, specifically throughout the recent summer, has allowed Hannon to max 295 lbs. on the bench press and 385 lbs. when squatting.

Hannon won third place in the 183 weight class at the Charlotte High School Tarpon Invite in January, the first meet of the season. Excited to continue improving, Hannon's biggest aspiration is to attend the state competition in Panama City in April.

Hannon doesn't intend to end his weightlifting career there. He hopes to power lift at the club level in college and continue setting and passing new goals.



PHOTO BY RUBY COPSEY
GRAPHIC BY BRIANNA NELSON

What's your advice for those who want to start

weightlifting?



Sam Sineath

"[Weightlifting] teaches us a lot about consistency, hard work, and determination. It's very common to have days where you can't give up on yourself until you get through the rough spots."

"The main thing with weightlifting is staying consistent with your workouts and making sure you give plenty of time for recovery after each lift."



Evan Hannon

Ninth-grader rows her way to regattas, self-improvement

by Lora Rini
Asst. Match Editor-in-Chief

With three hour-long practices five days a week, Sarasota Crew is no small commitment. To some, a practice schedule this rigorous may seem too demanding or overwhelming, but for ninth-grader Lana Ghamra, it's more than worth it.

"It can be really hard, and definitely stressful and not motivating, but it gives me something to think of outside of school, and it's fun when you have friends with you," Ghamra said.

Ghamra joined crew with some friends at the beginning of eighth grade. During her one-and-a-half years of practice, she has attended regattas as a part of middle school, novice, and varsity crew.

Ghamra enjoys working out and making improvements on her strength and rowing techniques.

This year, Ghamra rowed varsity for the fall season. She moved back down to novice for the spring season with the rest of the ninth-graders, where she will likely row as a part of the fresh eight, which is the top boat for ninth-graders.

Ghamra typically rows four, six, or eight seat, with her favorite being six. In six seat, she has to be strong as part of the main driving force of the boat.

To make further improvements, Ghamra works out outside of practice as well. She works out with friends at crew, runs, and uses a rowing machine at home.

this season.

"We were supposed to have [a regatta] last weekend but it was canceled because of COVID, but we have one in the end of February, and we went to two or three in fall. So it's definitely smaller than normal, but they're still happening," Ghamra said.

With her experience from the February event and a handful of other regattas from over the years, this will be Ghamra's first year attending states.

Since she began rowing, Ghamra has made great improvements in her technique and strength. Currently, she is working on applying her height to lengthen her stroke.

"I'm 5'10 and it gives me an advantage because of the longer stroke," Ghamra said. "I'm still working on technique and applying my strength to my stroke."

As of now, Ghamra is planning to continue with crew for the rest of high school.

"I love going to regattas and getting to race against other teams. A lot of my friends are at crew, and I just enjoy working out and rowing on the water," Ghamra said.



Ninth-grader Lana Ghamra rows in the Intrasquad Regatta at Nathan Benderson Park. Ghamra's one-and-a-half years of Sarasota Crew experience have rewarded her with friendship and physical strength. PHOTO PROVIDED BY LANA GHAMRA

"We just started doing this thing where we go in before practice to warm up, and at crew, during practice, we always work out together," said ninth-grader Maya Schultz, Ghamra's friend and teammate.

Due to COVID-19, regattas have not been as frequent as they would have been in typical years, but Ghamra remains cautiously optimistic about the remaining regattas

The Importance of Working out for Yourself

by Olivia Hansen
Copy Editor

When I began working out sophomore year of high school, I had a simple goal—to look like Kendall Jenner. Bella Hadid was another option; my goals weren't exclusive to just one Victoria's Secret supermodel. Soon after I became aware of my physical appearance and addicted to social media, my self-esteem rooted itself in my body image. And when my body image was constantly distorted by body dysmorphia, it was hard to feel good about myself.

My motivation for working out was substantiated by self-loathing and unrealistic body goals. It took me until my senior year of high school to change this unhealthy lifestyle and mindset and shift my goals in the gym. I work out now to be healthy, not to be Kendall Jenner.

After about a year of regularly exercising, I noticed a few things. I was hungrier, I weighed more, and I could do workouts much easier. Still, my body looked about the same. After speaking to my friends, they shared that they experienced similar patterns.

I realized that some parts of me were never going to change, so with time,

I began basing my progress on mobility growth and strength rather than physical appearance. I still didn't look like Kendall Jenner, but hey, I could do ten consecutive push-ups when six months prior, I couldn't even do one.

When you begin working out, it's a common pitfall to become discouraged when your unit of self-growth is measured by the highlights of others'. To reach your full potential in the gym, your only source of comparison should be yourself.

You've heard it before, probably on an inspiring VSCO post, but it's true. Everyone could do the same workouts and have the same diet and still look different. It's important to accept your natural state of physical being before incorporating unrealistic goals into your routine.

By knowing your boundaries and tracking your growth over time, your well-being will improve, both physically and mentally. Otherwise, I can promise you something from my own experience: you will be ridiculously dissatisfied when in two weeks, you don't look like how Chloe Ting promised you. Curb the dissatisfaction for acceptance. It will do you wonders.



GRAPHIC BY ZOE MERRITT

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What's the harm? Embrace your obsessions

by Joanna Malvas
Focus Editor

Obsessions. Let's be honest here, we all have at least one.

Those who are overly self-conscious of their own intense interests may try to diminish the word's connotation through claiming their own obsession as a 'guilty pleasure.' They may try to detach themselves from the stigma of generally being coined as 'obsessed.' Yet, obsession is something that I'd argue to be as natural as breathing.

So before we delve into this very obviously accurate analysis and exploration of modern obsessions, I call upon you, as the reader, to ask yourself an important question. What lives in your

mind 24-7, rent-free? What are you obsessed with?

Most people directly link obsession to hormonal teenage girls that own fan accounts and are essentially lovestruck by conventionally attractive male protagonists in Marvel movies, fictional Anime cartoon characters, or, most commonly, boy bands. But, to put this stereotype to rest, Chinese teacher and young adult Maggie Higgins has risen above societal standards, proudly displaying her kpop BTS shrine in the corner of her classroom (frankly, I can't blame her because it's beautiful).

By these means, to think that only teenage girls are obsessive, is inherently discriminatory of the wide scope of unorthodox interests that

people engage in, such as the ever-so-exciting topic of sports. For example, while I still don't understand why my AP U.S. History teacher is so pressed about Steelers fans, I've come to terms with the fact that rooting against other sports teams may be the equivalent of Cardi B and Nicki Minaj fan wars. Instead of engaging in Wattpad fan-fiction, Mr. Wolfinger, along with a group of our other beloved Pine View teachers, fervently support their fantasy football leagues.

And that, I say, is living proof that obsession is ingrained within everyone, even middle-aged men and women.

I saw up close how obsession can absorb someone, as it happened to my parents



PHOTO BY BEN GORDON

Sarah Catalano embraces a tree on Pine View's campus. Following the advice of her friend, Joanna, she has grown proud of her love for botany.

over quarantine. The growth of their obsession reflected on how our house slowly grew more into a jungle. Slowly, inch by inch, bromeliads and succulents encroached and encompassed our entire property inside and out, and that was how I knew that they had become obsessed with being plant parents. My mom probably talks more to her giant-leafed plant named J-Lo than me, and honestly, I don't know if that's a good thing or a bad thing.

To say the very least, my Asian parents now have something to be proud of.

To hit a bit more close to home, the average Pine View student can be described as obsessive.

