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A Shoe-in

National Technical Honor Society secretary senior Xavier Quintero donates a pair of sneakers for a shoe drive hosted by the club outside room B13. Students and staff may donate gently used shoes by Jan. 16. “The cause for the shoe drive is to help the homeless or anyone in need of actual shoes,” Quintero said. “I’m really hopeful for the total amount [donated] and surprised that people are bringing in full bags to help the people and environment.”
(Photo by Lucas Lim)



05 Opinion

Needless purchases are made by people largely influenced by “aesthetic” culture.
(Illustration by Lucas Lim)



10 Scene

Solve the mystery of Marissa Meyer’s “The House Saphir”.
(Photo by Taryn Schilz)



14 Arts

Choir charms its audience with their winter concert.
(Photo by Summer Do)

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mission

We, *The Hoofprint* staff, strive to inform the student body in an accurate, timely and objective manner. We also recognize the freedom of the press and speech given to us under California Education Code 48907. Through our coverage, we hope to represent the distinct character of the Walnut community.

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Vaping in bathrooms has become more common

School staff implement drug preventative measures to reduce vaping.

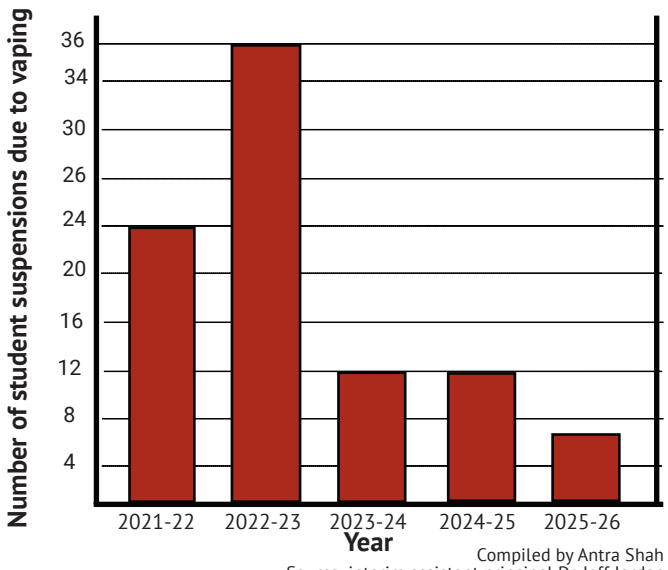
Hazel Li
News editor

Throughout recent years, vaping in bathrooms has become a prevalent issue on campus.

As signs of addiction worsen among high schoolers in California, vaping has seen a surge in daily usage. In order to address addiction and prevent the rise of students vaping in bathrooms, the school has implemented new measures to inhibit nicotine abuse.

"People will come tell us there's vaping in the bathroom, that something is happening. Part of our due diligence is to try to create deterrence. If I put an adult out there, that might deter somebody from wanting to walk in there to vape, knowing that they could potentially get caught. That's why we have [administrators and security guards] walking around campus," interim assistant principal Dr. Jeff Jordan said.

With different flavors, accessibility and products designed to look like everyday objects, vaping companies employ several strategies to appeal to a younger audience. These tactics influence how students interact with vapes and increase difficulty in detecting nicotine products.



Compiled by Antra Shah
Source: interim assistant principal Dr. Jeff Jordan

"I would say in the past five to six years, [vaping] has been increasingly worsening because it's easier to get vapes and they're making vapes that are not easily detectable. So as they are advancing and hiding, we have to progress in detecting," Grade level Coordinator Corolar Schultz said.

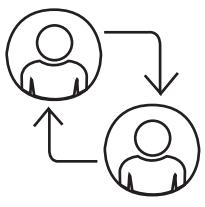
While each circumstance is navigated differently, there are general steps that the school undergoes to handle students caught vaping. The school first assesses the type of vape, determining the substance that is being used like nicotine. Then, they contact the student's parents to inform them about their student. From there, the school investigates to better understand the situation: uncovering how long the student has been vaping, hearing what the parents say and talking to students. After collecting information, they decide how to handle the situation. Depending on the student's needs, there are different programs offered to help students.

"The big thing is that we want to help people stop [vaping]. We have programs [for addiction] and if you are doing it for other reasons, we want to counsel and talk to you. We have outside therapy that we can recommend because addiction is such a strong thing that follows you for a lifetime and can control you. If we can stop it right now and help you with it by catching you, then I think we've made a difference in our student lives," Schultz said.

Beyond programs and consulting, suspensions are sometimes given as a last resort under serious and specific circumstances.

"We don't want to suspend our students. [Instead], we look for alternatives because the goal is to stop them from vaping. It's not to punish or keep them away from school. It's to help them stop it because we know it leads to addiction and if you're addicted to something, then you have a less chance of being successful in life itself," Schultz said. Ω

Q&A: Why did you start vaping?



Anonymous, 10: "It's addicting, but at the same time, it's just something to talk about with people. You can make a lot of friends just from doing stuff like that since it's something you find you have in common with a lot of people. [I used to vape, but] I quit because it messes with your lungs, especially for athletics. People in marching band aren't very fond of doing that kind of stuff either."



Anonymous, 12: "When middle school started, it was something to distract my mind from everything that was going on: life, family and relationships. And then, it just kind of turned into like a normal thing. [In my middle school], everyone did it and so it was just a normal thing. I looked for the fix in the wrong places, you know. Later, I realized that it just didn't help. The high would wear away, and life was still there."

Compiled by Antra Shah

Walnut's vaping policies and procedure

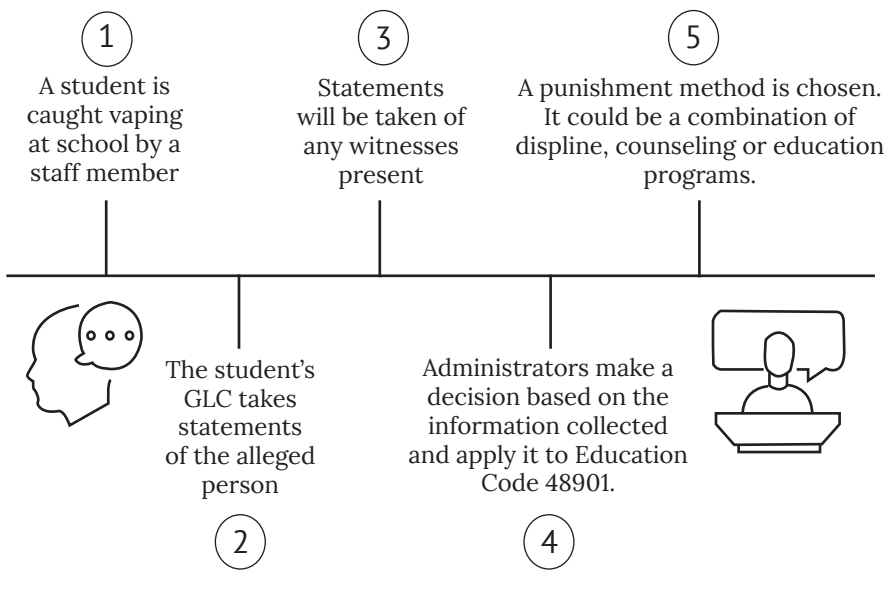
The school follows a set process to manage students vaping on campus.

According to the Student Handbook:

Nicotine Products: "Possession or use of tobacco or any product containing tobacco or nicotine could result in suspension or expulsion."

Tobacco Use Prohibited: "As of July 1, 1995, tobacco use is prohibited on all school district grounds and in all district buildings and vehicles. This includes the stadium at football games or other athletic contests."

Delegating Punishments: "Students receive three 'strikes,' each with an increasing punishment. Students can receive up to five days of suspension."



Stricter measures address student vaping

Programs and codes help minimize usage of nicotine products.

California Education Code 48901 was amended to prohibit students from using and possessing electronic devices that contain nicotine or other vaporized liquids in 2016.

Programs such as nicotine education programs act as correctional programs for students found vaping along with the punishment. The purpose is to inform students about what they put in their body.

According to interim assistant principal Dr. Jeff Jordan, before stricter policies were implemented, suspensions in California schools were staggering. Many schools would suspend students for inconsequential reasons, resulting in increasing suspensions. Seeing these skyrocketing suspensions, legislatures started enforcing stricter rules, ensuring that students undergo corrections before facing suspensions.

Source: Interim assistant principal Dr. Jeff Jordan and Grade Level Coordinator Jenny Alegre

Faculty supports students facing peer pressure

Campus provides several resources for students to rely and turn to.

Amber Yang
Arts editor

Peer pressure is one of the factors that contribute to abusing drugs such as nicotine.

The Merriam-Webster dictionary states that peer pressure is "a feeling that one must do the same things as other people of one's age in order to be liked or respected by them." Social norms also play a role in how people could feel peer pressured to use drugs. School psychologist Rob Coad believes that there are two contrasting aspects of peer pressure.

"Sometimes peer pressure can be positive. [However], negative peer pressure [pulls you off] of who you are [as a person]. That's something we want to have our students be able to identify, when they're being pulled in a direction that's not positive," Coad said.

According to an article by the National Library of Medicine, "adolescents with fewer (less than four) Alcohol and Other Drug friends (AOD) were more likely to be abstinent [to be sober] than those with four or more AOD-using friends."

"Everybody in high school is trying to figure out who they are and what they want to be like. There's pressure from all of these different groups, whether it be 'maybe come to a party and try things that you wouldn't normally do' or 'try a new activity.' I think that pressure is constant," Coad said.

Peer pressure holds a significant factor in not only substance abuse but also in social settings. Students may feel pressured by their peers and turn to substances in order to be liked or perceived in a certain way. Grade Level Coordinator Jennifer Tucker acknowledges how difficult it is to say no and suggests students make up excuses or directly say no. Other advice that would be typically given to students would be to stand their ground and to set boundaries. A major factor that plays a role when advice is being given is mental health.

"For me, I look at who the student is and what I feel that they're capable of. [Questions I would ask myself] are, 'Do they need some help trying to get out of the situation?' Tucker said.

According to the 2021 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, it is estimated that 21 percent of teens who have used an illegitimate substance at least once did so because of peer pressure. School psychologist Jena Muhr advises students to always tell someone if they feel hesitant or scared to reach out about peer pressure.

"Make your own decisions and do what you know to be right. And if you are feeling like 'just this one time' or something [similar] it is probably not the right decision to make," Muhr said. Ω



"I wouldn't say it's typically advisement, but rather conversing. It's not so much like,'Oh you should or shouldn't do this.' We would instead just open conversations. [We'd ask,] 'Have you been open to any other methods?' Maybe they didn't realize they had more options. [This may lead] them to find a healthier way of responding to things they're going through rather than something like vaping."

Jonathan Castellanos, 12

"We give them options, and we [ask if] they can see [these options] working. We discuss possible options with them and help them take initiative on their own. We sometimes try to ask them other questions like, 'What else helps you cope?' We try to get to the root cause of why they are smoking or vaping and introduce them to potential other methods [to cope]."

