

ARTS&CULTURE

New Digital Filmmaking class gives students the opportunity to express themselves creatively. Pg. 15

ELECTION SEASON

What role do newly eligible voters play in the upcoming election? Pg. 10



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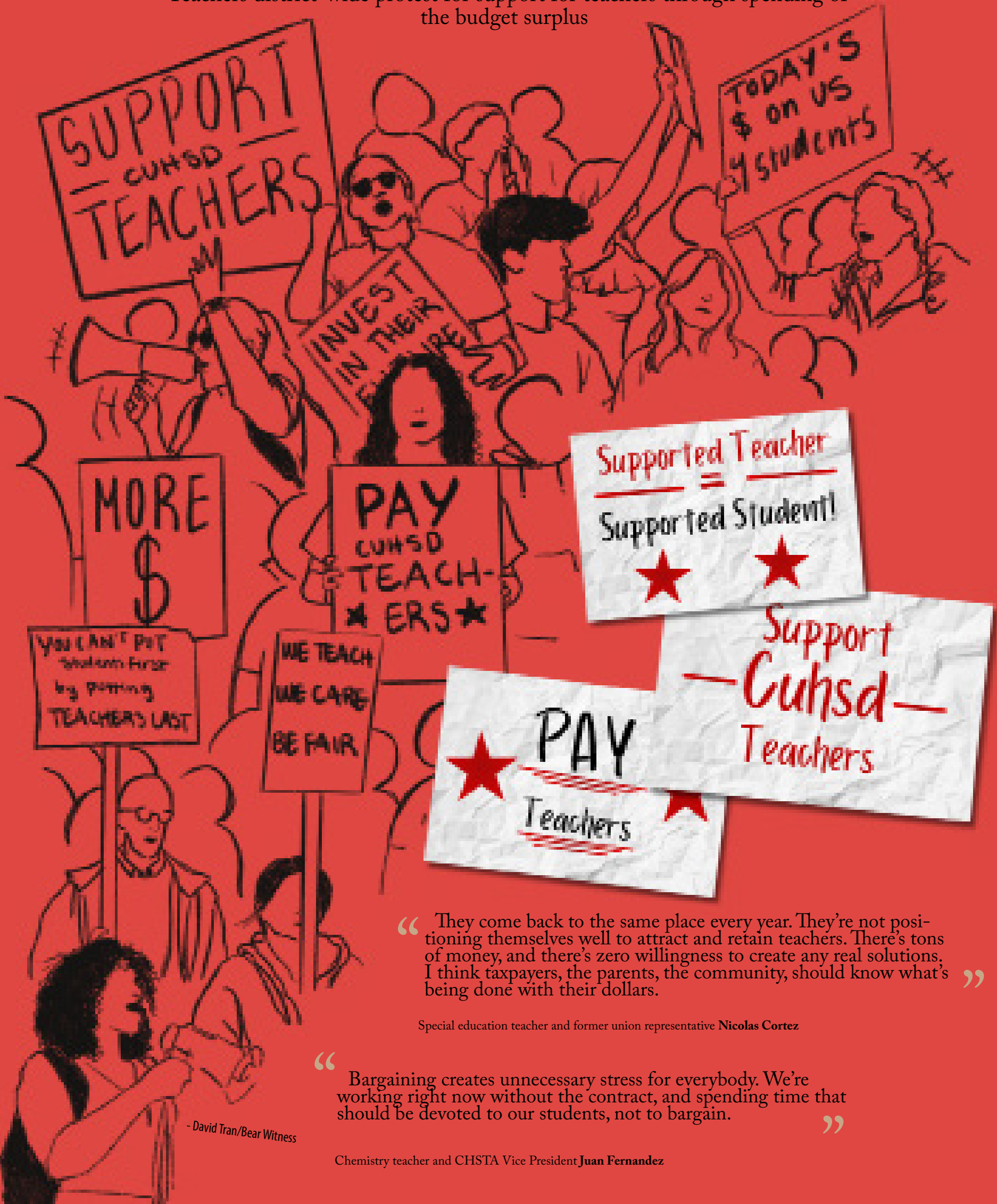
BEAR WITNESS



TEACHER CONTRACTS

FIGHTING FOR FUNDS

Teachers district-wide protest for support for teachers through spending of the budget surplus



“ They come back to the same place every year. They’re not positioning themselves well to attract and retain teachers. There’s tons of money, and there’s zero willingness to create any real solutions. I think taxpayers, the parents, the community, should know what’s being done with their dollars. ”

Special education teacher and former union representative **Nicolas Cortez**

“ Bargaining creates unnecessary stress for everybody. We’re working right now without the contract, and spending time that should be devoted to our students, not to bargain. ”

Chemistry teacher and CHSTA Vice President **Juan Fernandez**

NEWS

OVERHEARD | QUOTES OF THE MONTH FROM OUR ONLINE STORIES

“We need to be able to feel supported by our administration. It’s a big issue with how we feel about showing up to work and making sure we’re all in the right environment.”

Spanish teacher **Jessica Martinez-Gallardo**, who participated in the teacher contract negotiation demonstration in the quad.



Yujin Cho/Bear Witness

“[Cultural exchange events] can be a great opportunity for students outside of [Korean] classes. Watching them laughing and talking together makes me really happy.”

Korean teacher **Sunyoung Jeon**, who organized high school students from Korea to visit Branham and exchange American and Korean culture.

“I enjoy creating things people love and will appreciate. It’s something calming that I can sit down, where I don’t even realize how much time has passed.”

Psychology teacher **Jennifer McGrath**, who uses Cricut to tune into her creative side.

AP EXAMS

AP EXAMS GO DIGITAL

Newly digital AP exams impact classes

ALYX YOON
Staff Writer

Starting in May 2025, 28 Advanced Placement (AP) Exams held annually by College Board are going digital. The new format requires students to annotate and analyze questions digitally, compared to the traditional paper exams. College Board encourages the switch to online testing due to the increased amount of cheating attempts.

Tiffany Ylarregui’s AP Statistics class has already become completely digital. She has been teaching the class for 30 years and has had to adjust her teaching style in order to adapt with online testing. Ylarregui raises concerns that annotating online may not have the same benefits as annotating tests on paper.

“I acknowledge that it’s probably for the better, but I’m very disappointed because I have been teaching students to annotate on their written copy and make notes,” Ylarregui said. “I think it’s going to change the way we do testing. I think it’s a whole different strategy.”

The digital version offers annotation options that students would have on paper, such as the ability to highlight, circle and underline key terms. However, on Bluebook, College Board’s digital testing app widely used for the SAT, Ylarregui is unsure if annotation is limited to only crossing out multiple choice options.

Nonetheless, Ylarregui proposes certain benefits of digital tests, such as its accommodation to students’ challenges by enlarging font size and having audio.

“[Testing on paper] doesn’t accommodate every student’s preferences, and obviously, it doesn’t help with security,” Ylarregui said.

Similarly, AP United States History teacher Christopher Mock, who has been teaching the class for seven years, shares a similar opinion as Ylarregui. He is preparing students for

the switch to digital testing by familiarizing them with online platforms and practicing digital quizzes and online assignments.

“I want students to tell me how things are going for them, and I can try to adapt things as much as possible to make [the transition] as intuitive and as less stressful as possible,” Mock said.

Mock also finds that annotating online is a setback for the digital tests and believes it is less effective than annotating on paper.

“Eventually, students will be able to mark up the texts and prompts, but as of right now, that’s not the case,” Mock said. “It’s frustrating.”

Junior Sofia Yang, who is taking four AP classes, also dislikes the switch to online testing.

“When I’m physically writing stuff down, my brain works better,” Yang said. “If I’m typing things online, [my brain] feels stuck so it’s slower.”

On the other hand, Mock identifies ease in grading essays as an advantage of digital testing since teachers and AP graders would not need to decipher handwriting. Even so, he said he’s concerned for online testers to experience bugs and cheating.

“I think College Board has sold [digitally testing as if] it’s going to help cut down on plagiarism, and I don’t know if I totally buy that because it’s online,” Mock said. “I think having paper tests is actually one of the easiest ways to make plagiarism a lot harder.”