Why? Because, when I tell you that refreshing Parent Portal every two seconds isn't going to magically change your grade, you won't believe me (don't act like you haven't tried it). As much as I could go on about other people's obsessions, it wouldn't be fair to say that I'm any better. Freshman year was definitely when my obsessions

hit their peak, as I prioritized watching the next episode of an Asian drama over an assignment due before midnight quite often.

So yes, we're all a little bit obsessed with something on the inside. In the end, whether your obsessions are commonly accepted or are considered really quirky, recognize that having a somewhat excessive and unhealthy attachment to something is completely normal!

To be honest, I'd even go as far to say that my obsessions have made me a stronger person. I have vivid memories of staying up until 2 a.m. to study for biology and to watch Strong Woman Do Bong Soon at the same time, which has increased my multi-tasking abilities. To most, this may sound quite unhealthy, but I always look back and say, "if I can survive that, I can do anything."

It's time that we rise up against social stigmas, own up to our obsessions and stop judging full-grown adults that dress up in cosplay for Comic-Con.



GRAPHIC BY LEO GORDON

Resting on a lux chase lounge, eleventh-grader Joanna Malvas sits amongst her parents' significant plant collection. Her family has recently become obsessed with hoarding a variety of plants.

Student anti-driving movement gains steam

by Anna Labiner
Asst. Editor-In-Chief

In a recent bid to quell their embarrassment, high-school students Newt Ryever, Will Nawtdriive, Carl Axident, and Noel Isence have instigated a massive anti-driving movement among the student body — targeting parents who insist upon placing massive "student driver" stickers all around their childrens' cars.

"It is so embarrassing to have to drive people around with those 'student driver' stickers all over my car," Isence said, "and if my parents refuse to let me take them off, then I simply will not drive at all."

Students involved in the movement cite multiple instances in which they noticed cars actively changing lanes to avoid being in the proximity of their vehicle, scared of the possibility of falling victim to a reckless young driver. Not only do these students have to endure the lack of trust from their community, but many also say that they have been laughed at by fellow drivers for the massive caution-tape-esque warnings plastered on all sides of their vehicle.

The smattering of cautionary stickers has also created a paradoxical phenomenon dubbed "new-driver judgment" in which new drivers who are still getting their sea legs are automatically deemed as irresponsible and dangerous no matter what speed they're driving at.

"If I drive a little fast,

people assume I'm reckless, and when I drive a little under the speed limit, people assume that I have driving anxiety and veer around me," Axident said. "It's a lose-lose situation, but if I didn't have the stickers all over my car, no one would make those assumptions in the first place."

Absolutely gut-wrenching for these kids.

It was not until parents started getting creative with the stickers, purchasing garish bumper accessories with catchy sayings like "WARNING: student driver... and screaming parent!" or the ever-popular, "Straight Outta the DMV: Student driver alert!" that students really began to rebel. These wise-cracks were the final straw for these students and proved to be the driving factor of the anti-driving movement.

The campaign has grown enormously since its conception in September and holds weekly counseling sessions for students dealing with vehicular-embarrassment-related trauma (VERT).

"We will not be silenced, and will demand that our parents chauffeur us around town until they've learned the consequences of their actions," Ryever said in a statement to the student body earlier this week.

As for the future of the movement, the growing support seems promising, and it is safe to assume that the shell lot will be fairly empty in these coming weeks.

Pickup Lines: Pine View Edition

Hello, my loves it's Naina. I know Valentine's Day has passed but there's still time to romance your boo. As a long-time Pine View student, you could say I'm rather adept at coqueting our special population of students. I've collected a list of suave and terrifically charming pick-up lines from my fellow flirts on The Torch staff. I hope you enjoy my special secrets and enjoy the same successes that I have.

**Are you my PSAT/SAT scores?
Because I can't get you off my mind.**

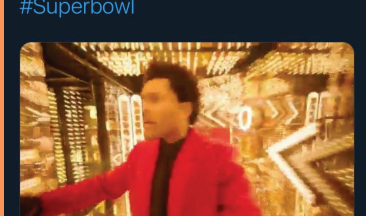
**Are you an extra credit opportunity
at the end of the quarter? Because
you are unreal.**

**I think you must be a rower because it
looks like you oar the one for me.**

**Are you my AP English assignment?
because I'm definitely overanalyzing
you.**

GRAPHIC BY PEYTON HARRIS

MEME OF THE MONTH



The Weeknd's much-anticipated half-time performance did not disappoint. Besides an entertaining show, the performer also gifted us with a wonderful new meme of the month — one that features the artist running frantically through a room of mirrors while holding the camera.

The internet took the video and ran with it, and it's practically impossible to log onto Twitter without seeing some reiteration of the meme. We get a pretty good kick out of it. Very relatable content.



GRAPHIC BY ANNA LABINER

[a column] Robbed of recognition: the 212 Wall of Fame

Pine View has gifted me many things in the 11 years that I've been here — a sense of intellectual curiosity, strong friendships with similarly motivated students, and life-long fears of alligators and turning in assignments with incorrect MLA formatting. I often wake up in a cold sweat after recurring nightmares in which I realize that I forgot to put "Labiner 1" at the top of my papers. Though these gifts are abundant and much appreciated, there is one Pine View achievement that I have yet to fulfill, and I'm angry.

How have I been here for 11 years and I've never had my photo hung on the 212 Wall of Fame? Is having your photo plastered on the window of the Student Union embarrassing? Extremely. But I have now moved on from the denial stage and I'm on to anger, so the faithful readers of the Torch will feel my wrath. Grudge activated.

Had I entered Pine View at a later date, this wouldn't sting so bad. Right now, I feel like I'm on the downward spiral — I've officially caught senioritis, I look ROUGH in the mornings, and my closet has dwindled down to a solid five combinations of sweatshirts and leggings. The lights are on but no one's home.

But, if you had seen me at my prime you would know why not getting my picture on the cafeteria window cuts so deep. When I entered Pine View at eight years old, I was a treasure.



Anna Labiner
Asst. Editor-in-Chief

Really and truly, I was up there for Pine View's most adorable students, but apparently, that isn't enough for this prestigious award.

As a senior, my heart breaks for a younger me, who always wanted to be a PV Wall-of-Famer. Now that I have lost my youthful charm

and have joined the elderly population of Pine View's student body, my chances at the award are shot, and it's a little depressing.

But, as I transition into the acceptance stage of the grieving process, I recognize all that Pine View has given me academically and the dedication of the teachers and administrators who got me all the way through to the end. However, let it be known that I will always harbor this anger, and that there will always be a missing piece of me in the shape of a 212 Hall of Fame Award.

How have I been here for 11 years and I've never had my photo hung on the 212 Wall of Fame?

Student places in top 1% of BuzzFeed astrology fans

by **Peyton Harris**
Opinion Editor

My morning routine is pretty simple. I wake up like any other teenage girl (just more beautiful because of my Libra moon of course), eat a light breakfast (because of my Capricorn rising), and hop in my car, ready for another day of every boy at school staring at me. As an Aries, I'm used to it. The constant stares as I flip my hair, the way I move in slow motion and enamor everyone in my path. Life as the best sign can be difficult when everyone's obsessed with me, but it has its perks.

I used to never believe in astrology until I realized how similar I was to the model Aries. For example, Aries uses charm to get their way. I've hit at least four pedestrians (this morning) but nobody ever calls the cops on me because I'm so charismatic (also they're dead). Aries are strong-willed and hardworking — I once argued so long with a teacher that eventually he just gave up and let me nap in his class. And of course, all Aries love blueberries. I swam in a bath of that once. I'm actually not sure where that fact came from, but it fits.