Avie Lin, 12



Peer Counseling students explain how to manage peer pressure with substance abuse

Compiled by Hazel Li and Antra Shah

Q&A: Have you faced peer pressure with drugs?



Angel Bennett, 9

"[For example,] if you're sitting down at lunch, with your friends and they ask you if you with a [vape] and say that [you should try it] , they're going to keep on asking you, and eventually, you're going to give into it."



Leo Li, 11

"I personally have not experienced any peer pressure that's related to drug abuse at all, but I also have not seen anybody else experience any peer pressure related to drugs as well. But my opinion is, we shouldn't have any peer pressure related to drugs. You shouldn't do any drugs at this age or whatsoever, at all."



Alaina Wainwright, 11

"It was a couple years ago [when] I went to my friend's birthday party. She's older than me, and I didn't know anyone else there. But we were all in her room, just hanging out. All of them started smoking a joint, and I was only one who doesn't smoke. They were like, 'Oh, just have some, it's fine, it's whatever. All of us are smoking anyway, it's fine.' And I [just said] no."

Compiled by Iayan Bhanot, Summer Do and Antra Shah

Survey: How do students view the use of substances?

Drug Facts

Current statistics (based on a survey of 165 students gathered through Google Forms)	***Percentage***
Students feel underage substance abuse has become normalized	62.9%
Students feel pressured by their peers to try using substances	5.4%
Students have witnessed smoking/vaping near school bathrooms	31.7%
Students have smelled smoke or vapes in school bathrooms	52.1%
Students believe that friends have little influence over their decisons regarding substance abuse	17.9%

Warnings

Vaping may cause lung inflammation and damage, increased risk of asthma, pneumonia, damage to blood vessels and nicotine addiction.

Smoking may cause lung disease, premature aging and many types of cancer.

Compiled by Hazel Li and Antra Shah
Sources: The Center for Disease Control and Prevention and The Cleveland Clinic

Healthy vs. unhealthy coping methods to deal with stress

Healthy Coping Methods

Yoga/meditation



Sharpens cognitive abilities.
Lowers levels of stress hormones.
Increases production of endorphins and brings more oxygenated blood to the brain.

Exercise

Treats anxiety disorders and clinical depression.
Reduces the body's stress hormones like adrenaline and cortisol.



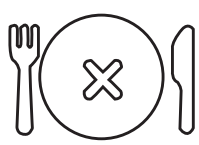
Spending time with friends



Protects against depression and anxiety.
Lowers blood pressure when people talk to supportive friends.

Unhealthy Coping Methods

Overeating



Stress releases the hormone cortisol into the bloodstream, increasing hunger.
Most people like to turn to comfort food or junk food, increasing stress.

Social isolation

Increases risk of depression, poor sleep quality and a harsh cognitive decline.



Emotional outbursts/lashing out:



Can damage relationships.
Create a sense of loneliness and increases emotional distress.

Compiled by Hazel Li and Antra Shah

Editorial

Balanced cell phone rules aim to support learning while respecting student needs

As the first semester of the 2025-2026 school year draws to an end, the Walnut Valley Unified School District has begun to gather feedback in preparation for implementing a schoolwide and district-wide cell phone policy. Faculty and parents are being sent a form requesting their opinions on students' cell phone usage, which will then be consolidated to create a policy in compliance to Assembly Bill 3216, the Phone-Free School Act. This act is scheduled to go into effect by July 1, 2026, requiring school districts in California to develop a policy limiting the use of smartphones on campus.

Within the survey, questions focus on learning, safety and consistency as the district seeks to find a suitable balance. However, in order to establish realistic and meaningful regulations, we urge the district to also recognize students' opinions, as they are the ones affected by the policy. Students can often be seen checking social media or browsing the web on their phones, causing disruptions during class. On the other hand, they are also used as educational tools, such as the calculator and study apps, to supplement learning.

After years of unrestrained cell phone usage, students may find it difficult to acclimate to drastic changes in policy. Cell phones have become an ingrained part of students' social and personal lives, whether in organizing a meetup with friends, googling an unfamiliar phrase or drafting an email to a teacher. Even if regulations are established with good intentions, in the end, a policy ignored is a policy rendered useless.

Instead of enacting strict rules that prevent cell phone usage altogether, restrictions should be placed to regulate their usage. This flexibility allows students to check on their messages during breaks and stay connected with others while simultaneously maintaining focus during classes. The problem is not cell phones themselves but rather how and how much students use them.

Currently, the Rule of 5 allows cell phone use in classes with teacher permission, leading to inconsistent regulations. Some classes allow students to use their phones, some prohibit them while others offer bonus points for students to voluntarily store their phones in a designated area. This inconsistency, when improperly conveyed, can foster confusion and frustration in students. A clear policy must be made, taking student input into consideration to establish expectations. Additionally, regulations must be enforced uniformly and consistently throughout the school with fair and transparent violation penalties.

The nuance of cell phone usage should be considered in the formation of long-term guidelines in order to create a safe and conducive learning environment. Only then can these rules be used to improve learning rather than simply becoming another rule to add to the lengthy student handbook. Ω

How to get your opinion published:

If you are interested in sharing your viewpoint, we accept replies to articles or comics/political cartoons. Email to So Hee Tan at stan@wvusd.org. Include your name, grade and phone number. (Anonymous works will not be published)

Group projects are not fair just because they prepare us for life

Group projects show how teamwork collapses when only a few contribute.



Drifting through work | Hoofprint students depict how group work leads to zoning out, with one on a laptop, another on a phone and a third with their feet up. These often leave one person carrying the assignment. (Photo by Trae Contryman)

Rylyn Wang
Manager

Group work is supposed to prepare us for the real world. They build teamwork, communication and leadership skills we need beyond the classroom. And in theory, I get it. In the workforce, not one person can work on a project alone. Also in the workforce, not everyone pulls their weight.

I expect to face incompetence someday in an office, not in a classroom surrounded by peers who should know how to do their part. Being super transparent, most of us are all working for that good grade. But what makes it worse in this high school setting is that we can't call HR on these people because they're "friends." You can't call them out without seeming harsh, and you can't ignore them without looking arrogant.

When group projects actually function, I love to bounce ideas off others where everyone is contributing equally, but it's rare. More often, "group work" turns into one person leading the group and taking on the responsibility to put everything together. It's funny when I see someone with their laptop open "researching" when their screen clearly shows a Discord chat instead of the topic we're discussing.

Sometimes, when I get paired up with certain people, I see the relief written on their faces. They would joke, "She's definitely carrying" or "Oh, I'm set." On one hand, it's flattering because I like that my reputation for working hard precedes me. But on the other hand, it's frustrating. Does this excuse you from trying? Does it let you do nothing then? Are you going to just sit back and let yourself be carried?

Too many people care about how they're perceived. Nobody wants to be the "bossy" one who tells everyone what to do, even if it's necessary. Nobody wants to create an awkward environment over something as minor as a group project. So instead, we stay silent, do the extra work and pretend it's fine, because at this point, preserving a friendship feels more important than demanding fairness.

If group projects are meant to prepare us for the real world, then they need to be restructured so people are held accountable. Progress checks or even anonymous peer evaluations would help because, honestly, our generation feels safer when names aren't attached to critique.

In a way, group projects do prepare us for the adult world, as we learn to deal with people who don't care as much as we do. But, my classmates aren't coworkers I can clock out on. They're peers and friends my age, so they should know better. Ω

Politics and sports should not intersect

Celebrity posts online blur the line between what is real and what is fake.

George Wang
Print editor-in-chief

When footballer Cristiano Ronaldo posted a picture of himself with President Donald Trump in the Oval Office on Instagram, I didn't think anything of it. However, when I opened Instagram again and scrolled upon an AI-generated video posted by Trump of him and Ronaldo playing soccer, I was caught off guard, not sure if I should laugh or be concerned.

Unlike the deepfake memes of Jake Paul dressed in a skirt and top, this video showed two of the most influential public figures interacting. For many people, seeing Ronaldo photographed alongside Trump raised questions about why these political leaders utilize public figures to promote their reputation.

By placing himself next to Ronaldo, even through AI-generated content, Trump connected his reputation to one of the most popular athletes on the planet. By appearing next to a celebrity, a politician can make themselves seem more relatable and more admired.

What made this more intriguing was how the Democrats responded. Instead of ignoring the video, the official Democrat social media page created their own edit using Lionel Messi. Their message was essentially, "if Trump gets Ronaldo, then we get Messi." The edit was intended to be funny, but it showed how both sides treat celebrities as part of their political campaigning.

These posts reveal the problem of how politics today is less about policies and more about online attention. A picture with a famous athlete can get more engagement than a speech or a serious announcement. With video-generation technology, politicians can now create realistic videos of moments that never occurred.

Ultimately, the question we should be asking is: Should politicians rely on celebrity collaborations to win the support of the public? Should athletes and other public figures be pulled into political battles? Voters must be able to tell the difference between when a politician is being sincere and when content is created just to gain attention online. Ω

Social media "aesthetics" cause overconsumerism

Trends make everyday items seem essential, pushing people to constantly buy more than they need.

Antra Shah
News editor

Social media has led to a rise in overconsumerism because of how quickly trends shift and aesthetics appear.

Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok or Pinterest actively market these ideals, turning everyday routines into curated images that encourage constant buying. However, many people don't realize that this overconsumption ultimately leads to wasted money and environmental costs.

One of the clearest examples is BookTok, a TikTok community centered on reading, which has turned books into aesthetic objects rather than sources of knowledge or entertainment. Books are supposed to be well-read and cherished. A $20 price tag isn't worth simply reading it once just to show others you read it. BookTok promotes buying physical books for the "aesthetics," even though social media has also begun to promote eco-friendliness.

While some people enjoy the feel of having a physical book, libraries have seen a decline in the number of books being borrowed. As someone who loves reading books and has bought several in the past, I can confidently say that besides reading "Dork Diaries #2" seven times, I have only read every other book that I have bought once or twice, such as "Educated" by Tara Westover, leading them to wait on the shelves for a couple of years before they get donated.

Although BookTok was originally made to share books and ideas with people around the world, it has gradually shifted into a space where books are romanticized and promoted more as aesthetic objects than for their content. TikTok has also contributed to other trends, such as the "performative male" aesthetic that influenced people to buy labubus and start drinking matcha in order to conform to certain standards.

Social media platforms have coined the term "microtrends" because of how fast the trends

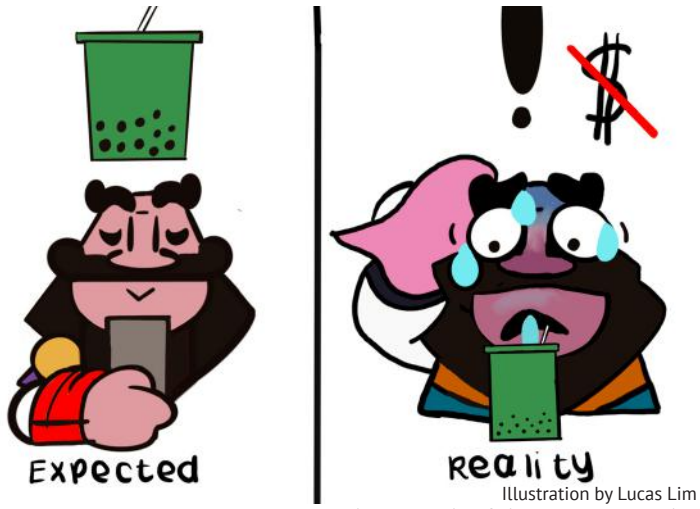


Illustration by Lucas Lim

rise and die, but the physical objects people buy to go along with the trend, for however long it lasts, continue to last in landfills.