Mock suggests finding a balance of technology and paper for the exam, as it would combat the ongoing issue of rising student screen time while including elements for the AP exam that cannot be done on paper.

“I would emphasize [using] paper if it still makes sense and if there are things that can’t be done on paper [then] we can make these experiences better for students [and] teach them new skills on technology,” Mock said.



Dao Do/Special to the Bear Witness

EXCHANGE STUDENTS

BRUINS BEYOND BORDERS

Branham hosts students from Korea



Alyx Yoon/Bear Witness

Shihoo Choi from DDSHS and junior Pei-Ling Ko answer questions from Get to Know You Bingo hosted in the cafeteria.

ALYX YOON AND DAVID TRAN
Staff Writers

The Korean classes held an exchange day, where students from Daejeon Dongshin Science High School (DDSHS), located in Daejeon, South Korea, visited Branham to experience student life in the U.S. while allowing Branham students to practice Korean.

Students enrolled in the Korean 2 or Korean 3 classes were assigned a pen pal to email over the course of a week prior to meeting them in person. The exchange students followed their assigned Branham partners from their fourth period class to lunch. Throughout the day, students played Korean teacher Sunyoung Jeon’s K-pop themed Blooket in the cafeteria, danced to K-pop songs with the K-pop club and played a Get to Know You bingo.

“In between classes, [the exchange students and Branham students] communicate,” Jeon said. “They never cease talking to one another. So just watching them laughing together [and] talking together makes me really happy.”

During Korean 3, the DDSHS students presented different concepts regarding activities in Korea, such as how native people enjoy K-pop or significant Korean baseball players. Senior

Gina Shim, a Branham Korean 3 student, explains how student exchanges are important.

“I feel [the student exchange is] important because [the DDSHS students] got to experience our education system, and we were also exposed to their cultures when they did slideshows and presentations,” Shim said.

While students struggled to break the ice early in the day, many felt more connected by the end.

“It was awkward because they just came in and sat in our class while I was listening to a lecture, but during tutorial and during Korean class, as we started talking more and doing activities, I feel like we got a lot closer,” Shim said. “By the end, we were sad that they were going.”

Through presentations from the DDHSH students and accompanying Branham students to their classes, each school was able to discover something new from the other’s culture.

“I feel like it’s important because just knowing your culture and not expanding to other parts of the country or world is not good,” Shim said. “It’s better to have more knowledge of how other places do the same thing and you get to experience the differences.”



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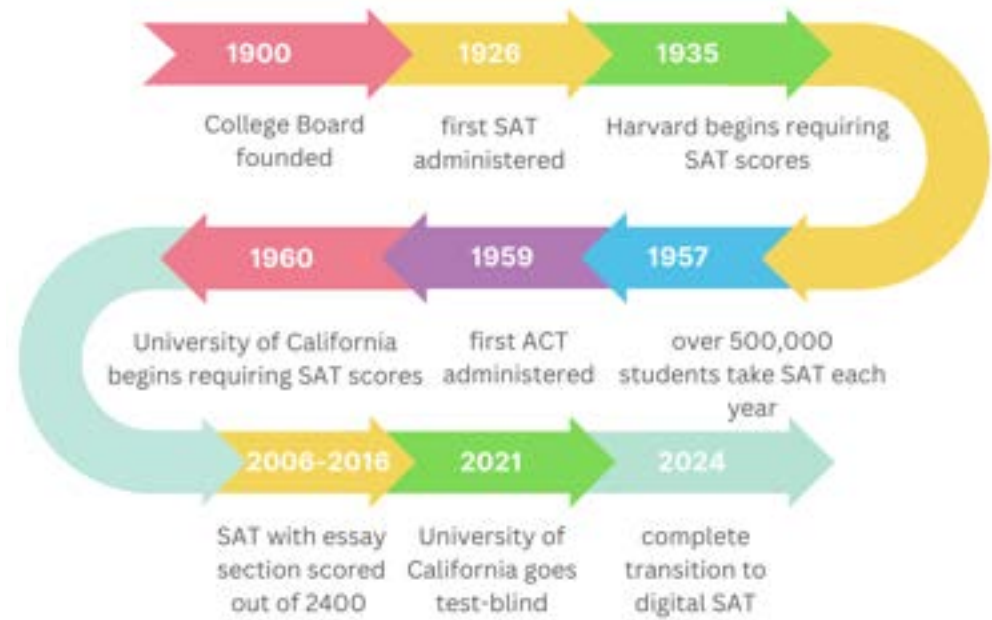
STANDARDIZED TESTING

RETURN OF THE SAT

SAT's return in a post-COVID world

ELLIOTT YAU
Science & Health Editor

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, many colleges required applicants to submit their SAT or ACT scores, but global lockdowns caused most to switch to a test-optional or test-blind policy starting in fall of 2020. Now, some colleges are shifting back towards requiring standardized tests. Some schools, including elite colleges like Harvard University and California Institute of Technology (Caltech), suddenly reinstated the test requirement for the class of 2025, which may have impacted some seniors according to College and Career specialist **Chen Liu**. "Class of 2025 is definitely affected because some students probably thought they would not need it when they applied, [so] they didn't spend much time preparing for this test," Liu said. Some selective schools like Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Yale University and Brown University also reinstated the testing requirement. According to The National Center for Fair and Open Testing (FairTest), around 2000 colleges made submitting test scores optional for the class of 2025. Since senior **Cassia Huang** plans to apply to the University of Pennsylvania, which is a test-optional school, she hired a tutor to help her prepare for the SAT. "Dedicating those hours to solely studying for the SAT really helped me in boosting my scores and finding my weaknesses and working on them, especially because they gave me personalized materials," Huang said. According to FairTest, overreliance on standardized tests creates an unfair environment because it excludes students who cannot afford tutoring and resources, but Liu doesn't completely agree with that. "For some activities or summer camps, you have to pay big bucks, but [for the] SAT there are actually free classes online, free resources," Liu said. "If you spend time researching [and] spend time practicing, you can improve." The College Board offers multiple Preliminary SAT (PSAT) versions for different grade levels, which are intended to provide insights into areas of improvement and help students set target scores for the actual SAT. Senior **Eulina Ji** scored in the top 1% of PSAT takers last year to earn a spot among 16,000 other National Merit Scholarship



semifinalists. She only used Khan Academy, a free resource, to study. "I mainly used Khan Academy because I found it the most straightforward and the most consistent," Ji said. "Some people have tutors outside, but I feel like independent studying also works just as well, and it works really well for me." Another National Merit semifinalist, senior **Kevin Toren**, also only studied using free online resources like Khan Academy and The College Panda. "Unless you're applying to extremely elite colleges, you don't have to worry [that] it's biased against [you if you're not high income]," Toren said. "The vast majority of people do not pay for these expensive tutors." Toren hopes to attend a University of California (UC) school, which don't consider standardized test scores. Even though he cannot submit his SAT scores, he can demonstrate his academic achievements by listing his National Merit Scholarship semifinalist status as an award on his application. Huang also qualified as a National Merit Scholarship semifinalist. She will apply to the University of Southern California (USC), a test-optional school

that accepts SAT scores, where National Merit Scholarship finalists are eligible for a half-tuition scholarship. Since most colleges consider the ACT equivalent to the SAT, Liu also recommends attempting the ACT, which is more popular on the East Coast, as a possible replacement for a low SAT score. The ACT is also more accessible than the SAT in the Bay Area, according to Ji. She said it's nearly impossible to take the SAT at a testing center without registering months in advance. "For the current junior class and also the sophomores and freshmen, at least try ACT as well," Liu said. "Some students [are] actually good at [the] ACT rather than SAT, but they never tried." Ultimately, practice is the most important preparation for standardized tests, according to Toren, who emphasized learning the material thoroughly and managing time well. "It's not a test of intelligence," Toren said. "It's a test of how well you know the material."