After years of finding similarities with myself and traits of an Aries, taking numerous BuzzFeed quizzes that confirm it, and reading

my Snapchat horoscope of the day, I can consider myself qualified to be an astrologer. However, for all my knowledge, I've found that my skills are best applied to myself.

For example, I knew exactly why I hit

my brother the other day — Mercury was in retrograde, so my Taurus Mercury was agitated. For some reason my mom didn't understand how that made me send him flying. For some reason she saw sending him to the ER as "really upsetting." She'll never comprehend my

brother the other day — Mercury was in retrograde, so my Taurus Mercury was agitated. For some reason my mom didn't understand how that made me send him flying. For some reason she saw sending him to the ER as "really upsetting." She'll never comprehend my

universal knowledge.

But I know better than to fall prey to the doubters. Astrology

is the foundational science of man. I think it's a travesty biology is a state requirement

instead of the science that explains why I am so breathtakingly hot, smart, funny, and charming.

Being an Aries isn't all fun and games, though. The stars give a lot of trouble to those that they love the most. Like, the other day my friend made a tattoo for

stealing her current boyfriend. And her last boyfriend. And the one before that, too. When I told her that's what my self-written horoscope for the day said to do, she didn't even understand that I can't help it! If she has an issue with that, she should take it up with the stars.

My sign also once led me to spend \$400 at the mall.

That sucked! Now I'm \$800 in debt, but I know being an Aries will relieve any temporary financial problems.

My expertise in astrology is too great to use on just myself — as my Venus Taurus always reminds me, I need to gift my knowledge to the world. I've now started my own tarot reading business: apparently that's different from a horoscope but all this universe stuff is pretty much the same.

My two customers do nothing but rave about my readings. I told them the cards said they were hot and going to get a boyfriend soon. They loved it! I was given three stars on Yelp for accuracy and two of the reviews were mine, but three is the number of stars in the Aries constellation, which is all that matters to me.

I also recently discovered that my full birth chart is more than just the signs I like best for the prettiest planets. Such an Aries moment of me. I wouldn't trade my birth chart for the world. When I filled out my chart I didn't know exactly what time or place I was born in, but I feel undoubtedly connected to it nonetheless. I could be either a Gemini or Cancer Pluto, which could explain either why I was sent to the office for cheating on a test or why I cheated on all my boyfriends.



GRAPHIC BY PEYTON HARRIS

The glorification of substance abuse in social media

Recent social media trends romanticize the use of hard drugs as “ethereal”

by **Tiffany Yu**
Match Asst. Editor-in-Chief

In 21st century America, starting from youth, the phrase “don’t do drugs” has been ingrained in everyone’s minds. We see through the portrayal of substance use in anti-drug programs such as D.A.R.E. that the main reasons to avoid drug usage is that it will cause long-term detriment to your health and— even worse in our current day it seems— ruin your appearance through dental, skin and other physically appearing issues. However, we see in current years that there has been a rapid de-stigmatization of hard drugs; why is that?

According to DrugWise, a hard drug is defined by a higher number of risks and likelihood of dependency, such as heroin or MDMA (ecstasy). While there is heavy criticism and taboo surrounding their usages, there has also been a climb in their popularity among youth, as apparent in their appearance on social media. For example, while TikTok can be accredited for some fun, even good, trends, one of the worst— or at least most problematic— to arise is the glorification of hard drug usage. At best, niches of TikTok such as ‘CokeTok’ or ‘XanTok’ are skewed representations of the reality of these substances; at their worst it’s a bigoted community blatantly promoting substance abuse.

The algorithm of social media platforms inherently promotes and benefits conventionally attractive people; on top of this, TikTok is known for the start and spread of trends that are bold but generally easy to execute. The combination of these two

elements combine and take form in the promotion of conventionally attractive girls doing illicit substances. This type of content creates a loophole in the argument that drugs will ruin your appearance, lessening the merit of logic used against hard substances. It also normalizes hard drug usage by no longer portraying users as villains as we so often see in anti-drug campaigns; instead hard drug users are young and beautiful heroines.

As a result of this, we see a disturbing unawareness from both parties, the content creator and the viewer. With influencers, oftentimes they are ignorant of the position and power they hold over people; while it isn’t directly their responsibility to inform their viewers of the consequences that may come as a result, or even how to safely participate in a certain drug’s usage, there is a responsibility they have when it comes to the

portrayal of substance use. When impressionable audiences see how many likes they receive or the praise these creators get in their comments, they often romanticize the usage of those hard drugs and replicate the influencer’s behaviors.

The most shocking comments, however, can be found on videos of people in particularly vulnerable states, whether it be clearly showing a dependency on a substance or the struggle of overcoming addiction, a very real and prevalent problem. With the traction these conventionally attractive influencers have, people continue to portray physical symptoms of these drugs as something desirable such as the ‘Molly Eyes’ phenomenon. The ‘Molly Eyes’ phenomenon, which over time has become a meme, is a trend in Tik-

Tok comments where users of the app identify people who have taken MDMA through dilation of their pupils and say kind things to them.

This trend, alongside many others, also accentuates the long standing double standard when it comes to people of color and drugs. Simply put, when POC get involved with drug activity or paraphernalia they are labeled as thugs, dirty, or criminals. White and white passing individuals instead receive praise, oftentimes either thrown into the category of ‘beautifully tragic’ or tough and mysterious.

Not only does the dichotomy reveal how people feel about drug culture in actuality, it reveals people’s inherent nature to scrutinize POC. While being caught doing illicit substances often leads to the downfall of POC’s careers and even incarceration, we see on the other hand how drug culture can actually create careers for white people.

Oftentimes these successful creators’ messages on substances are misconstrued; people with reliance issues or addiction attempt to inform online audiences on the dangers of hard drug usage but are overlooked, instead praised for their ‘wild lifestyle.’ Hard drug usage is an escapist strategy and— with constant use— has so many consequences beyond addiction. They are especially harmful to those who struggle with mental health issues, which many who resort to repeated substance use are. Before one comments “you’re ethereal” on one of these types of posts, they should try to actually be cognizant with who they may be enabling and affecting as a result.



GRAPHIC BY ZOE MERRITT

The importance of climate education in schools

As climate crisis worsens, school should put more emphasis on environmental education

by **Mahitha Ramachadran**
SciTech Editor

When I was 13, I learned about the term climate change. My tidbits of knowledge about the state of the Earth—global warming, ozone layer damage, endangered species—felt, up to that point, isolated and out of reach, as if they were happening on a different planet. When I looked up climate change, though, I was met with a wealth of information describing rising sea levels, increased air and water pollution, and devastating natural disasters; the world of my future suddenly seemed bleak and scary.

No longer distant and trivial, climate change became a tangible, real crisis to me, something to panic about. But my parents had never told me that we were destroying the world. Neither had any of my friends or teachers. I learned about it myself, left to panic alone.

Unfortunately, this situation is all too common, but it can be prevented. Comprehensive climate education must be implemented into all schools; it is a crucial step in ensuring that all students are informed of the causes and effects of climate change while also equipping the next generation with the information and tools needed to combat it.

According to a Washington Post-Keiser Family Foundation survey conducted in 2019, 46% of teens feel they have learned little or nothing in school about the causes of climate change, and 54% of teens feel they have learned little or nothing in school about ways to reduce the effects of climate change.

It is terrifying that so many are left uninformed—or even misinformed—about an issue which will not only define their futures, but one that has already demonstrated catastrophic effects around the world.

Moreover, those that decide to

learn about climate change on their own are often stranded in a sea of information and anxiety and must learn to navigate through it with little support.