One day, a $60 Stanley cup will be trending — even though it may not hydrate better than a $10 water bottle — and bought by people because it's aesthetic and matches the "clean girl" or "gym aesthetic." The influence of social media leads to people wanting things since it's popular, not because it is useful or needed. Even now, the trend of having a Stanley cup has largely died down, as Stanleys have been replaced by Owalas, and more recently, by micro Hydro Flasks–fitting for the trend.

Social media aesthetics may look appealing, but they often disguise the reality of overconsumerism–after all, there's only so many books or water bottles one person could truly need. Ω

Is the mainstream diluting real fandom and identity?

Viral niche films turn genuine fandom into curated performance, leaving longtime fans behind.

Audrey Yang
Arts editor

Once, avid fans of niche movies were seen as obsessive nerds in tight-knit communities. Now, these people find themselves in fandoms with new fans from social media platforms, eager to pursue the idea of authenticity without considering their personal passions.

Nerd culture becoming mainstream contains many underlying issues. With the rise of social media and performative personas, individuals strive to appear unique to their peers. They carefully curate their hobbies and interests, drawing inspiration from fandoms that positively contribute to their public image. In the process, these individuals fail to appreciate their own unique identity, neglecting the passions that truly align with their characters.

Select niche entertainment, such as the "Coraline" movie and "The Maze Runner" movie trilogy, has especially attracted viewers online. The themes and aesthetics of these productions appeal to those who peruse online platforms, resulting in a widespread movement where everyone claims they are true fans in the fandoms.

For instance, "Coraline" includes intricate visuals and a thrilling plot that contribute to the wonder of the film. I have been a fan of Coraline ever since elementary school, appreciating the movie's originality and comforting atmosphere. Yet in recent years, "Coraline" has gained immense popularity on TikTok. Content creators produce theories about the Other Mother, while users make movie edits. People claim that they love "Coraline," which, in previous years, was a niche film that many deemed too dark for children.



Illustration by Ava Kaleah David

The movie is now one of the most popular and successful stop-motion movies. Yet, I wonder if these fans truly appreciate the wonder of the film, or if they're going along with the online community in the pursuit of surface-level originality. The complicated layers of the plot can be used to fuel the idea of an intellectual identity without actual commitment to the meaning of the film, which ultimately undermines the credibility of new fans.

On the other hand, "The Maze Runner" movie trilogy has also gained immense popularity. Dystopian movies have long since become subjects of adoration, particularly evident in the rise of teen dystopian entertainment in recent years. However, I have noticed that so-called supporters of the trilogy are more fixated on the physical appearances of cast members such as Dylan O'Brien, who played Thomas, than the actual plot. Additionally, claiming to be a follower of the fandom can be viewed by others as an interesting quality that stands out in the backdrop of other heavily saturated dystopian movies, such as "The Hunger Games" trilogy.

Despite these factors, the accessibility of niche entertainment can combat the traditional nerd stereotype and help indie filmmakers reach a bigger audience. Furthermore, this shift can encourage people to pursue their interests without the fear of peer judgment in an inclusive environment.

While nerd culture being mainstream can give recognition to underappreciated entertainment and provide exposure to new interests, it is more often the outcome of performing for the public. As a result, old fans are left in a community of followers who lack actual appreciation for the fandoms that they have genuinely supported for years, where personal passions are abandoned for the pursuit of superficial authenticity. Ω

George's Gist



Toxic circles poison friend groups

George Wang
Print editor-in-chief

Honestly, I don't get it. It's strange to hear one of my friends badmouthing another one of our mutual friends, only to act as if they're BFFs the next day. It's even more off-putting to see them posing for photos during group hangouts, grinning from ear to ear and complimenting each other, just to complain how annoying the other is later that night. What bothers me the most? Planning hangouts in the group chat when we should be concerned about whether we even like each other or not.

I love my friends, but our forced friend group dynamic reveals the artificiality of bonds in big groups or cliqués. Almost as if bound by mere obligation rather than true affection, a secret animosity forms between individuals and subgroups are created as a result.

Maybe that's the problem with high school friendships: they're built on forced proximity rather than genuine connection. We see each other every day, share the same jokes, complain about the same teachers, but when these coincidental similarities disappear, the friend group does, as well.

In turn, people start avoiding each other because they don't find enjoyment in interacting with the group. There's always the "lone wolf," who chooses to stay away from hangouts because there is nothing to look forward to. As an observer, it hurts to see the fragility between some of my friends, and the possibility that after graduation, the friend group will cease to exist.

But I think what makes all of this worse is how no one ever says what they really feel. We suppress our annoyance and pretend everything's fine because there's always the risk that if you speak up, you'll be the one who broke the group apart. So instead of confronting problems, people just talk about them behind each other's backs, whispering their various frustrations.

There's no other solution except to confront the issue. No friend group is perfect, but by not being afraid to have empathetic yet firm conversations, we can prevent resentment and encourage a healthier friend group dynamic. Ω

Driven to learn: a peek inside the lives

Between long commutes and juggling extracurriculars, sophomore Mia Olivares's identity and strengths are shaped.



Painting the road for success | Sophomore Mia Olivares juggles multiple commitments in school for ASB and girls soccer. With so many responsibilities and so little time to complete them, Olivares counts off her goals to complete for the day as she drives back home for an hour. "[The long commute] helps me be more responsible because I have to make sure I pack everything the night before and to finish homework early. It's helped me grow as a person," Olivares said. (Photo courtesy of Mia Olivares and illustrations by Ava Kaleah David and Angie Hsu)

Angie Hsu
Feature editor

It's 6 a.m., but rather than being tucked in bed, sophomore Mia Olivares is already on the go for her daily hour drive to school with her mom. With music playing in the background, she lightly naps before preparing herself for the day ahead.

Olivares is an Allen Bill student, making the daily commute from her residence in Rialto to Walnut High School, about 34 miles. On top of maintaining her academics, she balances both club and school soccer, playing on the varsity girls team, and serves an active role in Associated Student Body (ASB) as a member of the hospitality, pep rally and athletics committees.

"I'm really tired throughout the day because I leave my house really early so sometimes I just try to sleep in the car, but it's hard to go back to sleep when you're already up and about," Olivares said.

To maximize efficiency, Olivares prioritizes getting tasks done at school, putting her all into her activities so that by 10:30 p.m., she can sleep. In the morning, she wakes up as early as 5 a.m. with a schedule running in her head for the rest of the day.

"[Living far] has taught me a lot because I have to use my time really efficiently; if I'm sitting around doing nothing, and I have homework to do later, then sometimes I'm not going to be able to finish it," Olivares said. "I have to use my time when I can and make sure I have enough time to eat in between practice and still do my homework. [With my extracurriculars too], it's just a matter of time management."

> *"[My routine] is worth it at the end of the day because I know it's going to help me in the long run."*

The long days are the biggest challenge for her, especially when she is juggling ASB activities and soccer practices and games, sometimes getting home as late as 10 p.m. Other conflicts can occur with her parents' schedules. With her mom working in Diamond Bar, she has to wait until 4:15 p.m. for her to come pick her up — even on the days she does not have practice or conflicting schedules. Through it all, she tries to keep a positive mindset.

"It's hard when I have school events, or my friends want to hang out because I have to stay [longer], but then, I still have to drive an hour home," Olivares said. "I try to maintain a positive mindset. I remember that I have friends over here [that] make it better and that it is worth it at the end of the day, because I know it's going to help me in the long run."

Aside from her mom working in Diamond Bar, her decision to continue coming to Walnut was driven by her friends, the education and soccer program. Olivares originally grew up in Walnut, then she moved to Cypress in fifth grade when her great grandmother — who had lived with her family — passed away. Being near Long Beach, she enjoyed the proximity to the beach and ocean but then was faced with another hard goodbye when her grandparents needed aid. Moving even farther to Rialto during the summer between seventh and eighth grade was hard on her, but she now embraces her new environment in Walnut.

> *"I don't like [living] so far [from school], but I like the environment [in Rialto] more."*

"Walnut is always really busy, and there's just a lot going on here. Where I live — which is near the mountains — there is a lot of open land that is really pretty to see," Olivares said. "I do not like [living] so far [from school], but I like the environment [in Rialto] more."

Olivares's friend, sophomore Carys Tuason, has been able to see her transition to her different hometowns since they became friends in sixth grade.

"I feel that [Mia] really has her life together; everything is on such a schedule, and she works so efficiently. For me, since I don't have to wake up as early and don't have to be conscious of the time that I sleep, I just procrastinate even more," Tuason said. "Even though she wakes up super early, she's still super lively at school with a lot of energy, so I don't think it impacts her in a bad way."

Olivares's mom too views the everyday routine with a positive outlook and praises WVUSD for the benefits she has observed over the years.

"I value the positive learning environment, safety and strong community of WVUSD. The memories, friendships, education and support that the WVUSD district [provides Mia] have helped shape her into the person she is today," Ms. Olivares said. "The long car rides and days are worth it knowing the academic, athletic and social benefits Mia receives." Ω

A closer look at out-of-district



Out-of-district students by residence

25.9% live in Covina
17.6% live in Pomona
15.8% live in Chino Hills
12% live in Chino
9.6% live in La Puente
19.1% live in other cities



Out-of-district students' commute durations

30% 20 minutes
18% 30 minutes
16% 40 minutes
18% 50 minutes
18% 60 or more minutes

Content by Angie Hsu, Lucas Lim and Nayeli Tan
Data sourced from WVUSD Data Engineer Sunny Garcia

# of students living outside of Walnut

Junior Zike Yu's District of Choice (DOC) experience is characterized by early mornings, heavy traffic and late night drives.



In motion | From changing strategy with his teammates for water polo to changing lanes on his way home, junior Zike Yu drives home after a long day of practice and school. He glances at his navigation app, showing him the long route home he has to drive, making sure to keep his eyes focused on the road as he thinks about his assignments. "Because I have to come over here from really far away, I don't really have time to do [extracurriculars or activities]," Yu said. (Photos courtesy of Zike Yu and Timmothy Chen and illustrations by Ava Kaleah David and Angie Hsu)

Timmothy Chen
Online editor-in-chief

Every school day begins the same for DOC student junior Zike Yu: he drags himself out of bed, getting ready for a 40-minute drive through morning traffic from Chino to Walnut High School.

Living in Chino, Yu went to school at Cal Aero Preserve Academy up to sixth grade, until his parents then decided to send Yu to Suzanne Middle School for seventh grade. Instead of going to Chino Hills High School, Yu now attends Walnut High School because of the greater academic opportunity and special community culture.