TEMPERATURE DROPS, TENSION RISES

HAILEY STEED
Staff Writer

Air conditioning is crucial in many classrooms, whether providing relief from toasty outdoor temperatures or providing classroom occupants with a cool draft, yet concerns regarding the uncontrollable temperatures in classes are advancing. The air conditioning varies based on the buildings. The AC in the C, S and J buildings have a pre-programmed range of temperatures that they can be set to by teachers. Plant Manager **Verano Ramos**, who oversees grounds and manages custodians, explains the district's involvement with the air conditioning system on campus. "We have the old [air conditioning] system here that's individual to each classroom," Ramos said. "The new building has [their systems] up on the roof, and they're computer controlled." He mentions that the district only allows teachers two degrees up or down, and that the parameters are set according to the state regulations. These regulations range from 68-72 degrees Fahrenheit. The newer system is based on these regulations, while the old system includes a wider range of temperature control in the classroom. Not everyone is happy with the new system implemented. English teacher **Heather Amantullah**, who was previously in room

28 last year, moved to her new classroom in the C building, and expressed concerns about the restrictive system. "I feel like I can never get warm in here," Amanatullah said. "We don't have as much control over the [air conditioning]. It's all over the place." However, the air conditioning is inconsistent throughout the C building. According to Amanatullah, AP English Language teacher **Bobbi Arduini**, who is in the classroom next door, has warmer temperatures despite having the same AC system and regulations. Similarly, out of a poll of 40 stu-

dents 32 share that they noticed cold temperatures in classrooms. Furthermore, the chilly air conditioning might have other, greater consequences. Freshman Kaylee Fu, who partook in the poll, explains

how the air conditioning has affected her. "I have a friend that said that she's becoming a bit sick because she's noticed a lot of colder air conditioning," Fu said. "It's kind of hard to adjust between very cold environments of the classroom rather than the outside [temperature]. It's starting to affect certain people." Another student who partook in the poll, junior **Tamar Maysel**, also raised concerns about the issues the air conditioning caused. For Maysel, she is most worried about how the temperature could negatively impact attentiveness. "If we're taking our final exam and it's freezing in that class, it'll be really hard to focus," Maysel said. Ramos explains that in the future, this air conditioning system will soon be implemented into more classrooms as they are remodeled. As the district gradually replaces older buildings such as the K building, the newer air conditioning system with less control from teachers and students will be further reinforced in the Branham campus. "It's felt like a lot bigger problem," Maysel said. "It would be nice to change it to a temperature that feels warmer in the winter time."



David Tran/Bear Witness

HIGHLIGHTS

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Teachers coordinate in red shirts in the quad during lunch. Teachers, with posters and banners, encouraged students to talk to them.

Quad Teacher Contract Demonstration

Branham teachers gathered in the quad to raise awareness for the Campbell Union High School District's contract negotiations. Organized by the Campbell High School Teachers Association, the demonstration was motivated by the lack of appropriate teacher salaries. Teachers have been negotiating contracts for years and periodically working without one. Teachers organized the demonstration in hopes of bringing student awareness to the issue and generating momentum to influence the district. "We need to be able to feel supported by our administration," Spanish teacher **Jessica Martinez-Gallardo** said. "It's a big issue with how we feel about showing up to work and making sure we're all in the right environment to do so." "Students have power in the district," a leader in the demonstration and AP United States History teacher **Christopher Mock** said. "More often than not they care a lot more about what students, parents and community members think. A lot of times when they are pushing the district, the district will react."

— Missy Keralapura and Dylan Collisson

PSAT/NMSQT Merit Semifinalists

Seven Branham seniors, Richfield Chen, **Harriet Chua**, **Isaac Chua**, **Matthew Do**, **Cassia Huang**, **Eulina Ji** and **Kevin Toren**, were titled as National Merit Semifinalists from scoring in the top 1% of PSAT/NMSQT scores. "Just practice, practice, practice," Huang said. "It's all about how familiar you are with the questions, with the format of the test. You just have to be super careful, because it's all about the details inside the instructions or the prompt, and the blurb that makes a difference in the answer." The Semifinalists can move forward as finalists by submitting an additional essay, academic record and conformational SAT or ACT score.

— David Tran and Elliott Yau



Students to speak to a Johns Hopkins University admissions officer at the designated booth.

District College Fair
Colleges across the nation visited Prospect High School for the district college fair, which aims to give high school students the opportunity to discover college options for their future.

Participating colleges, led by admissions counselors, set up booths with flyers and pamphlets. "When you walk up to tables, they tell you about their majors and about their campus," junior Anika Prabhune said. "You can learn and see if you're interested or not." Overall, the event allows students to learn more about their post-high school paths. "It's important to broaden your horizons and step outside of the box," Lafayette College admissions officer Abby Zea said. "I think there's a set number of colleges that you know about, and [students] limit themselves to those."

— Missy Keralapura, Dylan Collisson and Nithya Karambakkam

OPINION

SOCIAL MEDIA

STOLEN CHILDHOOD

The need to keep up with social media trends and influencers steals kids' childhoods

TAMARA RESTREPO
Staff Writer



Karis Do/Special to the Bear Witness

The ongoing trend of ‘Sephora kids’ stemming from social media apps, such as TikTok, has exposed a greater issue of how young children are growing up too fast. Generation Alpha, those born between 2010 and 2024, are maturing significantly faster than previous generations. When Generation Z, kids born from 1997 to 2010, were in elementary school, it was uncommon for children to have cell phones, much less access to social media. According to The Common Sense Census, 42% of kids have a phone by the age of 10, and 20% of kids from the ages 8 to 12 use social media on a daily basis. This early exposure to social media is forcing children to grow up too soon by exposing them to teenage or adult trends at such an early age. The rise of “Sephora kids” has highlighted this trend. In January, the term “Sephora kids” went viral on social media platforms, especially TikTok with its short videos and quick global access. In these videos, young girls walk around the beauty store Sephora, buying several products and then later showcasing their purchases on camera. Since these makeup products had reached multiple social media platforms, these young girls only wanted to join in. People went to social media to criticize the idea of little kids obsessing over skincare products. Since many of the popular products, such as Drunk Elephant, contain retinol, which is specifically used to treat aging skin, it was shocking to see adolescents using it. However, many critics still overlook how truly detrimental this trend is to the minds of young girls. One of the main reasons children on social media are pushed into this environment is because of the influencers on these media apps. The individuals these children look up to on social media platforms are typically much older than the children are. They are influenced to be like the people they are watching, even though those people are several years older. This creates an environment for children to unknowingly deny themselves of the innocence of childhood. According to CNN Health, the minimum age requirement to participate on most social media apps is 13 years of age; however, 40% of children aged 8 to 12 are also on these platforms due to the lack of regulation or proof age. Additionally, from the ages 10 to 12, the developing brain starts to feel increased satisfaction from social rewards such as compliments and other forms of validation, according to the American Psychological Association. During this time, the brain begins to produce more oxytocin and dopamine, “making preteens extra sensitive to attention and admiration from others.” Children before their teenage years do not have the mental capacity to properly handle exposure to social media.

As more and more young children start joining social media and hopping on the bandwagon of different trends, it may slowly become a norm. Children will start to feel increased pressure to join these trends because if they don’t, they fall into the trap of being ostracized from media culture. All humans have the natural desire to fit in. Now, children are forced to fit into unrealistic beauty standards and style trends that they see on social media. Young children’s exposure to social media steals the innocence and simplicity of childhood, causing them to grow up quickly. They become influenced to fit a certain image with components of beauty and materialistic things that children should not have to worry about.

64%
of kids aged 8 to 12 years old watch online videos everyday.

42%
of kids have a phone by the age of 10.

18%
of kids aged 8 to 12 years old use social media on a daily basis.

Source: The Common Sense Census

CELEBRITIES

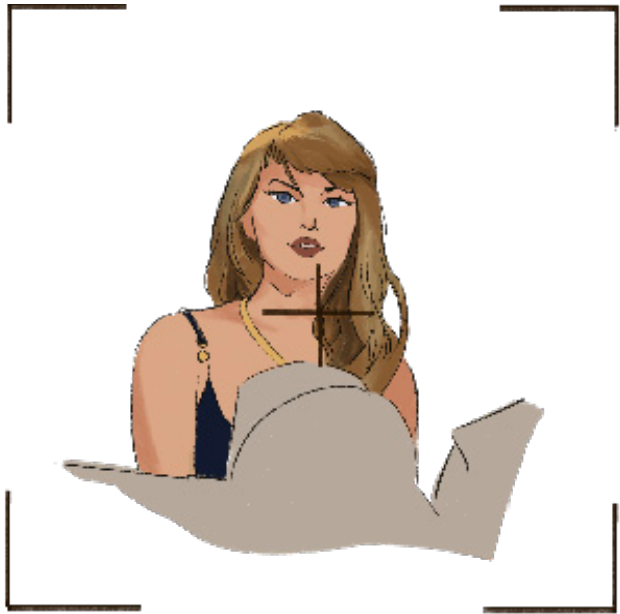
STARS IN THE STANDS

Can panning to celebrities in sports games risk losing the money-making shot?