At Pine View, sixth graders take Earth and Space science. Within the state-wide curriculum, the closest standards come to addressing climate change is instructing teachers to, “Identify the impact that humans have had on Earth, such as de-

for-

estation, urbanization, desertification, erosion, air and water quality, changing the flow of water.” However, the term “climate change” does not appear even once in the entire course standards.

“It is a very sensitive topic for many people, almost political. It shouldn’t be. Science is about looking at the facts and that is how it should be taught,” sixth-grade science teacher Marie Rosander

said.

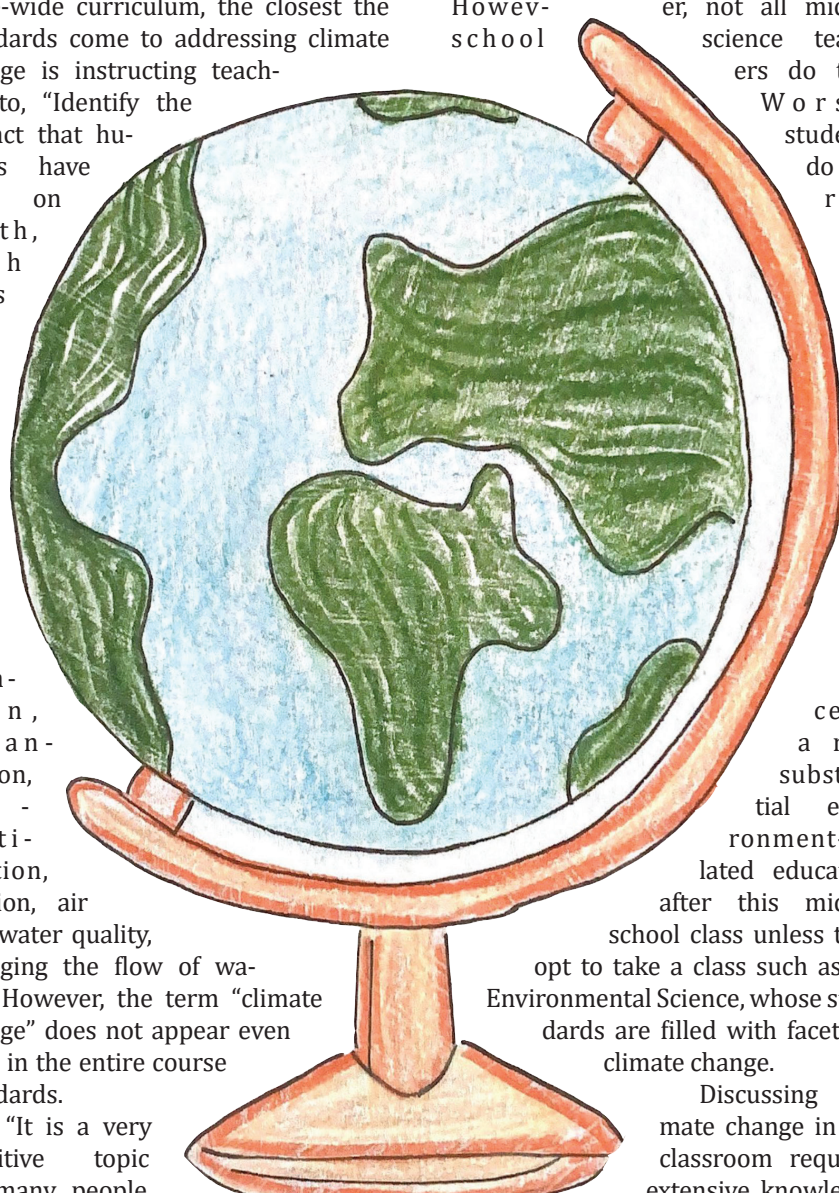
Rosander expands on the basic standards in her classroom, tackling topics like renewable energy and greenhouse gases with a focus on research and data-based conclusions. However, not all middle school science teachers do this.

Worse, students do not receive

any substantial environment-related education after this middle school class unless they

opt to take a class such as AP Environmental Science, whose standards are filled with facets of climate change.

Discussing climate change in the classroom requires extensive knowledge of the topic’s breadth and plenty of resources, as well as an acceptance of possible conflicts which may arise from the baseless controversy surrounding the subject. Ergo,



GRAPHIC BY MAHITHA RAMACHADRAN

teaching about climate change cannot be a decision which teachers are forced to make individually.

“In order to make climate change a bigger part of the curriculum, it needs to be focused on more in standards and standardized tests. That’s just the way it is,” AP Environmental Science and Marine Science teacher Jason Miller said.

Fortunately, in recent years, many states have taken the initiative to adopt standards which include climate education and provide resources for teachers to implement it into their teaching, such as the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) or alternatively, adopt new standards based on the framework of NGSS. Though not a final solution, this is an important first step in recognizing climate as an important topic in the classroom. Yet, Florida has taken neither of these actions, nor any other significant steps towards implementing climate education in schools.

Teaching climate change in schools will widen students’ perspectives, allowing them to simultaneously consider the global community and their own communities. It will empower them to learn problem-solving skills and think critically about the issues facing our world. It will inspire young scientists to pursue research and young artists to spread awareness. Perhaps most importantly, it will prevent young people from feeling alone in their climate anxiety.

“It can be overwhelming and terrifying when you start digging into [climate change],” Miller said. “That is something I keep in mind with the AP Environmental Science class; after presenting the problems, the next question is always about proposing a solution: ‘What are we doing? What works? What doesn’t work? What have we tried and what are we hoping to try in the future?’”

It is time that comprehensive climate education is implemented in all schools so that everyone starts asking these questions.

[student voices]

Which issue will define Joe Biden's presidency?

In the infancy of Joe Biden's presidency, there are a number of large-scale issues that consume the country. Pine View students discuss their thoughts on which of these issues will be the most prevalent during the duration of Biden's term.



Hailey Peace, grade 9

"Honestly, I feel like the biggest issue is just going to be Trump supporters adjusting to the idea of a new normal... we don't know exactly what's going to come to play."



Brianna Diaz, grade 12

[staff editorial]

The radical idea of policy over party

In November of 2020, Florida voters approved an amendment that raised the minimum wage to \$15 an hour. In the same month, Florida voters also approved one of the most far-right presidential candidates in recent American history. In a primarily red state, how is it possible that a progressive policy, such as raising the minimum wage to a living wage, could be passed? The answer is relatively simple. When the two-party system isn't clouding the perception of American politics in the eyes of the voter, progressivism prevails.

In such a polarizing moment in American politics, it's difficult to identify as a "progressive" without immediately being dismissed as "socialist propaganda." However, during a time when unemployment has skyrocketed, millions are fearing for their health, and individuals are going into substantial debt, these single cast ballots targeting progressive policies are integral to the well-being of America as a whole.

A couple months ago I was making small talk with my cashier at Walmart, only to learn that she was only three hours

into working a twelve hour shift. I mentioned the recent passing of the second Amendment in Florida, suggesting that it may lessen her seemingly overwhelming workload, and this was her response: "I really wish they didn't do that because now I am going to have to pay \$11 for a carton of milk."

I tried to reassure her that that wouldn't be the case, but the Walmart checkout aisle isn't the best place to have an unsolicited political debate. However, this conversation resonated with me. Since its conception, the Republican party has utilized illusive propaganda to curtail support for progressive policies, such as raising the minimum wage, despite there being little to no evidence to back up their claims.