"My parents sent me to [Walnut Valley Unified School District (WVUSD)] because they thought it was a better school than other schools in my area," Yu said. "I also like Walnut as a city more, too. There's a lot more to do over here than Chino with better restaurants and better places to hang out across the city."

To arrive on time to campus by 8:30 a.m., Yu wakes up at 6:30 a.m. and often gets an insufficient amount of sleep of around five hours on school days. Yu considers this daily tiring schedule and time consuming commute to be one of the biggest challenges of being a DOC student coming from Chino.

> *"I had to build up my social skills to meet new people."*

"I don't get as much sleep as I normally should be getting because I have to wake up really early to make it to school on time," Yu said. "The traffic in the morning really adds a lot of time to the commute which takes away time from me being able to do other things like resting, sleeping and homework."

Despite the greater academic opportunity at WVUSD, Yu also finds it especially difficult to be a DOC student. On the social aspect, most students often grew up with one another and live close to Walnut, causing Yu to feel isolated when he first transferred there.

"Because I transferred to the Walnut district in seventh grade, I didn't know anyone, which made me feel a little alienated," Yu said. "A lot of people here have been friends since elementary school, so I had to make new friends again. I really had to build up my social skills to meet new people."

Now that Yu has been in the district for five years, he feels satisfied with his time at Walnut and enjoys hanging out with the new people he has met and became close with. However, even after finding a lot of new and interesting friends, the long distance between them limits their ability to hang out with each other. On top of this, when they do actually hang out, junior Aaron Cho notices that Yu is often very low on energy and visibly exhausted.

"We are really close and we spend a lot of time with each other hanging out," Cho said. "When we are hanging out together or playing video games though, you can tell that socially he gets super tired. When we are at school in the morning too, I see Zike buy coffee from the ASB shop a lot. [Outside of school], none of our hangouts are close to his house, so sometimes it gets inconvenient."

> *"Even after [practice], I have to spend over an hour driving from school."*

Yu is also on the varsity boys water polo team, attending practice and games. Balancing this with his schoolwork is challenging for Yu, and he is forced to pay extra attention to his time management.

"All the schools we play against are far from my house, so I get home really late," Yu said. "A challenge is having better time management because even after [practice], I have to spend an hour and a half a day driving from school to home."

In the past, Yu's parents had to wake up early and drive him to school, where they then had to pick him up later as well. However, now that Yu has his driver's license, he is able to relieve that burden off his parents and take more responsibility for himself.

"Usually, when I went to hang out with my friends before I had my license, my parents were often unable pick me up on time or they couldn't take me at all," Yu said. "After I got my license, it is been way better for me and my parents."

For Yu's mom, Lynn Wang, seeing Yu thrive in his environment outweighs the far distance they live for his son. His good academic standing and abundant social life gives her continued reassurance about sending him to Walnut.

"It is worth it because the education is better at Walnut than it is at Chino Hills, so a longer drive in the morning has to be the sacrifice," Wang said. "I also do not have to wake up early anymore to take Zike, and he has all A's in his classes right now, so I am satisfied." Ω

options at Walnut High School

22% of WHS students are DOC students

13% of WHS students are Inter-District students

4% of WHS students are Allen Bill students



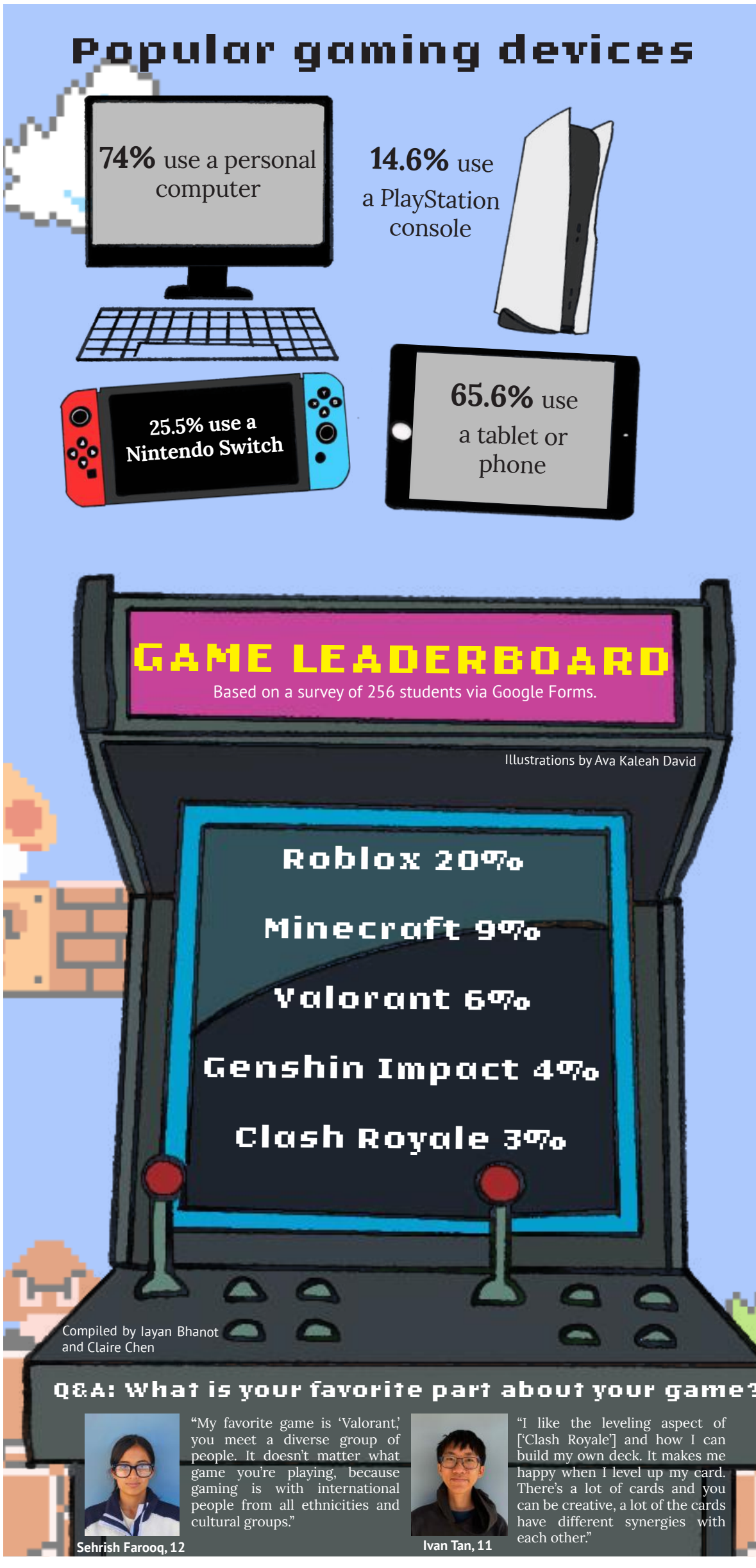
District of Choice is an enrollment option offered by Walnut Valley Unified School District (WVUSD) that allows students to transfer between school districts, regardless of whether or not they live within district boundaries. Applicants submit their location of residency and their top two schools of choice.

Other transfer options include the Allen Bill and Inter-District Transfer Permits. The Allen Bill allows parent or guardians employed within the WVUSD school boundaries to enroll their student. An Inter-District Transfer Permit allows a student to attend school in a district outside their place of residence.

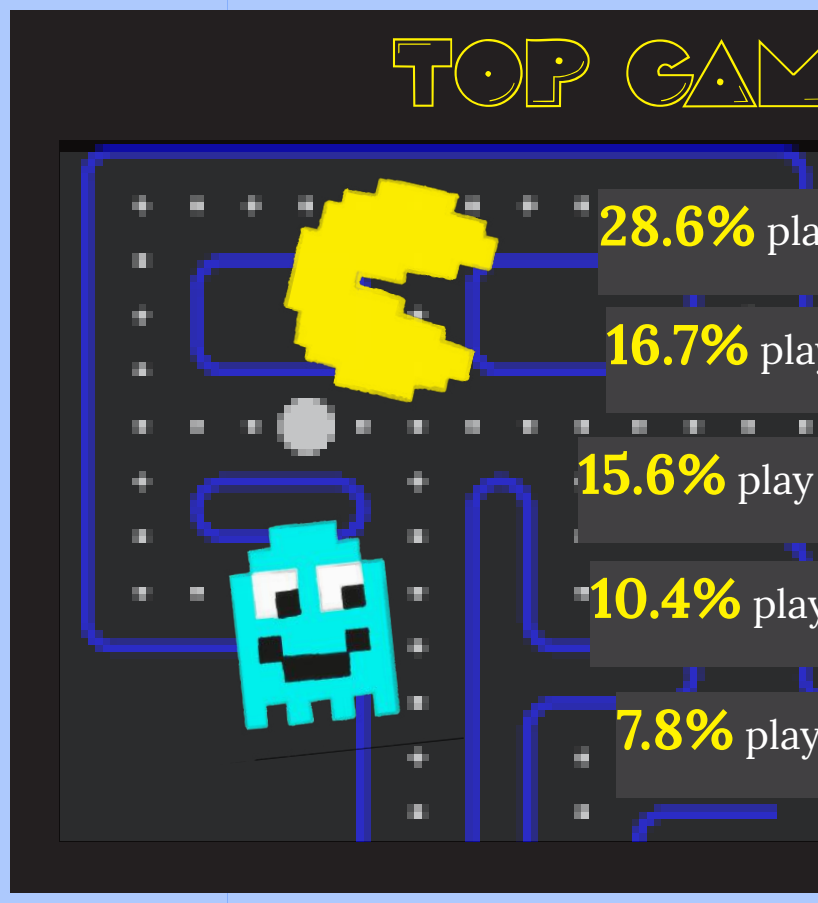




Due to past lawsuits, WVUSD is unable to process DOC applications from students residing in the Azusa, Pomona and Rowland Unified School Districts. Students from these districts are able to apply by the Allen Bill or an Inter-District Attendance Permit.







Ava Kaleah David
Design editor-in-chief and
In-depth editor

From the likes of 8-bit pixels to virtual reality, the digital gaming empire has technologically advanced and expanded its capabilities through the decades. Beyond these controllers and consoles, digital gaming offers students and adults alike an escape from reality—transporting individuals into any realm of their choosing.

Gaming is one of the most ideal ways for students to unwind after a long week because of its accessibility; some of the most popular games such as "Clash Royale" or "Fortnite" are available through mobile devices for free. Starting up the console and kicking back to play video games is a fun way for people to decompress. In fact, according to a survey taken by 256 students, of the 75.8% who do play video games, 23.3% use it as an opportunity to relax from their busy schedules.