TOMER VARDI
Staff Writer

In recent years, sports broadcasts have increasingly focused on celebrities in the stands, often cutting away from the action of the game as a means of generating more revenue. Celebrities attending sports games have become a noticeable trend, and their appearances often shift the focus from the game itself to their reactions. For example, whenever the Kansas City Chiefs score a touchdown or make an outstanding play in the National Football League, it has become the ritual for the technology team to pan the camera over to Taylor Swift, who regularly attends because she’s in a relationship with one of the players, Travis Kelce. This has generated an additional \$331.5 million for the Chiefs and the NFL, according to the Apex Marketing Group. While this boost in revenue may benefit the teams and leagues financially, it detracts from the game itself. Roughly 52% of sports fans polled by Ipsos Group are reportedly tired of seeing celebrities during broadcasts. Specifically, Swift seems to be one of the most overexposed celebrities, with 47% of sports fans saying they are tired of seeing her. In 2022, over 123 million people tuned in to watch the NFL Super Bowl, with the majority doing so to witness the athleticism, strategy and skill that make sports so captivating. The phenomenon of celebrities becoming a more prominent focus of sports events has been increasingly observed; for example, numerous celebrities were spotted at the 2024 Paris Summer Olympics and were used as a marketing tool for the event.

Recent reports by Fox 4 suggest that Taylor Swift’s presence at Kansas City Chiefs games has led to a spike in viewership, particularly among younger demographics, with a 53% viewership increase in female viewers aged 12-17. In fact, data shows that approximately 2 million new viewers tuned in to Chiefs games after Swift’s appearances. This trend is not just limited to Swift, though. Various other celebrities – such as Snoop Dogg, Ludacris, Eminem and Rihanna – also have attended several sporting events, with numerous stories written after the fact marketing their presence. When people tune in to watch sports, viewers expect to see athletes who have dedicated their lives to honing their skills. The athleticism and strategy are what make the game thrilling for viewers. Sports columnist Tony Dungy expressed frustration after an NFL game was increasingly interrupted by cutaways to celebrities, stating that it disrupted the flow of the game and made it harder for viewers to stay engaged. While focusing on celebrities might broaden the sport’s audience, it also overshadows the sport itself, with more viewers watching for the celebrities instead of the game. Ultimately, the real stars of the show should be the athletes themselves. The primary audience of sports broadcasts should be fans who care deeply about the outcome and the game’s progression. Despite the organizations and athletes currently being more lucrative, the profitability of celebrities will eventually lead to an ever-increasing focus on them – and the individuals who view the games to watch world-class sports will be increasingly left out.



David Tran/Bear Witness

BITE-SIZED OPINIONS
Minor problems, major solutions



Problem: It’s way too hot for October. I can’t focus in school when it’s this hot out.
Solution: Extend summer break to the start of October to accommodate climate change, that way it’ll feel like the right temperature for school.

—Ava Stark



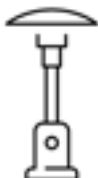
Problem: I never know what to wear and I’m scared people will judge me for repeating outfits.
Solution: Brainwash everyone each day to never remember what people were wearing the day before.

—Anabelle Walker



Problem: Writing college applications is hard to balance alongside school work.
Solution: Join the circus — they’re always looking for runaways. No applications, just a whole lot of tigers.

—Naomi Bergman



Problem: Going from ice-cold classrooms to outside is uncomfortable because the temperature change is too sudden.
Solution: Provide heaters above the doorways of classrooms to make the transition smoother.

—Nevaeh Gutierrez



Problem: Passing periods are way too long now. 10 minutes is too much time to get to class; I always show up early.
Solution: Shorten passing periods to one minute. It’s the perfect amount of time to get to class if you run!

—Colin Kalanges

OPINION

TEACHER NEGOTIATIONS

Working to contract hurts students, not the district

Editorial

The opinion of the Bear Witness editors

“I’m sorry I am not able to email you back right now. Due to the ongoing teacher negotiations, I am working to my contract. You can contact me during school hours.”

Branham’s nearly 2000 students are all too familiar with this message. Although the teachers’ work to contract protest recently ended, the contract negotiations continue to drag on. These negotiations and uncertainties bear heavily on teachers, who give up their time, energy and own money for their students. Whether it be opening classrooms early or staying at school late, hosting clubs or chatting with students, teachers interact with students outside of strict school hours in a variety of meaningful ways that are not part of their official contract. Yet, none of these are possible with teachers devoting their time and energy to the negotiations.

The extra effort and work that teachers put in are essential for us to receive a quality education, which should be the district’s utmost priority. If the teachers have to resort to going on strike, students’ education will grind to a near halt. Teachers will be out-

side picketing instead of teaching, and the district might have trouble finding enough substitutes to fill the vacant spots.

There is only one surefire way to protect students’ education: ending the negotiations. These contract disputes desperately need to stop happening every time the contract must be renewed. The district needs to find some form of compromise and end this cycle.

To support their teachers and thus their education, students need to take an active role. The louder they are in support and the more their voices are heard, the more likely it is that the district would have to take notice.

Although the contract negotiations are between the teachers

and the district, the previously established “work to contract” agreement led to many issues for students, including an inability to hold club meetings, a delay in letters of recommendation and unrepresentative grades. Intended to get the attention of the district, these strategies did not work as the negotiations are still ongoing.

While this policy has ended now, students will still feel the negative effects, as teachers’ attention will still be divided. The classroom environment will suffer if teachers are forced to spend energy on the negotiations.

That being said, students do not blame the teachers for this. The unnecessary stress put on students is a result of the policies of the district and their plain refusal to pay teachers what they deserve for the work they put in. The district’s priority should be to ensure the best possible learning environment for students, and the fastest way to accomplish that would be to cooperate with teachers. The cycle needs to end.

REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

ABORTION RIGHTS: 2024

Exploring the abortion landscape and stakes for women's rights in a critical election year

MISSY KERALAPURA
Staff Writer

In the 2024 election debates and speeches, the topic of abortion has been a key issue for those running for office and among voters from across the political spectrum.

Seven in 10 voters labeled abortion as the most important voting issue because of the impact the upcoming presidential election will have on future access to abortion, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation 2024 Abortion Health Tracking Poll.

Abortion is a medical procedure that ends a pregnancy. It’s a basic healthcare need for women due to their life circumstances, such as financial status, age, and health.

There are two dominant groups that advocate for and against this issue. The anti-abortion rights group is described as the “pro-life” position, while the abortion rights group is described as the “pro-choice” group.

The pro-life movement believes that abortion is murder since many in this group think life begins at conception. They believe that restricting abortion protects the rights of a fetus, even though a fetus is generally considered nonviable, or unable to survive outside the mother’s uterus, before about 24 weeks. Therefore, a nonviable fetus should not be granted personhood rights that override a woman’s rights to make decisions about her body, according to the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists.

On the other hand, the pro-choice group believes that the right to have an abortion is a human right, advocating that it is a woman’s decision to choose what to do with her body without government control, according to Amnesty International.

While the issue of abortion has remained a controversial issue for decades, the 2022 overturning of the Supreme Court decision of Roe v. Wade through the case of Dobbs v. Jackson has shaken up this topic once more. Mass protests have erupted across the U.S. along with further polarization of the two political parties.

Dobbs v. Jackson overturned the constitutional right to an abortion, leaving the decision regarding the rights and restrictions up to the states. As a result, many states have implemented harsh restrictions, limiting abortion access to as few as six weeks. This is a significant change because six weeks is before many women even know they are pregnant and well before fetal viability of around 24 weeks.