In fact, according to a study from Upjohn institute, prices rose by just 0.36 percent for every 10 percent increase in the minimum wage. This study also found that an increase in the minimum wage actually reduced prices of goods in some instances, all while decreasing unemployment rates.

Regardless of evidence of the minimum wage overall ben-

efitting the working class and the economy as a whole, the traditional premise of American economics, substantiated by raw, capitalistic philosophy, stigmatizes it as the opposite.

But this is not unusual. The Republican party has shot down relatively moderate domestic, democratic reforms as "socialism" for as long as the two-party system can remember. Mitch McConnell even dismissed a voting rights bill (the For the People Act, directed towards eliminating partisan gerrymandering and increasing voting rights) as a socialist concept. Donald Trump calls Democrats "socialists" every time they advocate for wealth distribution or a public health care system.

As the Republican party continues its trite reiteration of partisan attacks on the Democratic party, we move further and further away from a solution. After all, if socialism means better medical care, higher wages, better living, and less poverty, maybe the capitalistic system that has controlled our nation since its inception is the problem. But that conversation's too radical — right?

It's not time for brunch yet

President Joe Biden: Obama's best friend, a man of the people, a compassionate leader with a penchant for service. His second-in-command, Vice President Kamala Harris, the girlboss to end all "#girlbosses" as the first female and POC Vice President. The pair will conquer inequality and we can all finally "go back to brunch."

The only problem is that inequality didn't begin with Trump. And it won't end with his leaving office, either. Inequality, on all fronts, is a systemic issue established far before this nation's inception, perpetuated by establishment politics (both the DNC and RNC) — while Trump undeniably worsened issues of equality during his term, it's incorrect and tone deaf to assume that these problems can be solved by the neoliberalism of Joe Biden and Kamala Harris.

As much as I want to fawn over our Vice President's pantsuit choice and convince myself that she is proof of progress — I can't. Because the truth is, Kamala Harris is not a girlboss. She was known as the "top cop" during her history as district attorney — she refused to investigate an infamous case of police brutality, declined support for a bill requiring police officers to wear body cameras, etc.

Sure, Harris' voting record has become increasingly more progressive, and there is no doubt that her representation as a WOC in such a high position of power will positively impact the next generation. But she is by no means the solution to the problems that so urgent-



Peyton Harris
Opinion Editor

ly face us. And Joe Biden, a man who promises to not to defund the police and not to ban fracking. His solution to police brutality, increasing funding for sensitivity training with officers, essentially puts a flimsy band-aid over the real issue of systemic racism.

Four years of Biden and Harris is infinitely better than four more years of Trump. And I am hopeful that meaningful legislation will be passed while Democrats maintain control of Congress — but this doesn't mean we can "go back to brunch".

We shouldn't step back from politics and feel secure in this administration. Because the truth is, we're not secure. Biden has already appointed a corporate-friendly cabinet with no diversity in ideology. His silence on meeting requests by BLM, a progressive organization partially responsible for his win, speaks volumes.

This administration must be held accountable and stick to the promises of progress they touted so eagerly on the campaign trail.

Club Fundraising: We are sad to see a decrease in financial aid and fundraising success for clubs like Model United Nations and Speech and Debate due to COVID-19.



Blood Drives: We are excited to see increased participation in blood drives. The community benefits greatly from the participation of seniors and staff.



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Pine View teacher studies and teaches abroad in Asia

by Kai Sprunger
Match Layout Artist

From one of the remote monasteries in Tibet, eighth-grade and AP English Literature Teacher Pamela Novak watched as vultures rained down from the sky to feed on a deceased person. It was her first time to ever witness a sky burial. Not only did she see this, but she experienced other memorable moments throughout her eight years of travels through India, Bhutan, Nepal, Beijing and many more countries in Asia.

She spent a semester of undergraduate school in India, Bhutan and Nepal. Novak also lived in Kathmandu with her husband while teaching in School for International Training's (SIT) Tibetan Studies Program from 2003 to 2008. She had a semester long trip to Beijing in 2013 with her family as well.

When Novak was an un-

dergraduate in college and majoring in English, she went on a semester long abroad program to study Tibetan culture and religion. She stayed with a Tibetan family for five weeks to study the Tibetan language, then trekked and camped across the most remote regions. At the end of this semester program, Novak was given a month-long period to independently study the culture and develop a 40 page-long research project based off their travels there.

This program inspired Novak to continue studying the Tibetan language and do PhD work in History of Religions. While completing her PhD, Novak took a position that SIT had offered her.

This time, she travelled with her husband, Manuel Lopez, who ended up co-directing the SIT program with her. The two had initially met in the summer of 2001 in Tibet, while they

were still students in the program.

"I loved traveling with her. She loves to travel and she loves to try new things. She has an adventurous spirit — more than I do actually. If there is something new and exciting, she loves to do it," Lopez said while reflecting on the times traveling with Novak.

The two of them lived together in Kathmandu for six years and taught wave after wave of undergraduate students.

One of Novak's most vivid memories while teaching was when their group spontaneously shifted their course because of the Maoist Revolution led by a communist party in India that wanted to overthrow the government of India.

"We were going to be on a 10 hour overnight train ride and about an hour into the trip, we got notification that there was a bomb that had gone off," Novak said.

Quickly, the program had to cancel all of their plans — including all of their lectures, speeches and scheduled activities in Varanasi — in order to protect the students. Instead of Varanasi, the group scrapped all their initial plans and made an impromptu decision to move to Bodh Gaya, which was hours away.

Despite having faced uncertainties, Novak still witnessed numerous historical and pivotal events. One of her favorite experiences was traveling with her students to the remote monasteries and nunneries in Tibet.



Pictured above is the Buddhist Stupa in Kathmandu called the 'Boudhanath.' English teacher Pamela Novak and her husband lived in Kathmandu for six years.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ASHLEY CLEMENTS

"It was quite incredible to be able to be in the presence of his Holiness, the Dalai Lama. Our students were able to ask questions about four or five questions, but just to be with him and to get a sense of how he relates with people in the world was really incredible and one of the top experiences I've had."

Not only did Novak have numerous memorable experiences, but some of her students that went with her on this program did as well. One student, Allison Kwesell, went on the Tibetan Studies study abroad program in 2003. She remembered doing a five to six day long trek in Tibet on a tall path that was 18 thousand feet in the air.

"We had yaks and some people got altitude sickness so they had to ride on a yak. It was really snowy," Kwesell said. "I specifically remember that Pam was really strong. I know that she's a high school teacher now

but she's really powerful — I was kind of impressed by her!"

Along with visiting Dharmsala, Novak even observed a sky burial.

"It's such a profound experience, because it takes one of the fundamental Buddhist teachings of the Notion of impermanence," Novak said, "everything changes and that what we feel so attached to at certain times has no use anymore. To observe something that seems so important to human body and to watch as it changes through the consumption by vultures is just a really profound and very meaningful experience. I think it's definitely affected me a lot."

Having been exposed to a plethora of cultures, Novak has shifted in her world views in many ways — academically, personally and more. From India to Nepal to Bhutan, Novak is thankful to have had these experiences and memories.



Posing at the very left of the photograph, Novak and her husband pose with fellow students. One of her previous students, Ashley Clements, is sitting at the bottom of the photograph.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ASHLEY CLEMENTS

Marine Biology teacher decides to take a 'dive'

by Joanna Malvas
Focus Editor

Being fresh out of college with certification for scuba diving in 1999, future Pine View science teacher, Jason Miller, had an ambitious plan to land a job as a scuba diving instructor at the Marine Resources and Development Foundation. In the short span of less than three weeks, Miller was packing all his belongings and moving from Canton, Ohio and into a tight, garage-sized apartment in Key Largo, Florida.