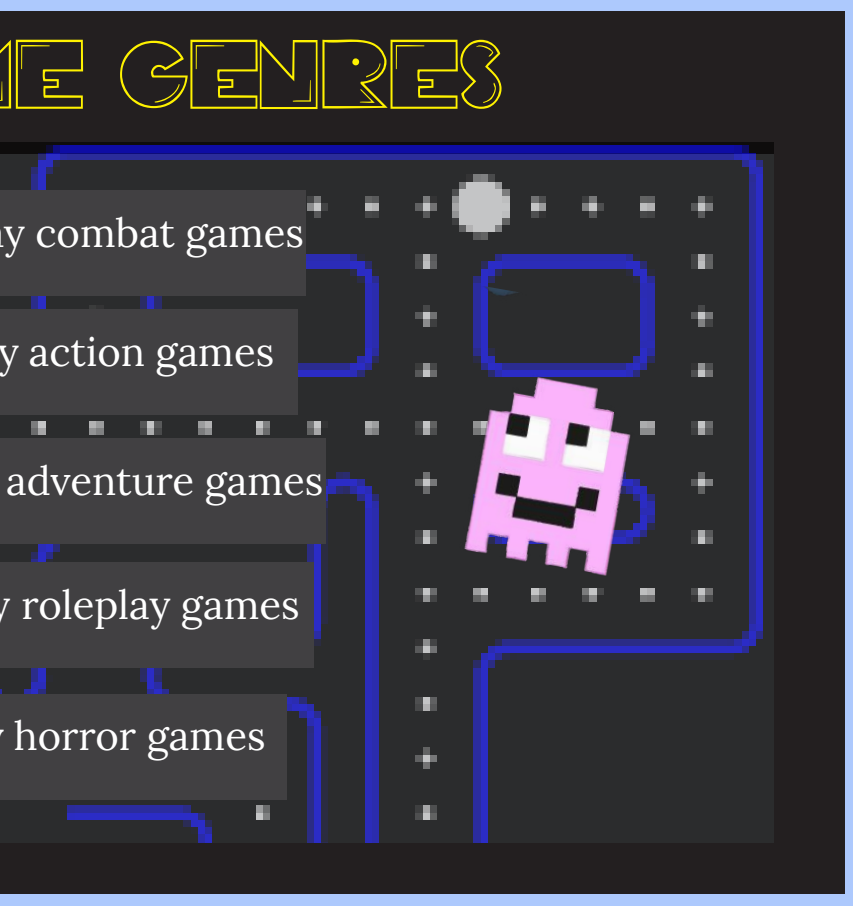
What attracts people to this industry is that it caters to everyone and among the plethora of games available on the market, there is something that can uniquely fit anyone's interests, redirecting stress into focus.

"The gaming industry is a place where you can free yourself. I play games on my own time, and I just forget al my [stress] and I just focus or that," senior Thinon Halgama said. "Gaming embraces you into a world that is separate from reality. My favorite game is 'Legend of Zelda,' Breath o the Wild. Back when I was in fourth grade I started playing it I thought it was too hard. A yea or two after, I started to ge back into it, I figured out how to play the game and perfec it. The puzzles, the quest and the characters interest me, and I like the combat, fighting the hard boss battles."

Various tasks and achievements are also a primary interest for its users Through the completion o these levels, players can earn accomplishments in-game that keep the platform both entertaining and satisfying Just like a Roblox obby, each level challenges students in overcoming obstacles to try different methods, work through pressure and adapt their thinking, which directly coincides into real life.

"Bringing 'Roblox' into the classroom, you learn when you keep falling [to get back up]– you can apply that into the classroom to be more patien when you mess up on things You could take that to real life where you can't just leave, but you see yourself through it, junior Gabby Diaz said. "I fee

L UP!



like if you have patience, it will make it a lot easier to work through things because you have something there that's grounding you. When you're so far into it and you don't want to leave, you're like, 'Okay, let me just calm down, be patient and try again.'"

> *"Digital gaming offers students and adults alike an escape from reality."*

A huge aspect of gaming is competition between other online users and friends. Depending on the game, people can choose to team up randomly or with those they know, implementing strategies and fostering collaboration. For student athletes who have a competitive drive to win, their motivations within their sports can also translate into the digital world and reinforce their mentality.

"My time in tennis especially translates into gaming because during tennis, it's all a mental game. You have to know what your opponent is thinking and control your emotions. I think it's important that you also have a good mentality when you're playing video games, especially if you're playing anything with competition," senior Brendon Lu said. "Playing a sport would really help you overcome those problems or those difficulties, ultimately making you better as a gamer. I think it also depends on what sport you play and what type of games you play. Especially if the sport doesn't take as much mentality, but it takes a lot of technicality, then you can apply that to a technical game set."

Just like in other trends, there is also a resurgence in popularity of older games being revived to fit new platforms with the same classic characters. Evident through brands such as Nintendo who came out with new editions of classic games such as "Mario Kart" or even "Animal Crossing" has proven the love for these games generationally, leaving their marks on the childlike nature inside of everyone.

I remember while growing up having a Nintendo 3DS to now, playing "Animal Crossing" on a Nintendo Switch which feels very full circle. While gaming as a pastime itself is fun, playing with friends, fueling our competitive drive and unwinding is what makes these games all the more exciting—and that's a level up. Ω

Choose your character:



Custom Avatar - Roblox

"My go-to Roblox avatar is myself. I have a purple outfit because it's my favorite color, and it has purple hair. My friend made it for me for my birthday, so she customized it for me with my favorite color," **sophomore Angela Wang** said.

Rico - Brawl Stars

"I play 'Brawl Stars' and [my go-to avatar] is Rico. His shots can bounce off walls, so they're kind of hard to dodge. He's a robot, and I like technology, [so] I like working with computers and coding. His voice also sounds robotic. [He's my favorite because] he's one of the first brawlers that I got from a star job," **sophomore Kane Lee** said.



Shiba Inu - Minecraft

"My [go-to is] a minecraft skin that I've had for over nine years now, I had it based on one of my favorite YouTubers as a kid, Stampy Long Nose. It's another animal instead of the cat he uses. It's a dog with a hoodie on, and I like blue hoodies, the color blue and I also love wearing hoodies, so that gives its importance to me," **junior Darren Tran** said.



Cat Peach - Mario Kart

"For things like 'Mario Kart,' I typically like the sillier characters. I like to choose Princess Peach, but in her cat form, just because I think it's cute and funny," **senior Katie Moreno** said. "I like playing as silly little characters because I just think it makes the game more fun."

Photo sources: Roblox, Minecraft, Brawl Stars and Nintendo
Compiled by Alyssa Alejo, Claire Chen, Abby Chin, Ava Kaleah David and Jj Zong

Q&A: What do you find most interesting about gaming?

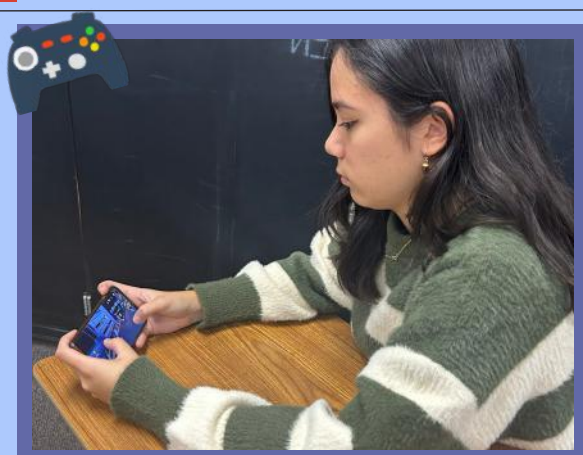


Senior Leo Lin plays "Valorant" and "War Thunder" on his personal computers. (Photo courtesy of Leo Lin)

"[What] I find most interesting about gaming is the diversity and community. There are as many types and genres of games as there are with other types of media, like songs and books. There's always something for anyone," **senior Leo Lin** said. "Just like any other community, people of similar interests can bond and connect with like-minded individuals. It's amazing how many different people from different backgrounds can connect over a simple video game. I think that my favorite part about gaming is the drive to win. I'm naturally a really competitive person, and I have an instinct to either be better or achieve victory whenever possible."

"I think the most interesting part about gaming is that there's so many different options you could choose. It's not just one thing, so if you ever get bored of one game, there's always something else you can do or there's new updates that makes the game fun," **freshman Madilyn Lee-Maslar** said. "It's just a fun thing to do that doesn't have to do with anything stressful. Whenever [my volleyball teammates and I] played before, I think it helped us got a lot closer because it allowed us to talk off court and hang out."

Compiled by Ava Kaleah David



Freshman Madilyn Lee-Maslar plays "Five Nights in the Forest," on Roblox. (Photo by Ava Kaleah David)

Love without limits is a sister's commitment

Supporting her younger sister through her disability, senior Skyler Wan shares her story filled with hardship and love.

Jocelyn Chen
Copy editor-in-chief

As a soft song echoes through the living room, senior Skyler Wan smiles and gently taps on her little sister Esther's arms—following the rhythm, and trying to communicate. While other students' after-school routines consist of finishing homework or clocking in at their part-time jobs, Wan's routine revolves around taking care of her 9-year-old sister, who has a disability.

Wan's sister is diagnosed with type 1 spinal muscular atrophy (SPA), a disorder that results in loss of motor neurons and progressive muscle weakness. Esther's disability impaired her ability to talk, breathe and eat since birth. For the past four years of Wan's life, Wan has served as one of Esther's primary caregivers alongside their parents.

"[Esther] requires constant attention and care," Wan said. "When I get home from school, I sit next to her and [monitor] her. Although it can be stressful, I enjoy my time with her."

Wan and her family first found out about Esther's condition when they were living in Chongqing, China. While type 0 SPA patients usually pass away within 10 days of birth, Esther started displaying type 1 symptoms of increased weakness a few months after birth. At the time, Wan was only 9 years old.

"My parents didn't know what to do," Wan said. "All the doctors said that she cannot survive past a year because that's normally how children with SPA end up in China."

After consultation, Wan's parents decided to seek treatment for Esther in the United States, leaving Wan with her grandparents in China before she moved to the States herself shortly after, when she was 14 years old.

"At first, I felt abandoned," Wan said. "For the first nine years of my life, I was an only child; all the attention was on me. After my sister was born, she needed that attention and at the time. I didn't understand [her needs] until later."

Since then, Wan has supported her family by taking on major responsibilities in caring for Esther, which takes one to two hours of her time per day. Because Esther needs to be hooked up to a specialized breathing machine at all times, Wan checks for phlegm in her nose or throat to suck it out with the machine. She makes sure to monitors Esther's heart rate and spends time doing calming bonding activities with her, such as watching TV.

"Before, Esther wouldn't be able to [communicate] which [channels] she wanted," Wan said. "When she began yelling and crying, we found hope in that change. Every time she yells, my family and I now know, 'Oh, this is the wrong one.'"

Inspired, Wan channeled what she learned with Esther into her love for psychology. At a psychology clinic she volunteered at under the guidance of Dr. John Pellitteri in Rancho Cucamonga, Wan performed tests as part of a curriculum that helped her gain insight into people's adaptability to change and find ways to help her sister. Now, she designs sensory games to improve how Esther communicates—playing songs for her and performing different motions depending on the pace. Wan's experiences motivated her to start Walnut Psychology Club on campus and apply to be a Peer Counselor during junior year.

"Having a sister who needs more care makes her a more empathetic person," Peer Counselor senior Gerilyn Funk said. "She knows how to balance lots of things and take care of someone who isn't herself, it puts her in a position of being a caregiver to her friends, family and students on campus that might need extra help."