Although many states with harsh restrictions have exceptions for extreme cases, such as health emergencies or rape cases, abortion access is still denied.

For example, in Sept. 2024 in Georgia, 28-year-old Amber Thurman suffered a rare complication after taking an abortion pill. Not all of the pregnancy tissue had been expelled from her uterus, putting her in a severe life-threatening state.

She required a specific emergency abortion procedure, which the hospital refused to provide her because such surgeries are banned in Georgia. As a result, Thurman suffered in a hospital bed for 20 hours until her organs failed and she died, according to The Guardian.

Anti-abortion states argue for fetus rights, yet they refuse to recognize the rights and life of the woman who is carrying the



Grace Ngo/ Special to the Bear Witness

fetus, even to the point of their death.

However, regardless of restrictions, the actual abortion rate does not reduce. The number of unintended pregnancies increases due to lack of contraceptive access, hence the demand to have an abortion remains similar. Instead, legal, accessible and safe abortions become illegal, which, according to National Public Radio (NPR), causes dangerous abortions that cause the deaths of many more women.

While this issue remains highly controversial, 63% of Americans believe abortion should be legal in all or most cases, according to Pew Research Center.

Therefore, the decision to overturn Roe v. Wade did not actually align with the ideals of the majority of Americans. One major factor that led to the overturning was former president Donald Trump’s stacking of the Supreme Court during his presidency. In his term, he appointed three conservative Republicans, which shifted the court balance to be six Republicans to three Democrats. This led to the Supreme Court being highly skewed towards conservative rulings, like in the Dobbs decision, regardless of the public majority. The stacking scheme made the Supreme Court a very politicized court, meaning it is no longer an unbiased balancing function.

The Dobbs ruling alludes to the notion that the United States is looking to take steps backward regarding the rights of women.

63%

of Americans believe abortion should be legal in all or most cases, according to Pew Research Center.

This is because it is limiting, once again, a woman’s right to bodily autonomy, similar to how it did before Roe v. Wade. However, the number of those advocating for abortion rights is higher than ever.

This indicates that the American people are invested in progress and equal rights, and stray from traditional ideologies. That is why the 2024 presidential election is extremely important, and why it is imperative that Branham students who are eligible to vote cast their vote. By electing a president and members of Congress invested in securing abortion rights, the U.S. can legally shift away from the restrictive and outdated path it is going on and reflect the direction the majority of citizens are looking to take regarding abortion rights.

ARCHITECTURE

The Lost Art of Architecture European architecture vastly differs from the modern minimalist style taking away from new creativity

ANABELLE WALKER
Managing Editor

In the heat of Europe, the streets are a living museum, a canvas of architectural brilliance that spans centuries. The majestic cathedrals of Notre-Dame or St. Paul’s, the elegance of Casa Batllo and the intricate spires of Gothic churches with artistry, passion, and an understanding of beauty that seems to be increasingly lost in the modern age.

Today, as we wander through contemporary cities, we encounter a very different narrative. Modern architecture, with its emphasis on functionality, efficiency and minimalism, often feels like a stark contrast to the grandeur of its predecessors. These new buildings, while impressive in their own rights, frequently lack the timeless charm and emotional resonance of old European architecture. The decline in aesthetic appeal is not just a matter of taste, it reflects a deeper shift in values and priorities within the field of architecture.

These modern structures often prioritize sustainability and practicality, aiming to meet the demands of contemporary life. This approach has led to advancements in energy efficiency and urban functionality. Many of these buildings, while technically advanced, seem devoid of the character and craftsmanship that define their historical counterparts.

Compare this with the architectural works of old Europe. Buildings like the gothic cathedrals of Cologne and Sainte Chapelle were not only feats of engineering but also embodiments of artistic vision and cultural significance. Their intricate carvings, soaring arches, and meticulously designed stained glass windows were products of their time, yet they transcend eras, capturing the statement of human aspirations and creativity.

The shift from ornamental to utilitarian design can be seen as a reflection of the changing societal values. The focus has moved from creating iconic landmarks to optimizing space and resources. Modern architecture often emphasizes modularity and

efficiency over aesthetic grandeur. While these innovations are undoubtedly beneficial, they sometimes come at the cost of the profound sense of place and identity that older buildings exude.

This isn’t to say that modern architecture is without merit. There are certainly contemporary buildings that embody creativity and vision. However, the emphasis on novelty and technological powers sometimes overshadowed the pursuit of timeless beauty. In the rush to push boundaries and redefine skylines, there is a risk of losing signs of the enduring qualities that make architecture not just functional but truly inspiring.

The essence of architecture lies in its ability to reflect and enhance the human experience. By honoring the rich legacy of architectural history we can strive to create spaces that are not just modern marvels but also timeless works of art. Only then can we hope to build structures that not only serve our practical needs but also continue to captivate and inspire for generations to come.

SCIENCE & HEALTH

SOCIAL MEDIA

GREAT MINDS THINK ALIKE

Algorithms contribute to misinformation on social media

FRANCISCO PHAM
Sports Editor

In recent years, social media has become the prevalent news source for information, especially for youth. A survey from Deloitte, a multinational professional service network, revealed that 51% of teenagers primarily get their news from social media sites. Social media companies, much like all corporations, are profit-based, and their purpose is to make money through selling advertisements directed toward specific users' interests by using algorithms. Companies such as TikTok or Instagram use specific algorithms coded in order to retain user attention and sell more specific advertisements to these users, according to **Steven Turner**, a computer science teacher and adviser for the computer science club. "What these algorithms basically do is ensure that everything that's being shown to you is something that you, even if you strongly disagree with it, [find] interesting," Turner said. "What happens is you end up in your own echo chamber." *Oxford Dictionary* defines an echo chamber as "an environment in which a person encounters only beliefs or opinions that coincide with their own, so that their existing views are reinforced and alternative ideas are not considered." Whether it be accidentally or purposefully, social media algorithms create environments where people's opinions are amplified. Senior **Cian Saito**, a student expert in data analysis and interned coder at HP, discusses how data consumed on social media can be misleading. "The problem with information that's curated for you to see on social media is they're half truths," Saito said. "They are conveniently made to support your preexisting beliefs and never reveal the entire story." There are calls from the general public for some form of regulation on social media as a way to combat the spread of misinformation. However, it's hard to differentiate that line because social media companies, as platforms for free speech, don't operate under the same guidelines as other companies. "I wouldn't say it is ethical, but the whole purpose of social media and the algorithm is to have more users and those users to use it more," said senior **Toma Li**, an avid user of social media. "So whether it is



Dao Do/Special to Bear Witness

4.8
hours a day spent on social
media by American teens.

5.17
billion social media users in 2024.

Sources: American Psychological
Association and Statista

However, a recent Supreme Court case, *Murthy v. Missouri*, permitted the government to request the removal of misinformation on social media platforms. Major platforms also take action against misinformation on their own. For example, the X flagging system labels tweets as misinformation, and YouTube and TikTok have similar structures. Ultimately, there are certain fact-checking methods that users can use in order to verify information's accuracy. Simply looking up information and using other sources than social media, the user can become aware of the information they are consuming. Lateral reading is another option. "Whenever you read or see a post on something, if you're suspicious of it, just copy and paste that into Google. If it comes from any other source, see what that source is about," Turner said. "If it's only coming from that source, it's probably not accurate."