Inherently having a deep appreciation for science, Miller's zeal to delve into deep waters was catalyzed by his marine science class in high school. At the end of his school year, Miller engaged in a week-long snorkeling trip in the Keys at the same organization that he would later pursue working at. Subsequently, Miller decided to take a scuba diving course in college for his PE credit, which set him on the journey to becoming a certified diver for four and a half years.

"I'd get money to play in the ocean; it was the coolest job in the world," Miller said. "We had days where you'd get in the boat... where it was like riding through a sheet of glass. The water was so flat and so clear, that you could be going long, and looking down at 30 feet of water and you would see the stingrays moving across the bottom."

Working from 8 am to 9 pm everyday, Miller undertook an exhaustive schedule, especially during the busy seasons. His day typically consisted of morning boat trips, afternoon snorkeling trips and evening lectures and labs. To add on, he spearheaded multiple roles, including being a boat captain and a marine biology instructor while at the foundation. By the time he left his job, Miller was entrusted with one of

the top management positions as the senior field instructor. Miller demonstrated versatility within his career, earning more advanced certifications for open water diving, wreck diving and night diving through the National Association of Underwater Instructors (NAUI). With such skills under his belt, Miller encountered adventures nearly everyday in various ocean environments.

"I remember one time I had three relatively new scuba divers, and we had gone to a place called Molasses Reef," Miller said. "We had gone

to the deep end of Molasses... As I'm checking with [the divers], I see something in the water, swimming behind them, coming in our direction... As it gets closer, I realize it's a shark — and it's a big one. This big shark, a 10-foot hammerhead, swims by. He probably was within 30 ft away from us, and he was cruising the edge reef line."

Miller also had the opportunity to observe countless ocean species at an area called Grecian Rocks, including grey reef sharks, lemon sharks, nurse sharks, moray eels and a copious number of jellyfish.

"If the water was really nice, we'd go out past the reef line, and go out to really deep water, like a thousand feet deep. And we'd let people go snorkeling out there. Because, that blue — that deep ocean blue — is one of the most amazing colors. And, it's a really humbling experience to be out there in that much water," Miller said, describing his memory of Grecian Rocks.

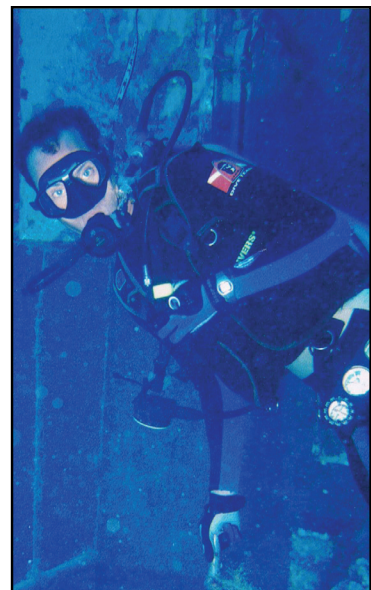
Yet, it wasn't just the exhilaration of deep water dives and witnessing aquatic life up close that made Miller's job interesting, as Miller interacted with a myriad of people. From senior citizens, to tourists, and even scientists from Purdue University, Miller guided varying batches

of people into water throughout his job. Surprisingly, one of the most pivotal groups of people that he had to take care of was a seventh-grade class from Venice Middle School. In a serendipitous manner, Miller met his future wife, the teacher of the class.

"It was almost three years later that she chaperoned another trip down there, and we were on the boat at the reef when I proposed. And everybody knew but her — all the marine lab instructors, all of her kids — all knew. I'm surprised all the kids kept the secret," Miller said.

After proposing, Miller realized it was time for a change in careers, as the couple had been in a long-distance relationship for the past few years. Due to his wife's influence, Miller decided to start teaching in Sarasota in August 2004.

Before moving to Pine View, he taught integrated freshman science at Sarasota High and biology at Booker High School. Despite moving away from deep waters, evidently, Miller dove into new challenges throughout his teaching career, as he now teaches AP Environmental Science and AP Marine



Pictured above is science teacher Jason Miller untangling a juvenile sea turtle from some marine debris. As a scuba diver, Miller encountered a multitude of marine species.

PHOTO COURTESY OF JASON MILLER

[a column]

Trying something new

by Leo Gordon
Editor-in-Chief

The last few months have been a chaos-ridden balancing act between college decisions and surprising amounts of schoolwork. Even though senior year hasn't been as easy as many of us expected it to be, things will get better soon. Before we know it, we'll have time to do the things that four years of Pine View have prevented us from doing.

I recently thought about how now, and the coming months, are a perfect time for us to try new things. As college decisions roll in, so will a wave of relief, and with it a release of prolonged stress and anxiety.

Don't worry. I'm not going to tell you to make a checklist, or anything unrealistic like that. It's just a good idea to let yourself think about the things you haven't been able to do for years, and to make a point of doing them.

Think about something you used to, or have always wanted to do. Obviously the Coronavirus limits some of those possible activities, but there's still a lot to do from home and outside.

For me, one of those lost activities is art. Honestly, I'm pretty bad at it, but it's something I enjoy doing. Plus, I was in the art show in elementary school, so I know that deep down there's some Monet in me.

Through art, I feel creative, goal-oriented and mo-



Leo Gordon, Editor-in-Chief

tivated. These qualities are especially beneficial as senioritis, a pandemic in its own right, infects Pine View seniors.

For you, that long-lost interest or activity could be music, language, video games, baking, or exercising. It really doesn't matter what you choose, as long as it takes away a bit of stress from your unexpected senior workload.

Try asking your family and friends, too, about things they'd like to accomplish with you before college begins. Those connections are stress-relievers in themselves, and with more time for friends and family, they are easier to make.

Generally, as the end of the year approaches, just remember to relax a little — we deserve it!