However, Wan's sibling responsibilities aren't always easy to juggle. Often finding it difficult to balance caring for her sister and her academic life, she cannot participate in competitions or events that require long traveling or shifts.

"Sometimes, I want to participate in those events. Knowing I am not able to attend those can be a little frustrating, but I know that God has a plan for everything so maybe I'll be able to in college," Wan said.

However, despite such battles, Wan loves her sister dearly. Her favorite silly memory is trying to put lip balm on Esther, which her sister usually glares at in disapproval—to which Wan laughs in return.

"A lot of people's first words are 'I'm sorry to hear that' when I tell them about my sister," Wan said. "But actually, she's a blessing instead of a curse. She's the reason we moved to the United States and are able to enjoy the education here. I want more people to understand how hard [people with disabilities'] lives are. They don't want pity. They want empathy." Ω







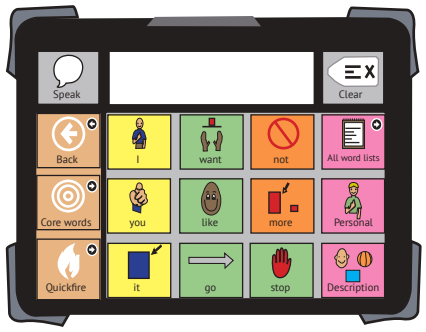


Sisterly support | Senior Skyler Wan spends time with her younger sister, Esther. Counter-clockwise from top left: Wan watches Esther's favorite videos, uses a suction machine to remove her phlegm, plays a song on her phone and taps on beat for Esther to feel. (Photos by Nayeli Tan) The two wear matching shirts as they share a memorable time on a family trip to Disneyland, during the Halloween season. (Photo courtesy of Skyler Wan)

Communicating by connecting

Skyler and Esther use unique ways to learn and talk to each other.

Esther's iPad



Vocab practice and word learning are features that form and type simple sentences for Esther and her family to read.

Command and ask buttons give Esther a way to communicate her needs or wants instead of relying on making sounds.

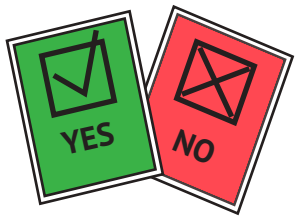
How it works:

Esther stares at an app or button she wants to use or play for two seconds, which activates the eye tracking camera.

The learning apps play different animal sounds or vocab words for Esther to familarize herself with, helping her match sounds with words.

With practice, Esther can visually form sentences or basic commands to speak with her family.

Yes and No cards



How it works:

Skyler holds the cards and asks Esther questions, who responds by looking at the cards or making sounds.

With these cards, Skyler figures out what types of sounds or videos she likes., creating a bonding moment between the two.

Content by Nayeli Tan

Predator alert! "Zootopia 2" slays its competition

The movie was a wild experience as new ideas of friendship and love are introduced and well executed.



Zoo-on-Top-ia 2 | Staff writer Claire Chen takes a picture with the promotional photo display for "Zootopia 2." (Photo courtesy of Claire Chen)

Claire Chen
Staff writer

Ending "Zootopia 2" with "Zoo" by Shakira gives me nostalgia of when the first "Zootopia" movie was released nine years ago on March 4, 2016, ending with "Try Everything" by Shakira. "Zootopia 2" was in theaters on Nov. 26, 2025, a long-awaited film since the first movie.

With themes of friendship and love, "Zootopia 2"(PG) is centered around Judy Hopps' (Ginnifer Goodwin) and Nick Wilde's (Jason Bateman) partnership and struggles. This movie expands on the prejudice from the animals based on stereotypes which was also expressed in the first movie.

Judy and Nick's clashing perspectives result in conflicts in their friendship and partnership. Their problems start when they have overruled what the chief says and tried to solve the mysterious case of a reptile who arrives in Zootopia to steal a historical journal that belonged to the Lynxley family, who are the main antagonists in this sequel. This leads to partnership doubts and leads them to uncover the conspiracy about the city's origins and the historical exclusions of reptiles.

I highly enjoyed the movie because it was one of my favorite childhood movies, which gave a nostalgic feeling when I walked into the movie theater. There were some scenes, like seeing Flash the sloth or when Judy and Nick were walking with other characters reconnecting Reptile Ravine, that made it especially nostalgic. As a teenager looking back, "Zootopia 2" captured that same feeling that I had when I watched "Zootopia".

The bonds with the new character additions such as Gary De'Snake (Ke Huy Quan) and Nibbles Maplestick (Fortune Feimster) added unexpected plot twists that I didn't expect. Every scene of the movie was detailed with revealing the origins of the city and the issues of the partnerships that made it seem more engaging. Zootopia felt like a film that could connect generations, giving longtime fans nostalgia and new viewers a meaningful story.

"Zootopia 2" is an inspiring movie because it educates viewers on the power of stereotypes and how one assumption can lead to injustice for a whole species. When Judy Hopps says "Anyone can be anything," this reflects that no matter what kind of background that you come from, everyone is encouraged to pursue any career they want. This message was really important to me because the movie showed that in real life there will always be problems in society, but how you choose to overcome them is up to you and your strengths.

There were similar scenes to the first "Zootopia" movie, which I enjoyed because it was intriguing how the directors, Jared Bush and Byron Howard, included every staple character in the first movie that made the new movie seem so nostalgic to people who have watched the first. The transitions between each scene were smooth and the little details were so observant toward the audience.

"Zootopia 2" is the sequel that is definitely worth watching because it was a fun, adventurous and thoughtful film. The movie reminded me of the Disney memories that I experienced when I was younger.

I loved watching Judy and Nick work out their partnership to make their bond much stronger and how they were able to save the reptile's town by working together. I appreciated how all the characters were taken into account in both movies. Walking into the theater as a fan of Nick Wilde and his charm, I walked out with a picture of the cardboard cutout and a grin from ear to ear. I rate this movie 5 stars. Ω

Q&A: What are your thoughts on movie sequels?



Rowen Gunawan, 9

"I think depending on the movie and film, it's just that some industries can do better than others. It can disappoint. Some can remake it, some can make it better. But it's just more of a cash grab because some movies are already good on its own, and they don't really have to make a remake of it or something. But I think the acting could be made better sometimes."



Caleb Leung, 11

"[Movie sequels] are always cash grabs. Well, I can't say they're always cash grabs, but a lot are. 'American Psycho 2' is just worse because of the plot. I would say it loses its plot and [the directing] is not done as well. But 'Top Gun: Maverick' is an example of a good one because I thought it was way better than [the first] 'Top Gun.'"



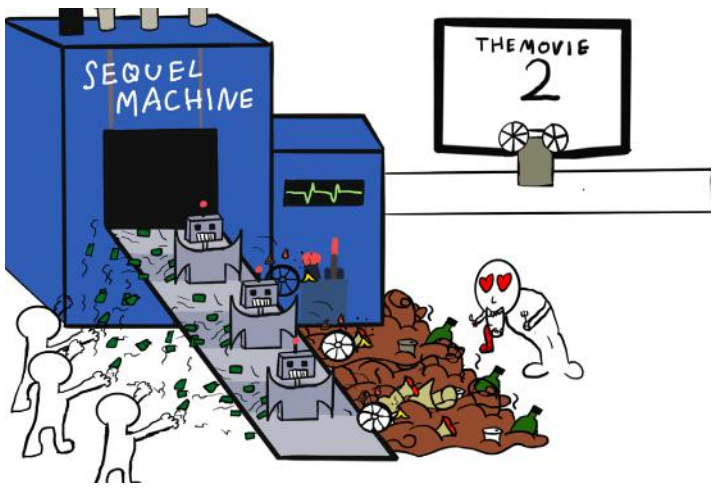
Victoria Mejia, 12

"It's just pushing it too much. I don't think it's necessary. They're just doing it to make more money and [they don't] really care about people watching it. I would say, yeah, [sequels] would [sometimes] be necessary. But some movies don't need them. I think sometimes they are prolonged and unnecessary, and they don't need all of it, but sometimes they are good."

Compiled by Iayan Bhanot, Leon Lee and Jj Zong

Movie sequels usually just seek money

Instead of a quality continuation, sequels are oftentimes rushed.



A second too early | Movie sequels are often too rushed when filmed and directed which results in poor movie quality. (Illustration by Lucas Lim)

Leon Lee
Advertising and Scene editor

The credits roll for a great movie like "M3GAN," and I'm left wanting more. But as "M3GAN 2.0" comes out, I'm left disappointed. This doesn't just apply to "M3GAN" though. Nearly every movie I've watched has had a disappointing sequel, with only a few exceptions.

To start, I enjoyed watching "M3GAN," a horror movie that focused on a robot named Megan, who started to kill people. This movie was thrilling and very suspenseful, as I had no idea whether Megan would kill everyone. And then "M3GAN 2.0" came out. The genre completely shifted from horror to spy and action where Megan started to fight a large artificial intelligence. It had completely lost the plot of the original.

Another example is "Fast and Furious." The plot changes twice throughout the several sequels. It starts as a racing movie, but it becomes a government spy action movie with cars around "Fast and Furious 4-6." Afterwards, it becomes crazy action movies that just have lots of cars. Oftentimes, movie sequels lose the original plot's direction by trying to continue a story that has already ended.

While some movie sequels just seem like greedy opportunities to make money, there are definitely well made ones such as "Inside Out 2." This movie, built on the original "Inside Out" movie, introduced new emotions such as Anxiety, Embarrassment, Envy and Ennui, which not only act as new characters, but relate to the audience as many kids who watched the first "Inside Out" are now teenagers. The perfect example of a well made sequel is a smooth continuation of the previous movie but introducing new ideas. While movie sequels are desired after watching great movies, it proves to be very difficult to make a sequel that matches or outdoes the first. Ω

“The House Saphir” is a book that should not be ghosted

Marissa Meyer’s newest fantasy novel exceeds expectations and is an intriguing, well-paced read.

Taryn Schilz
Advertising and Scene editor

Inspired by the tale of Bluebeard and French mythology, Marissa Meyer’s novel “The House Saphir” fulfills the interest of any fans of murder mysteries. “The House Saphir,” released on Nov. 4, is an entertaining read in the young adult fantasy genre.

As a fan of Meyer’s series “The Lunar Chronicles,” which tied in different fairytale plotlines from the Grimm Brothers into her novels, I was excited to see how the tale of Bluebeard would be woven into this story. Bluebeard is a story about a man who kills and hides his disobeying wives. His seventh and final wife, though the book’s retelling has four wives, escapes after finding the corpses of his past victims and gets her brothers to kill him. Monsieur Le Bleu, a French word that directly translates to “the blue,” is the story’s Bluebeard. The story follows the events of this tale generations later.

In the present, Mallory Fontaine and her sister Anaïs are con artists who use their deceased mother’s reputation as a renowned witch to lure in visitors. Mallory is a fanatic of the Saphir family and illegally gives tours in the original House Saphir, where Monsieur Le Bleu killed his first wife. When she crosses paths with Armand Le Bleu, she and her sister are offered the opportunity to go to the current House Saphir to get rid of the evil spirit of Le Bleu along with various monsters. Though they lack the ability to get rid of Le Bleu, as Mallory only has the ability to speak to ghosts, the sisters take the job for money and realize there is a lot more to Le Bleu and the House Saphir than they originally thought.