FOOD DYES

TRUE COLORS California set to ban Red 40 and other dyes in schools

LUCAS SETSER
Staff Writer

As concerns about food additives grow, Red 40 — a widely used artificial dye — has come under scrutiny for its potential health effects. Found in everything from colorful candies to everyday snacks, this bright food coloring has sparked debates among parents, health experts and educators in California, raising questions about its safety and impact on children's health. Studies have shown that these artificial food dyes may be linked to some behavioral issues for children such as hyperactivity, decreased attention span, and behavioral changes. Red 40 in particular is shown to worsen behavior in children with Attention-Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Some studies suggest that dyes such as Yellow 5, Yellow 6 and Red 40 may contain cancer-causing contaminants. In response to these concerns, California lawmakers wrote new legislation banning the use of Red 40 and other synthetic food dyes in school-provided meals and drinks, with some exceptions for fundraisers. The California School Food Safety Act, which Gov. Gavin Newsom signed on Sept. 28, will go into effect on Dec. 31, 2027, specifically prohibiting the presence of synthetic dyes Red 40, Yellow 5, Yellow 6, Blue 1, Blue 2 and Green 3 in school food. Opposition to these dyes has gained traction online in recent years. After reading articles and watching TikTok videos about the potential health issues, senior **Ayush Iyer** decided to eat less artificially-colored foods. "I used to eat Hot Cheetos a decent amount. They were one of my favorite snacks," Iyer said. "I realized it's definitely not the healthiest for you." Iyer said he would feel hyperactive after eating Hot Cheetos or drinking red Gatorade. Now he avoids those foods. "[The California School Food Safety Act] is beneficial to everyone because it's just better if no one consumes Red 40, especially in all these day-to-day products," Iyer said. Junior **Noah Noland**, a cross country athlete, drinks Gatorade after meets, but he doesn't feel the same way as Iyer after drinking it. "I've actually felt the opposite," Noland said. Noland doesn't eat the school food often, but like many other students, he eats snacks containing food dyes like Cheetos. "A lot of students here eat Hot Cheetos, and [they] probably aren't aware of the effects either," Noland said. However, not everyone believes that Red 40 is the cause of

these problems. Renal dietician **Karen Do** pointed out that the evidence around food dyes is mixed, and there has not been a conclusive study proving Red 40 causes hyperactivity or ADHD. "There are many factors that affect ADHD — environmental factors, genetic factors and also brain activity," Do said. "It could be the sugar from the drinks or in the product, or the carbs or starch, that cause the increase in blood sugar and activity." In addition, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) considers Red 40 safe for consumption within the acceptable daily intake of 3.2 milligrams per pound of body weight. Knowing this, Do claims it's not necessary to ban food dyes from school-provided meals, but schools should take responsibility in other ways. "Free breakfast and lunch are such wonderful things because [they] help a lot of people," Do said. "But for schools to be responsible, they can definitely offer food choices that may be a better substitute." According to Do, manufacturers used to insert food additives to hide flaws in their food and make them presentable for people to consume, but modern advancements have changed the industry. Now, food dyes mainly serve to enhance products' appearance. "Does [the dye] really do anything? Does it give any vitamins and minerals? It doesn't," Do said. "It just makes it more appealing to the consumer." Do also highlighted the type of food with the most color additives: treats like candy, soda, chips and other junk foods which don't offer much nutritional value. According to her, schools and parents should provide other food options for students without unnecessary additives. "Instead of giving children ice cream or sherbert that may contain those dyes," she said, "maybe give them yogurt, which is a better choice." The same applies to cereal, according to Do. Schools could replace Froot Loops, which contain dyes, with Cheerios or Corn Flakes instead. However, she noted that responsibility doesn't fall solely with schools as what students eat at home and outside of school also matters. According to her, the ban will not make much of a difference if students continue to choose foods with dyes while outside of school. Educating students about the potential impacts of color additives and healthier, more nutritious choices will encourage them to make better choices on the food they eat. Due to the mixed evidence, Do said students must judge for themselves and make informed decisions. "Giving people education and choices is better for people's lives in the moment because we want to promote a healthy lifestyle," Do said. "Lifestyle takes time."

Products with soon-to-be banned dyes



California School Food Safety Act

will prohibit Red 40, Yellow 5, Yellow 6, Blue 1, Blue 2 and Green 3 in schools starting Dec. 31, 2027. It's also known as Assembly Bill 2316 or Chapter 914, Statutes of 2024.

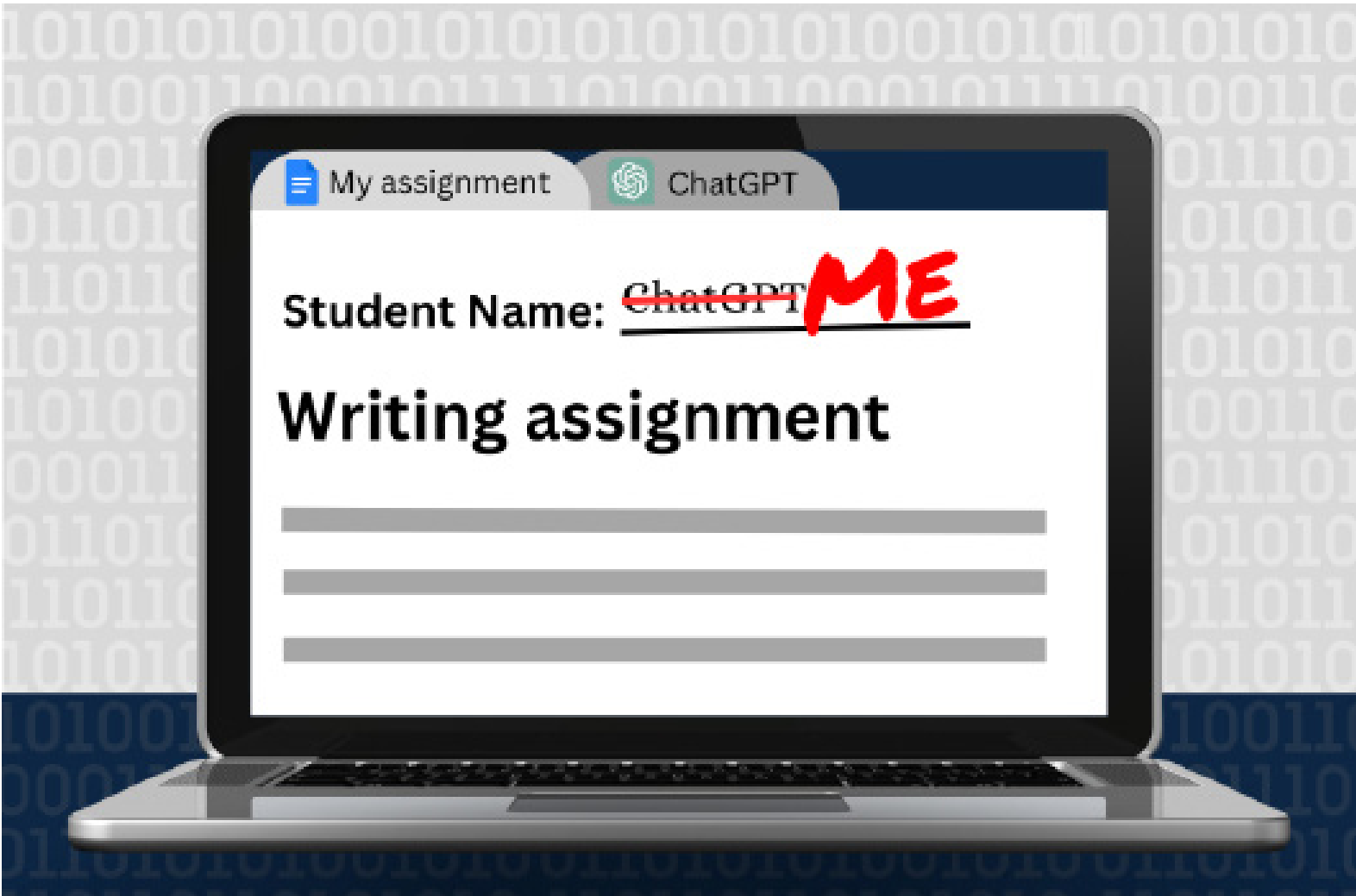
California Food Safety Act

will prohibit the carcinogenic substances brominated vegetable oil, potassium bromate, propylparaben and Red 3 throughout the state starting Jan. 1, 2027. It's also known as Assembly Bill 418 or Chapter 328, Statutes of 2023.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

IT'S A NO-BRAINER

Students and teachers respond to increased usage of generative artificial intelligence



NITHYA KARAMBAKKAM
Staff Writer

Nithya Karambakkam/Bear Witness

As students use generative artificial intelligence more widely, teachers, both in Branham and other schools, have created individual AI policies to prevent plagiarism in the classroom.

Popular applications, such as ChatGPT, Gemini, Midjourney and Github Copilot, are deep-learning models that can create content in response to user queries and fall under the umbrella term of generative AI, a subset of AI that learns from patterns and data models instead of abiding by specific rules.