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H M E N T A L

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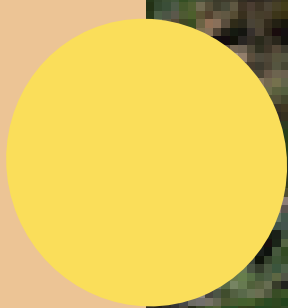
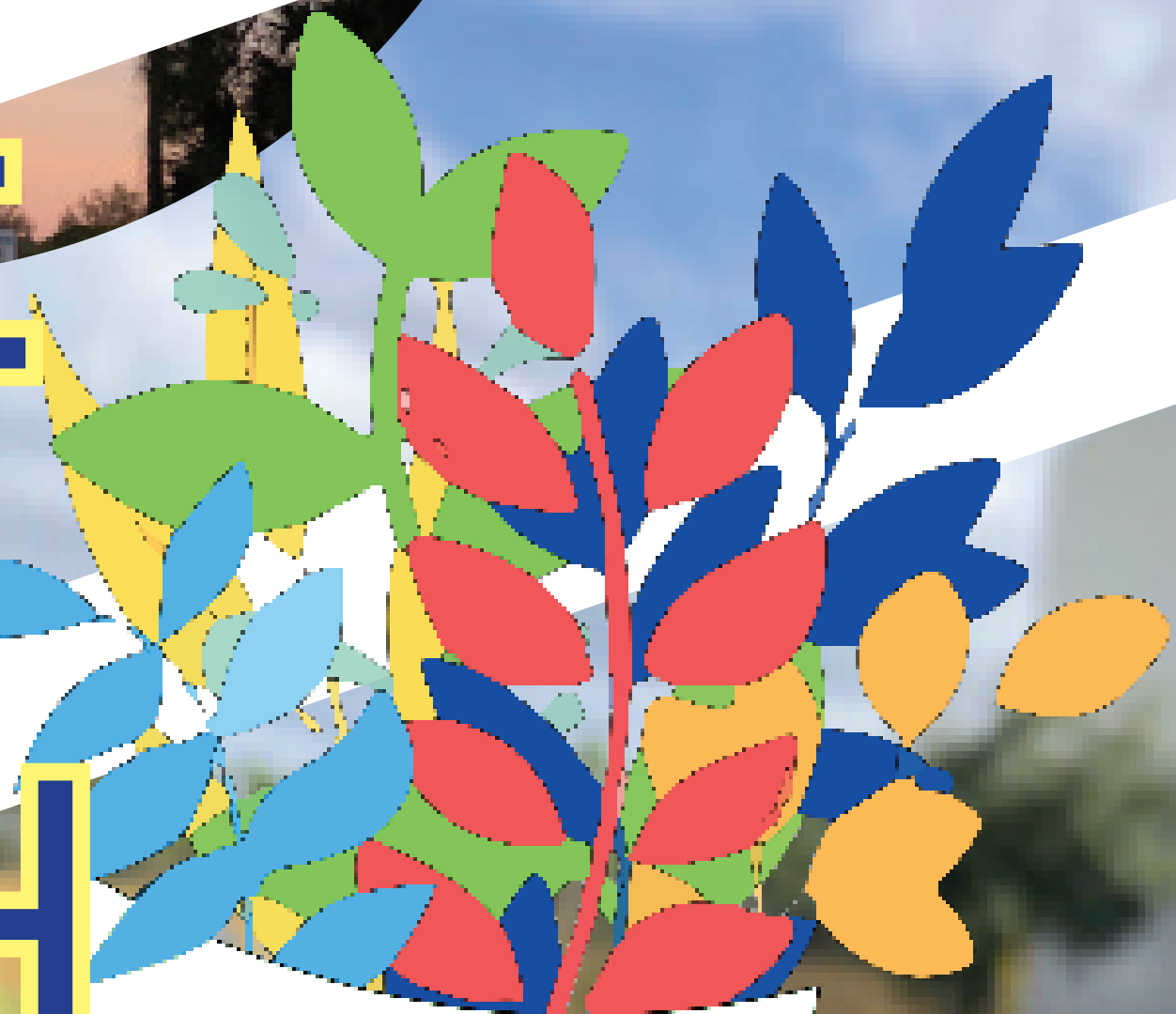
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Kenna Bartlett, 12th grader

What was one instance that caused you to notice a change in your mental health?

“In terms of my mental health [the college application process] is something that kind of stuck out for me that nobody prepares you for...Inadvertent pressure from the people around you.. And dealing with a sense of self doubt. They ask, ‘What makes you great? Why should you get to come here?’ I don’t know! I don’t know why I deserve this. You have to learn how to find the angles of yourself that are quote unquote ‘valuable.’ The college app process has given me a very in depth understanding.”

Is there a physical item/momento/photo that’s become significant to you in the last year?

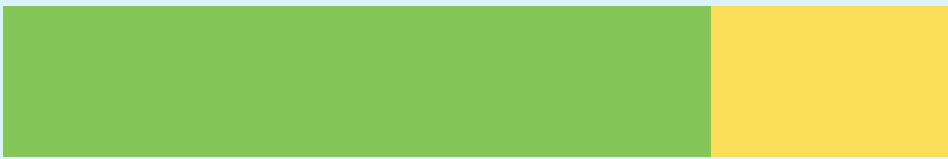
All of the stuff on my wall is something I did over quarantine. I redid my whole room, and painted my room. I found a new appreciation for my space. I liked my room beforehand but my walls were more geometrical and now I have two murals that I painted, I have all this stuff on my desk, random items, doodles, trinkets.

...For me, I like having stuff to look at that reminds me of friends, brings me happiness. I really found value in making my space my own. For some people, it might be more minimalist.”



ONE IN FOUR STUDENTS SAID THEIR DEPRESSION SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASED IN 2020.

activeminds.org

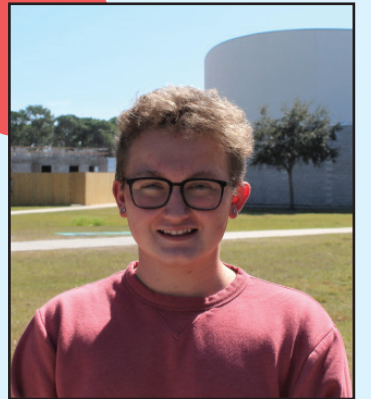
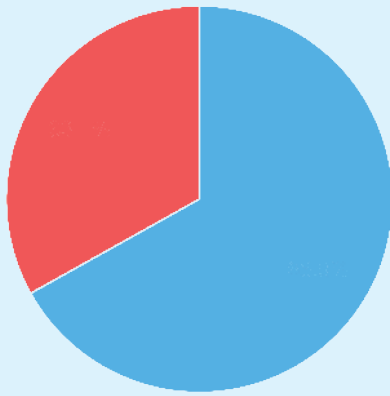


ALMOST **75 PERCENT** OF 2,051 HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE STUDENT RESPONDENTS SAID THEIR MENTAL HEALTH **WORSENE**D SOMEWHAT OR SIGNIFICANTLY SINCE THE START OF THE PANDEMIC.

activeminds.org

66.89 PERCENT OF STUDENTS REPORTED AN INCREASE IN **SUPPORTING OTHERS** WITH THEIR MENTAL HEALTH.

activeminds.org



Ethan Messier, 10th grader

What was one instance that caused you to notice a change in your mental health?

“A couple months into e-learning last year at the beginning of the pandemic when we were all just kind of locked up in our houses all of the time and we didn’t know what was gonna happen...I felt really isolated from a lot of people I cared about, and I was lost in my own mind. Almost like a depression but not clinically diagnosed or anything. That’s when I started to notice that my mental health was struggling, I felt isolated, alone, nervous about my health and mental health and why I was feeling that way.”



Scarlett Jane Whisnat, 9th grader

What’s one thing that kept you going through the pandemic?

“I’d say there were a few things. One of them is Edward Hopper paintings; I had to do a project and gather a few paintings, and I found one of his paintings, I think it was called the automat or something. And then I just spent a lot of days looking at Ed Hopper paintings and just being like, ‘Yeah, that’s me...’ It was like, finding a beauty in the being alone that everyone had to experience.”

Why do you think our generation is so impacted by mental health struggles?

I would say that [our generation is] getting diagnosed more. Older generations seem so paranoid that we are being ruined or something but I think it’s just that we are getting help more...I think it’s better.

How do you cope? Any recommendations?

Music is a big one. There are a few things I do when I’m upset, and I make super specific playlists of songs that I relate to. First off, it makes me feel less alone, and second it’s good to research the artists and see that they are doing better now. I listen to Soccer Mom a lot, and she used to write a lot of sad songs about relationships, platonic and romantic, and now she’s doing real well and engaged.

Drawing is good, going on bike rides is good, taking care of yourself is good.”



The Automat by Edward Hopper

chat with an expert

a Q&A session with clinical psychologist, former Sarasota school teacher, and gifted youth specialist Dr. Emily Sheets

What kinds of effects has the pandemic had on the mental health of teenagers?