Going into the novel, I felt iffy about how Meyer was going to differentiate Bluebeard’s fairytale from her original storyline. The basics of the story seemed too similar. I also assumed that the plot was going to be very predictable based on the beginning storyline, but there were some twists that caught me off guard. There were a few instances that I easily guessed, such as Armand and Mallory’s romantic side plot, but the actual climax of the story was more intense and had higher stakes than I anticipated.

One of the things I really enjoyed in “The House Saphir” was the pacing of its plot. Despite the novel being 420 pages long, I never felt bored reading it and found that every chapter contributed to the plot. There was a perfect combination of action, mystery and romance. It felt like there were not any filler chapters.

Despite liking the plot, I was not a big fan of the person the plot followed. Mallory’s character is your typical strong young adult female protagonist and was hard to relate to as a reader. Though she did have some character development towards the end that made her more likeable, I found myself wanting to roll my eyes at the snarky comments she makes at people trying to help her.

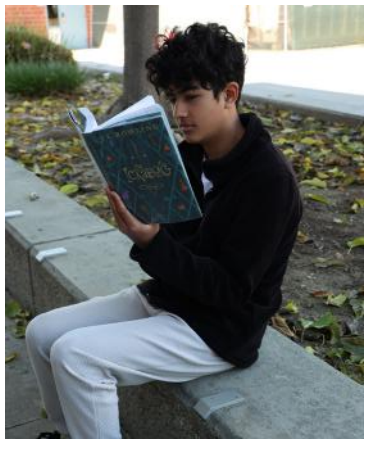
Overall, “The House Saphir” was a fun book I could not put down. There was clearly a lot of thought put into this novel, and I would give it a 4.5/5 stars. Ω



Grandeur ghouls | Surrounding the cover of Marissa Meyer’s novel “The House of Saphir” are French folklore monsters and important elements in the book in the order that they are introduced in the book. Counterclockwise from the top left are tarot cards, a water fountain, feux follets and a cheval mallet. (Compiled by Taryn Schilz)

The Hoofprint’s book buzz

“The Ickabog” is engaging for readers of all ages.



Magical mysteries | Staff writer Iayan Bhanot reads his favorite book, J.K. Rowling’s fantasy novel, “The Ickabog.” (Photo by Lucas Lim)

Iayan Bhanot
Staff writer

“The Ickabog” by J. K. Rowling released Nov. 10, 2020 and is a fascinating book for readers of all ages and contains some mature themes within its overarching allegory. It’s a fantasy about two siblings, Bert and Daisy Simpson, who investigate a myth about a creature called the Ickabog who eats children.

As I got deeper into the book, I encountered a shocking plot twist that completely flipped the story around. This book had chilling twists and turns that left me on the edge of my seat. It was exciting, interesting and never had a boring moment.

The book is a delightful and comfy adventure that is geared towards adults and children alike. “The Ickabog” immerses the reader into fantasy, making for a more fun and enjoyable read. It combines hope, curiosity and fantasy to make a relaxing read for all audiences.

When I read it, I realized that the book was more than just a simple children’s book. The events contain complex themes of overthrowing tyranny, the ostracization of the misunderstood, the destructive potential of rumors to the victim’s reputation and challenges of standing up against social ideals.

These ideas changed my perspective of the book and made me reflect on the book’s intended audience. Even after many years, I still enjoy the book due to these simple themes and details. I would recommend this book to any fantasy-loving child or teen longing for a simple escape into a cozy and magical adventure. The book can be purchased in paperback, hardcover or as a digital copy at Amazon and Barnes & Nobles. Ω

Books English teachers mark as favorites



Erik Jameson

What makes a book a must-read for you?
“In order for a book to be a must-read, it has to have a new and interesting plot, maybe something different than I’ve seen before, and well developed characters.”

What is your favorite book?
“It would either be ‘The Lord of the Rings’ trilogy by J.R.R. Tolkien or ‘American Gods’ by Neil Gaiman. Both of them are epic, widely encompassing and feature protagonists that are not necessarily stereotypical.”



Elisabeth Everts

What makes a book a must-read for you?
“I like a book that makes me think and [doesn’t let me] stop thinking about it. I like a book that challenges what I think is true and forces me to shift my perspective.”

What is your favorite book?
“‘The Phantom of the Opera’ by Gaston Leroux; that book has multiple perspectives in it. It changed my mind about class structure, what a romance really is and how people make decisions based on so many other factors than I’d ever perceived them as.”

Q&A: What is your favorite book and why?



Emma Aguilar, 9

“My favorite book is ‘The Summer I Turned Pretty’ because I think it’s really interesting; you learn a lot about love. [The book follows the main character] and two brothers in a love triangle. It’s just so interesting that she is falling in love with two different people, which stuck out to me.”

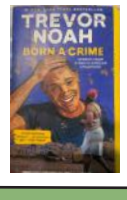


Book title: “The Summer I Turned Pretty”
Author: Jenny Han



Andrew Ho, 12

“My favorite book from high school reading is ‘Born a Crime’ because it was really funny. Though we are exploring important global issues and themes, the author is really funny. He talks about his personal experiences growing up, and I feel like I relate to some of them a lot.”



Book title: “Born a Crime”
Author: Trevor Noah

Compiled by Jessica Wang, icons by Taryn Schilz and photos by Ava Kaleah David and George Wang

Traditions foster meaningful connections

Students in Color Guard connect through hangouts and unique precompetition rituals.

Claire Chen
Staff writer

Through many unique and ingenious bonding activities, such as going granny bowling–where Color Guard has the opportunity to dress up as grandmas and go bowling–and giving out cupcakes at every competition, the team has their way of bonding. They rely on each other through these gatherings because it's used to maintain tempo and be in sync with trust.

Other traditions also help the team become closer, like spraying perfume on each other, where the spray would be used as a good luck charm, or eating tic-tacs. These bonding activities foster communication and give them confidence before their performances, so they can meet their goals during competitions.

"We feel comfortable around each other [and] you start to feel like a family," junior Megha Bembi said. "It's like a team where you're comfortable to be around, and it doesn't have to be just strictly Color Guard."

Team spirit in Color Guard is fostered through open communication and unity among a group that motivates them to work together toward their goal, which is improving and getting better scores at each competition from swinging a flag to throwing guns in the air. According to co-captain senior Giselle Lee, they go out to eat after almost every practice at either In-n-out or Applebee's where they do bondings.

"I feel like myself because I know that with them, I feel like I am in a safe space," Lee said. "I won't get judged, and it's really fun whenever I am with them because they're naturally funny people and we goof off."

Members in Color Guard can rely on each other with the connections and bonds that they have created by doing makeup and talking to help each other. Throughout the Color Guard season, members start to get really close because they are often communicating with each other. Whether that be performing their routine or practicing the timing of spinning a gun, the team will spend the rest of their experience in Color Guard adapting to these meaningful connections.

"I feel our Color Guard is more supportive of each other when it comes to learning how to do new choreography," freshman Queenie Wang said. "If you're a beginner and you're trying to learn how to fling a flag or something, they're really supportive about it and are willing to help." Ω



Tossing the flag to the rhythm | From left to right, co-captain seniors Jasmine Ting, Giselle Lee and Olivia Tecson adjust to their roles before band camp. "The people [in Color Guard] made me love it. I learned to immerse myself in the sport and got better [in the process]," Lee said. (Photo courtesy of Chinar Gajjar)

Illustrations by Lucas Lim

From long practices to their love for acting, Advanced Drama fosters an inclusive community.

Lydia Chen
Coverage editor-in-chief

Through bright stage lights and late night rehearsals, students in the Advanced Drama program become more than castmates; they become family.

The close proximity of the Advanced Drama class allows students to easily form connections through their passion for the arts.

"There's a smaller number of us, so we all become friends with everything that we do like workshopping, acting or improv," junior Kartyr Lewis said. "Then, when doing a show, you're spending hours every single day after school with them, so you end up forming really close bonds and it's like a second family."

During their last shows, every senior is given a speech in recognition of their contributions to the program over the years. Students are given the option to write and present a speech for a senior they have grown close to throughout their time in the program.

"I received three [senior speeches] after our show 'The Plot, Like Gravy, Thickens' and many more unofficial ones from underclassmen and those who I've been long [time] friends with now, especially some of our juniors," senior Blaise Contryman said. "It does feel strange to finally be in the position to receive a senior speech, especially after having been a part of drama for all four years. It was really heartwarming." Ω



Behind the curtains | Advanced Drama huddles during their energy circle, typically done before their opening and closing night shows. "It brings together everyone's energy to calm down. I feel connected with my castmates," drama president senior Adrianne Lamparero said. (Photo by Trae Contryman)

Cheerleaders passes their batons to the younger generations to empower their team spirit.

Abby Chin
Staff writer

Through special annual traditions that are specific to cheer, like passing spirit sticks, a ritual where seniors make small batons and give them to underclassmen, the cheer squad ignites team spirit and strengthens bonds amongst their team.

Other yearly traditions such as toilet-papering football players' houses and the big-little gift exchange serve more than one purpose. Since all of the cheerleaders rely on each other for stunts and support during performances, these events help build trust and cooperation. The "big-little" tradition helps varsity and junior varsity cheerleaders build connections with each other through mentorship and gift exchanges.

"[These special traditions] bring you closer to people you wouldn't normally talk to and get you out of your comfort zone," main base varsity co-captain junior Ancelin Orsatt said.

The team's other meaningful traditions, such as Senior Night gift baskets, which are presents gifted by underclassmen to seniors to show appreciation and make them feel valued, help to strengthen connections among the cheerleaders.

"We do this thing where all the girls who aren't seniors put together a little basket and a gift or a poster for the seniors," flyer varsity captain senior Akemi Ike said. "It just makes them feel special because it's their day."

Spirit sticks are passed from upperclassmen to underclassmen and are awarded during special occasions to reinforce community, tradition and belonging.

"As a freshman, I was always waiting for my chance to get a spirit stick," varsity captain and backspotter senior Hailey Thompson said. "It's something that helps to keep our community strong." Ω



Cheering on the crowds | From left to right, captain seniors Scarlett Montoya, Hailey Thompson and Akemi Ike hold their signs up at their last football game for Senior Night. "I was sad because it was my last game, but I'm happy that the underclassmen gets to experience it next year," Thompson said. (Photo courtesy of Hailey Thompson)

Illustrations by Lucas Lim

Choir captivates audience with jolly tunes

Choir department performed numerous memorable holiday tunes at their winter concert.



Christmas carols | From left to right, junior Myles De Los Reyes and sophomore Kirra Chin perform at Choir's Winter Concert. "Even though the audience wasn't that big [on Thursday], I think we still gave a good performance and gave good energy. I was really excited to perform really good songs," De Los Reyes said. (Photo by Summer Do)

Angie Hsu
Feature editor

Choir's Winter Concert was held on Dec. 4-5 in the Performing Arts Center (PAC) at 7 p.m. featuring a variety of winter tunes.