Large language models, or LLMs, are AI models that are trained on different online sources until they can generate responses to user prompts. The use of any type of generative AI can be controversial, with plagiarism being a concern because AI training models have used digital sources without properly citing them.

Last year, factors such as the release of the ChatGPT mobile app and advancements in generative AI contributed to an increase in the amount of students using it in school. To combat this issue, Campbell Union High School District instituted a policy regulating teachers' and students' AI usage.

The district policy allows CUHSD students to use generative AI "as part of their academic activities to enhance learning and productivity." However, they must agree to also "verify the accuracy of AI-generated outputs and remain responsible for the final decisions or actions taken based on these outputs."

Steven Turner, computer science teacher and chair of the CTE department, helped to create the district policy, which is similar to his own. He allows students in his classes to use generative AI for practice assignments, but restricts usage on assessments.

"I have assignments where [students] had to research something, and they come back and it's ChatGPT gibberish," Turner said. "The problem is instead of using it as an educational tool to help them get started, they just copy and paste."

English teacher Alanna Ojeda has yet to form her own opinion about whether it will be used positively

or negatively in the future.

In her class, Ojeda plans to explore the limitations and consequences of AI by giving students assignments in which they will interact with AI and explore the ethical concerns of AI. She wants students to be thinking independently.

"We are living in this constantly changing landscape of technology influencing our lives," Ojeda said. "As a teacher, my biggest fear is that students don't think for themselves — that they use AI to do the thinking work."

English teacher Jeannine Black is also concerned about the detrimental effect that generative AI could potentially have on students' critical thinking skills. She tries to lessen students' exposure to AI by completely limiting their access to technology.

"I fear that it's going to become a bigger part of our lives," Black said. "We have to remind students to think your own thoughts, come up with your own ideas, find your own metaphors, and know that you are your own idea generator."

Senior Sreyas Prabu, president of Artificial Intelligence Club, shares Black's misgivings about increased dependency on AI. He believes that students need to be able to complete schoolwork and do other tasks without the aid of AI, since it is not always reliable.

"You get addicted to [AI] at one point," Prabu said. "You're going to have to learn to do things on your own. AI is not going to always be there for you."

Turner also added that the ethics of AI usage is situational; it can be justified based on the purpose of students' usage.

"At the student level, it always comes down to what you use a tool for," Turner said. "How much of it is using it to learn or to check your work, and how much of it is to replace your work?"

Although AI usage has garnered mixed opinions amongst teachers and students, some of them, including Turner and Prabu, acknowledge that it can be beneficial in some fields by improving efficiency.

"There are so many niche problems in the world that nobody has time to solve," Prabu said. "That's where AI comes to use."

District policy on AI use

1. "Students are permitted to use generative artificial intelligence platforms as part of their academic activities to enhance learning and productivity."
2. Students must "not submit identifiable personal information to any AI service" and use tools "in a manner that ensures the confidentiality of personal data and respects the privacy of individuals."
3. Students must use AI tools "ethically and in ways that align with the school's values and standards" and "verify the accuracy of AI-generated outputs and remain responsible for the final decisions or actions taken based on these outputs."



WHAT'S NEW IN AI

—Compiled by Elliott Yau

Apple will launch **Apple Intelligence**, which combines generative AI with "personal context" (conversation memory and on-device user information), to devices equipped with an M1 chip as well as the iPhone 15 Pro and later. According to Apple, utilizing on-device processing and drawing on larger server-based models with Private Cloud Compute will boost privacy and protect users' personal information even when using artificial intelligence. One new feature, Writing Tools, can summarize, edit and write text, allowing for generation of quick emails, group chat summaries and notifications sorted by priority. Users can also generate images by transforming text or sketch prompts into custom unique emojis or realistic related images. And in Photos, users can remove unwanted people or objects from the background of photos and search all pictures with a description. Siri, Apple's voice assistant, is getting a long-awaited upgrade of more precise, natural answers and access to OpenAI's ChatGPT.



Meta introduced its new **Movie Gen** model this month. Combining the capabilities of its previous Make-A-Scene and Llama concepts, Movie Gen can generate and edit videos and audio. Meta developed a transformer foundation model with 30 billion parameters capable of creating realistic videos up to 16 seconds long using text and visual prompts. It can also alter backgrounds, styles, objects and subjects. Meanwhile, its 13-billion-parameter model can generate audio up to 45 seconds long such as background music, ambient noise and sound effects that synchronize with text and video prompts.



Microsoft launched the second wave of **Copilot**, its AI model. With Copilot Pages, Microsoft 365 users can collaborate directly with other humans and Copilot in real time. In addition, Copilot integrations are rolling out to Microsoft's 365 suite, including Excel (with Python), PowerPoint, Word, OneDrive, Teams and Outlook.



— Images and information from Apple, Meta and Microsoft

SCIENCE & HEALTH BRIEFS

Nuclear power makes a comeback
Interest in nuclear power is surging because of a spiking demand for electricity linked partially to the artificial intelligence boom. Running advanced artificial intelligence on supercomputers requires massive amounts of energy. According to one estimate, a single ChatGPT query consumes as much energy as powering a lightbulb for 20 minutes. Millions of users access AI-powered chatbots everyday, and even conventional Google searches now include AI answers, contributing to a global demand for power. In order to address these needs, companies have been reactivating American nuclear plants. For example, the infamous Three Mile Island plant in Pennsylvania, the site of a 1979 nuclear meltdown, will supply electricity to Microsoft data centers, leading to a 121% stock gain this year for Constellation Energy. Another Pennsylvania plant, the Susquehanna Steam Electric Station, will send power to Amazon, which has invested in small modular reactors like Google. The US Energy Department approved \$1.52 billion in loans to help restart a mothballed nuclear power plant in Michigan.

GM now supports Tesla charging
General Motors electric vehicles received access to Tesla's expansive charging network last month. Tesla's chargers were exclusively open to Tesla vehicles up until last year, and since then many manufacturers like Ford and Toyota have switched to Tesla's proprietary NACS plug. G.M., which owns Chevrolet, GMC and Cadillac, will begin selling adapters so that owners can take advantage of about 18,000 Tesla Supercharger stations around the country. Built by companies such as Electrify America and EVgo, charging stations open to electric cars from all manufacturers do exist, but Tesla has assembled its dominant network for more than a decade, marketing it heavily. Recently, automakers' investment in EVs and the growth rate of sales have slowed, but the current charging infrastructure cannot sufficiently support the current or expected future numbers of electric cars on the road.

Coal consumption drops
Across America, coal is declining as renewables rise. Technological breakthroughs, federal tax credits and state mandates have lowered the once-exorbitant costs of harnessing renewable energy. Since 2000, US coal capacity has dropped by nearly 50% while wind capacity grew by over 60 times. Although fossil fuels, which include coal and natural gas, still account for most of the US's energy production, analysts expect solar to replace natural gas as the biggest source of electricity. Last month, Britain, the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution, became the first major industrial power to completely stop using 'black gold', the dirtiest fossil fuel, and shut down its last coal plant and. The closed plant will become a "low-carbon energy hub" like how some coal plants in America are being transformed into solar or wind farms. In America, coal accounts for 16% of total energy production, down from over half in 1990.

Novel antipsychotic drug approved
The Food and Drug Administration approved the first new schizophrenia treatment in decades, a drug called Cobenfy. All other antipsychotic treatments on the market reduce symptoms like paranoia and hallucinations by blocking dopamine receptors, but they may cause dampened emotions, involuntary motions and weight gain possibly leading to cardiac disease and early death. On the other hand, Cobenfy changes levels of the neurotransmitter acetylcholine, indirectly influencing dopamine levels, which researchers hope will help with symptoms like the inability to feel pleasure or motivation. Developed by Karuna Therapeutics and marketed by Bristol Myers Squibb, Cobenfy's wholesale cost hovers around \$22,500 per year. However, only three controlled studies lasting five weeks each exist, and full results will be released later this year.