I would say the stressors are worse than ever before because of the pandemic and the isolation that's involved. The stress of not being able to have normal social interactions, normal scholastic interactions, normal extracurricular activities thwarts kids and teens from meeting the developmental stages that they need to meet as they progress through childhood and adolescence. The isolation that's imposed seems to create high feelings of anxiety, distress, stress, confusion, worry.

I think kids are less confident, they're way more anxious, everything has an extra layer of stress because they need to worry about infection as well as their parents or their grandparents. I think everyone's going stir crazy for families that have quarantined with kids who learn from home.... It's just throwing everyone into a situation that's not normal for so long now. Anyone can manage abnormality for a little while, but we are going on a year. It's very fatiguing.

What specifically do you see contributing to this impact on mental health?

Since the beginning of the pandemic, increases in stress, anxiety, sadness, and/or depression were reported by

60-85 percent

of 2,051 high school and college students surveyed in September of 2020.

activeminds.org

It's not being able to live life normally with things that teenagers do like sleepovers and football games and going places together and just being able to easily and readily be together. As children move into teenagerhood, the greater degree of input comes from their peer group instead of from their parents, and the opportunities are just not as available for that to occur now, which creates this isolation and sense of distress and sadness.

How would you compare the mental health effects the pandemic has had on teens to the effects it has had on adults?

I think the effect is magnified on teens because they are not able to live their life in a developmentally healthy way. They're not able to have the kinds of social interactions that are needed, the kind of spontaneous get-togethers or easy connections that we took for granted before. So that creates a higher sense of isolation, that creates a higher sense of loneliness and I think a lot of kids are probably not developing social skills that they need right now. There's just such a sense of loss. Plus, a lot of families have had a negative economic impact from this, so teens are coping with more stress from their parents.

How has this situation impacted students who were already struggling with their mental health before the pandemic?

TW: suicide

That is a huge problem. The child is already vulnerable to the anxiety and the stress and feelings of self doubt and difficulty getting going and lack of motivation and not understanding what the point of all this work is, and then to add this higher level of isolation and stress on top. Reno school district in Nevada had to reopen their schools because they had 18 teen suicides. I think there's a much greater proportion of kids who, as you say, were already vulnerable to anxiety and depression who have gotten hopeless. It's very scary and very serious.

From March through October of 2020, mental health-related hospital emergency department visits, ages 12 to 17 rose

31 percent

compared to the same time frame in 2019.

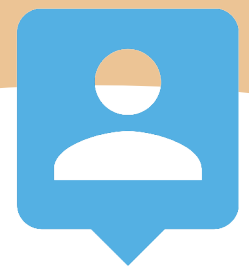
The National Syndromic Surveillance Program

As a professional, what is your perspective on increased awareness of mental health and mental health issues?

I'm very happy that that increase has happened, and I want it to stay there. If I could have my wish, I would have adults understand that childhood and adolescence are very difficult times with specific developmental steps that need to be experienced and mastered. You need to be able to fail, you need to be able to find your way with friends, you need to be broken up with, you need to try and not succeed, you need to try some more and succeed, you need to get in trouble. You need to do these things in order to develop the resilience that you need for adulthood, for life.

What would you say to a high school student who is struggling with their mental health and doesn't know how to navigate that?

They need to connect with an adult that they trust, that's the most important thing to do. A teacher, a counselor, a parent if they feel comfortable with that, one of their friend's parents, even call up someone they don't know, call up a psychologist, reach out for help. Call somebody, call an adult. It's a lot to put on another kid, that doesn't work as well, but definitely they need to say 'I don't feel safe, I don't feel good, my mind is playing tricks on me not understanding what the point of things are.' Once you go down that rabbit hole with depression, the quality of your thoughts starts to change, and you're not logical anymore. Your perspective is so distorted that you can easily rationalize or it might make sense to hurt yourself. So you can't get to that scary place. You need to stop and ask for help right away.



RATES OF DEPRESSION AMONG TEACHERS
ALMOST DOUBLED, WITH MORE THAN A THIRD OF
 EDUCATORS INDICATING **DEPRESSIVE SYMPTOMS**.

Study of Early Education in Louisiana COVID-19 Survey Report No. 2

One Year of Pandemic Teaching: Perspective

“When you’re in class you don’t need to unmute and hop in to a conversation. But when you have to go through the motions of pressing a button, most just decide not to talk,” music teacher Seth Gardner said.

With the onset of Covid-19, certain conditions have become a fact of life—Zoom, minimal interaction,

and uncertainty of the future.

For virtual students, the small interactions that made up everyday life have vanished;

in classrooms, students and teachers constantly assess the risks they take by sharing a space; a sense of stress lingers on everyone’s mind.

“I miss their voices, and I miss the conversations that we are able to have in class, even the side conversations,” Gardner said. “In the past, we would do trips. [The choir] would perform in April in Washington. It was an outside experience, and something as small as Universal and musical plays, have been changed. I miss that dynamic. You don’t get those non-academic conversations anymore.”

While the ongoing pandemic has affected communities and individuals in large ways—worry over vulnerable loved ones,

inability to go to school or see a friend face-to-face—for many, it is the smaller details that became most challenging.

Social Studies teacher Robin Melton said she worries about her students getting a proper education while balancing her home-life and family.

“I’m scared to take a day

off—is that a day where my kids can’t learn? My daughter started kindergarten this year, but what if she gets a cold? I’d be quarantined, too. Last year I might have taken a mental health day but can’t do that anymore. Last year I took a day for my daughter for her last day of preschool but can’t do this year. Not from admin, but it’s just how I feel,” Melton said.

For students, missed social time leads to loneliness, distractions become harder to ignore, and learning is simply more difficult. There is such difficulty in overcoming any situation that no one has experienced before, and this difficulty does include administrators and teachers.

At the beginning of the school year, a precedent was set: this year would be different. What was done in prior years would simply not

be possible this year.

“Once school started, we all had to adjust our teaching styles and expectations in the classroom to make sure we were keeping safety in mind,” Melton said. “We could no longer do group activities like we used to, especially in a mobile learning cottage. Due to limited space, moving around the room would be limited as well.”

Social studies teacher Roma Jagdish said that despite her love for teaching social studies, the strain of pandemic teaching was taking a toll on her—causing her to feel farther away from both her family and her students. Jagdish goes home every day exhausted, five days a week. She’ll bring her daughter dinner and soon after, sits down for four hours of grading and planning.

“I have family in Singapore and my mom is very sick and I can’t visit her. She’s eighty-four, but I may not be there if she passes on. I wish I could go home to see her,” Jagdish said.

Although the changes make for a challenging year,

it has given teachers like Melton, Jagdish, Gardner, and the rest of the faculty a chance to add unique and cheerful elements to their classrooms.

Jagdish used her doc camera to share online with students in AP Human Geography for a cultural project, including various pieces such as decorated masks from different cultures. Melton held her AP World History Empire Autopsy project on the website Sway to help online and in-person students collaborate. Gardner used websites like Teams and Nearpod to bond students and prepare them for choir concerts.

“It caused me, in a good way, to rethink how I teach,

the activities I teach, and to keep improving on yourself, it challenged me as a teacher and to think outside the box,” Melton said.

The challenges of taking care of themselves and teaching two classes at the same time has taken its toll. Teachers are working hard to be as strong as they can to keep moving on. Even through all the troubles and tribulations of this year, their only wish is to return to normalcy.

“We want the kids back. Not just as observers, but as participants,” Jagdish said.

75 percent

of 3,086 teachers surveyed reported working more hours, with nearly 20 percent working greater than 15 hours more than pre-COVID.

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards

24 percent

of respondents reported that professional learning support from schools or districts were “fully adequate.”

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards

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