This concert marked the first time choir director Andrew Perez directed a double show concert. This year's selection of songs aimed to encompass many diverse holidays and aspects of winter.

"There's no specific winter theme because [that] gets very narrow," Perez said. "I love winter music because you get a lot of slow, beautiful songs, [which] I love."

Act One of the concert began with Chamber Singers performing "Santa Claus is Comin' to Town" by Harry L. "Kiddy" Orysmyr. Treble Choir followed with "The Winter Owl" by Paul David Thomas. Solos from Treble Choir members included "Santa Baby" by Eartha Kitt sung by freshman Madeline Cheng and "Christmas Song" by Back Number sung by senior Vitalia Wu. Mustang Singers sang their set with "Winter Moon" by Jordan Ricks and "O Nata Lux" by Thomas Tallis. Rhapsody In Blue ended the set merrily with "Last Christmas" by Wham!

> *"Singing winter tunes increased my spirit."*

Due to the low number of Bass Choir members this year, the Treble and Bass choirs performed "Winter Wonderland" by Richard Himber together, marking the first time in Walnut history they did so. Treble Choir then performed "Dona Nobis Pacem" by Johann Michael Haydn, and Rhapsody In Blue followed with "Woods In Winter" by Reid Spears. Solos included "A Night To Remember" by Laufey and Beabadoobee sung by Treble Choir members senior Francesca Cortes and sophomore Darla Contreras, "Jack and Sally" from 'The Nightmare Before Christmas' sung by Treble Choir members sophomore Kirra Chin and senior Roman Macali and "O Come Little Town of Bethlehem" sung by Bass Choir member sophomore Tobias Silva-Jameson. Chamber Singers ended the concert with "Flight Song" by Kim André Amesen and "Go Tell It On The Mountain" by Stacey Gibbs.

"My favorite song was 'Flight Song.' It is fun [and] when we sing it, the harmonies sound beautiful," first year Chamber Singers member junior Angel Hernandez said.

Closing off the concert with their annual tradition, all choirs came together, with seniors singing "Peace Peace" by Rick and Sylvia Powell, accompanied by underclassmen singing "Silent Night" by Joseph Mohr.

"I was excited, since I've been in the program all four years and that it was my turn to sing 'Peace, Peace,'" Rhapsody In Blue member senior Victoria Bernal said. "'I'm sad about [this being my last winter concert], because it is my favorite." Ω

Step into the Dance Department's annual concert

Advanced Dance and Dance Team performed their routines at the Winter Wishes show.

Jj Zong
Staff writer

As applause filled the room, the stage lights shined brightly on the performers coming out in small groups, all doing a unique bow. After months of hard work, dancers stood in rows radiating from their glittery costumes and neatly done hair, taking one final bow for the night.

On Thursday, Nov. 20, Dance Team and Advanced Dance students took the stage at the Performing Arts Center (PAC) for their annual Winter Wishes dance concert. Student-created choreography expressed each dancer's wishes for the holidays, given to the audience to experience.

"For the show, Winter Wishes are like the wishes that we want to give the audience, kind of like gifts," Dance Team president senior Kyrah Chien said.

Preparations for the performance began in the middle of October. Dance Team practiced after school or in the mornings, while Advanced Dance practiced their choreography during class time in the dance room. Leading up to the performance, all the dancers had after-school dress rehearsals in the PAC.

"We did our hair and our makeup and then we ran the dances, like each dance for our set list," Dance Team member sophomore Isabelle Kwei said.

For choreographing, each dancer wrote a paragraph on the general theme of their dance. Themes varied from gratefulness to harmony and a few are picked by dance teacher Jenny Tomlin. A few dances are also choreographed by dance coaches.

> *"I'm grateful that I could [perform] one last time."*

"Sharp movement could represent anger, while soft, withdrawn movement could be more sad," Chien said. "Our facial expressions also tell a [story]."

Props also play a part in conveying a message to the audience, telling a story of love and warmth. They also added dynamic to the dance, giving the audience a variety of things to look at.



A show to remember | From left to right, Dance Team officer junior Lydia Chen, historian sophomore Kate Chen, junior Danielle Lopez and historian junior Michelle Tran wrap up their Winter Wishes routinue with a pose. "It was a really fun show to do and a great experience overall. It's cool how it was Dance Team and Advanced Dance compared to studio [shows]," Lopez said. (Photo by Narisa Tonprasert)

"I think [props] do [have a symbolic meaning]. For example, in the dance 'Home,' they use a candle. So a candle symbolizes, home, warm[th] and gathering, that kind of vibe," Advanced Dance junior Megha Bembi said.

Chien feels reminiscent and believes that she has improved a lot from freshman year. She feels that she has become more familiar with the behind-the-scenes on Dance Team.

"I'll really miss just being in the camaraderie I have with my team," Chien said. Ω

The flow state: the feeling of 110 percent

As athletes immerse themselves in their sport, they enter the thrilling feeling called the flow state.

Summer Do
Sports and Photo editor

In high-intensity moments, the stadium fills with coaches shouting, cheers erupting and pressure building. Some athletes find themselves shutting out these distractions and enter a state of heightened awareness where every pass, shot and action feels precise as their surroundings slow, and they feel faster than ever before.

This sensational feeling is known as the flow state or being in the zone. Psychologists say the flow state is a state of total focus and an instinctive sense of control over your mind and body. They describe it as when athletes become completely immersed in their sport and game, resulting in the athlete's performance rising and the feeling of being able to use 110% of their abilities and skills. While being in the flow state, the athlete's actions and thoughts are directed toward their primary focus.



Illustration by Ava Kaleah David

> *"During really important games, I block out all the crowd noises and just focus on my own game."*

"During really important games, I block out all the crowd noises, the players shouting, and just focus on my own game. Especially during playoff games, that's when I really have to lock in," varsity boys soccer goalie captain senior Frank Tang said. "Sometimes, the [referee] can make calls that you don't agree with, your team messes up during the game or you get scored on, [and] that's where a lot of the angry emotions come out. But trying not to get too angry and managing those emotions is really important."

As many athletes from different sports enter the zone differently and experience various emotions, basketball players enter a state that unleashes a level of performance beyond their normal abilities. Varsity basketball shooting guard captain senior Kiko Guevara entered the zone during one of his games as a junior against Diamond Bar in the fourth quarter in overtime, where Walnut won 68-61. He started off by making two baskets in a row before making consecutive shots despite the level of difficulty.

"I feel better than anyone else on the court. I feel like I can go out there, and no one can stop me. No one can block my shot, and I can't miss [when] I'm in the state," Guevara said. "When I'm in that flow state, I feel like everything just changes for me. When you enter that zone, your confidence goes up, and you feel better to go out there and play hard. I don't even feel tired, [and] everything for me just flows."

> *"I feel better than anyone else on the court."*

For other athletes, the feeling of entering that flow state is linked through trust and the focus of playing their hardest in their sport. Varsity basketball point guard captain senior Jacob Ventura felt this sensation when he scored a buzzer beater against Verbum Dei High School on Aug. 18, 2025 during the Mecca tournament in Long Beach and won when his friend and teammate made the assist.

"Being in flow state, it's just playing calm and playing confident at the same time. I feel faster when I play, and stronger [and that] I can just keep getting better from there," Ventura said. "I felt thankful because coaches put me in that situation, my teammates passed me the ball, and I trust my teammates and the coaches trust me." Ω

Boys soccer wins against Edgewood in a close game

With good offense, the Mustangs gained momentum toward a victory with a score of 2-1 in the second half.

Jetzibe Rodriguez
Sports editor

Varsity boys soccer defeated Edgewood High School 2-1 at home on Dec. 3.

The first half started with the Mustangs on the defensive lineup. As the game progressed, both Walnut and Edgewood had strong defense and offense, which led to several turnovers. Although both teams were close to scoring a goal, the first half ended with a tie score of 0-0.

"First half, I thought we dominated. We just couldn't find the back of the net," head coach Wilson Moreno said.

The second half became more intense as the Mustangs switched the lineup by adding four strikers. After both teams tried to score, a handball penalty rewarded Edgewood with the first goal in the 24 minute. Soon after, Walnut gained momentum after captain center back junior Ethan Prittie scored a header from a corner kick. At the 12 minute, Prittie would score the winning goal after another corner kick. The second half ended 2-1.

"I thought our play with the four strikers really dictated the tempo," Moreno said. "The boys consistently play hard. That's never a question. But today, I thought they were more composed on the ball. They completed passes right to their teammate, and I thought they were creative in the attacking third. This was our best game." Ω



Control of the ball | Midfielder senior Jaiden Temores focuses on controlling and keeping the ball during the game. (Photo by Trae Contryman)

Girls basketball comes up short against Temecula Valley

The Golden Bears' strong defense and early lead prevented the Mustangs from catching up and obtaining a win.



Waiting with patience | Point guard sophomore Jada Jao dribbles the ball while waiting for her teammates to set up for a play. (Photo by Summer Do)

Timmothy Chen
Online editor-in-chief

Varsity girls basketball lost to Temecula Valley High School 47-53 on Dec. 3 at home.

To begin the game, the Golden Bears' defensive prowess and superior shot selection created a substantial lead over the Mustangs, who quickly trailed 7-24 in the first quarter. In the second quarter, Walnut upped their defensive physicality, but costly turnovers and a lack of offensive rebounding prevented them from getting their offense going, resulting in an 11-33 deficit for the Mustangs.

However, after a spark of three point baskets and free throws from contested drives into the paint, the Mustangs cut the lead to 30-43 in the third quarter. Ultimately, Temecula Valley's defense and clutch late fourth quarter three point daggers stifled the Mustangs' comeback that fell short with a final score of 47-53.

"The first half we just came out slow and we were cold shooting. We were running our stuff, but we just weren't making shots and we had a few turnovers. [In the future], we need to improve on how we start games," varsity girls basketball head coach Michael James said. "Our effort was good though, and it would have been easy to quit when [the score] was 7-24, but our kids didn't quit. They battled back." Ω

12/6 Scoreboard

Boys Basketball
Record: 6-5

Girls Basketball
Record: 5-3

Boys Soccer
Record: 2-0-2

Girls Soccer
Record: 5-0-2

Girls Water Polo
Record: 9-1

Boys Wrestling
Record: 1-0

Girls Wrestling
Record: 0-0

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Schedule

Dec 22 **Testing** 9:30am–12:30pm	**Dec 23** **Review** 9:30am–12:30pm	**Dec 24** **Christmas Eve** **No Class**	**Dec 25** **Christmas Day No Class**	**Dec 26** **Class** 9:30am–12:30pm	**Dec 27** **Class** 9:30am–12:30pm
Dec 28 **Testing** 9:30am–12:30pm	**Dec 29** **Review** 9:30am–12:30pm	**Dec 31** **New Year's Eve No Class**	**Jan 1** **New Year's Day No Class**	**Jan 2** **Class** 9:30am–12:30pm	**Jan 3** **Class** 9:30am–12:30pm