—Compiled by Elliott Yau with information from the New York Times

BUDGET SURPLUS

BACK TO

OVERTIME

After a tedious three weeks of "working to contract", teachers regrettably revert back and move to the next stage of negotiations

On Friday, the teachers officially ended their policy of "working to contract". For the past 3 weeks, since Oct. 1, teachers were only performing duties explicitly required in their contracts. This prevented them from activities such as opening classrooms for lunch, holding club meetings, writing letters of recommendation and even grading papers outside of school hours. However, this was putting too much strain on the teachers, and on Oct. 18, the teacher's union officially voted to end the campaign.

This policy came as a result of the current contract negotiations happening between the

Campbell High School Teachers Association (CHSTA) and the Campbell Union High School District board. The two groups have declared an impasse, meaning that they have not been able to agree on a new contract.

The negotiations started in March, and by April an impasse had been declared. The contract then expired in June, meaning teachers have been working without a new one for the past two months, since the start of the school year.

Since April, the district and CHSTA have been working with a mediator to try and come to an agreement. But, even after several months of negotiations, the two parties were still unable to come to an agreement.

As a result, the negotiations have now entered the fact finding stage, where the two sides will then present their cases to a panel of three appointed arbitrators. Once all the facts have been laid out, the panel will then issue a report, deciding with side is correct in their claims.

According to AP Biology teacher and CHSTA Vice President **Juan Fernandez**, once fact finding ends and the panel gives their report, one of two outcomes may happen.

"The district leadership may impose the last best offer," he said. "The other option is that the teachers go on strike."

Since the panel's findings are not legally binding, the district can still put in place any policy they want.

One of the main points of conflict is the fact that the district has amassed a \$63 million surplus in the budget that they are currently not spending, and the district and teachers disagree on how it should be used. The union is advocating for higher teacher pay, something the district is hesitant to do.

The last offer from the district before is a 3% raise this year and an additional 3% next year, an increase from their previous offer of 1%.

However, teacher's hours would also increase, as they would now be required to stay afterschool for 504 and Individual Educational Plan (IEP) meetings, which helps students with special needs.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor, the cost of living in the San Francisco Bay Area has increased by 2.7% in the last year alone. In April of this year, the cost was almost a full 4% higher.

Special education teacher and former union representative **Nicolas Cortez** believes that the district's handling of the funds are lackluster. He contends that the issue is not that the district lacks funds, it's that they are unwilling to spend the money they do have.

"There's so many things that could be done with that money," Cortez said. "It's taxpayer dollars that were intended for education that the district is just plainly refusing to spend. I think taxpayers, the parents, the community, should know what's being done with their dollars."

Cortez has worked in other districts and this problem is seemingly unique to CUHSD.

However, Assistant Superintendent of Business Services **Meredith Hudson** points out that not all \$63 million of the surplus is available for teacher salaries.

"It's sort of like a savings account, but within that savings there are certain things that are identified already for those funds," she said. "We have to, by law, set aside money for facility maintenance. That's money that can only be spent on maintenance. We receive money that can only be spent on textbooks and curriculum."

Fernandez maintains that the district does have funds that could be used for teachers.

"There is a trend by district leadership to overestimate expenses and underestimate revenues," Fernandez said. "The state mandates a 3% minimal reserve. This district has, in the bylaws, a 6% minimal reserve. Now we are at 33% reserve. The district thought that the reserves would drop by \$13 or 14 million, but it had actually only dropped by three or four."

School districts are funded by one of two systems: Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), or Basic Aid. LCFF schools, such as San Francisco Unified School District, get their money directly from the state, proportional to the amount of attending students. LCFF schools legally are only allowed to have a 10% reserve or smaller.

CUHSD is a Basic Aid district, similar to San Jose Unified School District, meaning that they get money from property taxes, and importantly for these negotiations, do not have a 10% cap on their reserves, allowing them to get as big as it has.

The district has previously argued that since they have raised salaries in the past couple of years, they should not have to raise them again this year.

"In the 23-24 school year, we negotiated a 9.5% raise for teachers," Hudson said. "The revenue that we grew by last year was only 6.5%, meaning we outspent. We've had these multiple years of some pretty significant increases. Our fund balance is actually going to be paying off the future. When we do a raise like that, it lasts forever. It's not just a one time bonus."

According to Hudson, pay increases over the last couple of years have totalled to about 24%. However, CHSTA president **Kim McCarthy** disputes this number.

"[24%] represents the cost to the district, not the percentages in raises," McCarthy said. "While there has been positive movement in salaries for the past three years, [other districts] continue to outpace CUHSD teachers' salaries."

This is not the first time this has happened. Since 2021, an impasse, or inability to agree on the contract, has been declared four times.

"The sad thing is, this is the same thing that seems to happen every single year," Cortez said. "The district's behavior doesn't change at all. We have some new board members who are trying to change things, but changes seem to be coming very slowly."

Additionally, it is not just pay that the new contract will dictate. There are a total of 13 issues in need of negotiations, which include class sizes and greater recognition of extracurriculars such as the robotics teams.

"The union is proposing limiting the number of students for IM 1 classes, since those students need more support, and it determines their future success in mathematics," Fernandez said. "But the district does not want to talk about any caps or limits on those classes."

NEGOTIATI

Teachers district wide have been working with r surplus from the district board. To counter this, sure the district, however recently ended in

RECENT EVENTS

September 17 - Branham teachers held a sit-in during lunch in the quad to answer questions for students and bring awareness to the contracts.

September 24 - Teachers protested outside the district College Fair at Prospect.

October 1 - Students district-wide held a walkout during fifth periods.

October 1 - Teachers began "working to contract", preventing them from completing many tasks outside of their set instructional periods.

October 18 - The working to contract policy ended.

CURRENT STAGE OF NEGOTIATIONS

The district and teachers are currently in the stage of fact finding. They've had a third party mediator for a while, which they've recently ended due to a failure of reaching an agreement. The union chose to move to the next stage due to the possibility of being stuck in mediation and working to contract for up to 40 days. Now, both parties have been given 30 days to prepare an argument for a panel, which will submit recommendations to the district based on the information from each side on what they believe should be done. However, the district can still make any decision they choose. If the union disagrees with what the district decides, they may resort to striking. There is still always the possibility for both parties to go back to negotiation, which the union hopes the district will do with an updated offer.



Yujin Cho/ Bear Witness
Teachers protest before school in the mornings to rally support and demonstrate that they won't work for additional hours outside of instructional periods



Students gather



Dylan Collison/ Bear Witness
Branham teachers came together in the quad on September 17 to answer student questions on their situation.



Teachers wear red in su

NG

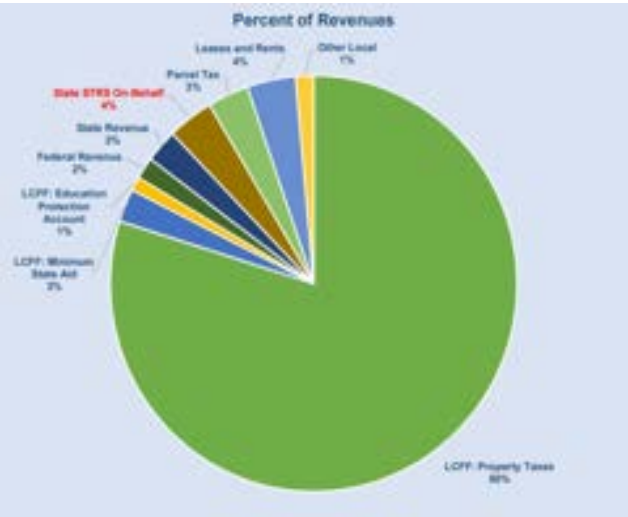
FUNDS

no contract and are upset about the unspent budget teachers have begun "working to contract" to pres-
n on Friday Oct. 18 due to unnecessary stress.

by Aidan Weiler and Ava Stark

Unrestricted Revenue	Restricted Revenue	Total Revenue	Expenditures	End Balance	Surplus % of budget
\$133,403,555	\$14,027,697	\$147,431,252	\$158,159,907	\$55,100,824	34.8%
\$140,670,272	\$19,812,086	\$160,482,358	\$166,069,998	\$63,167,949	38%

Courtesy of Kim McCarthy
The table represents the revenues and surpluses recieved at CUHSD.

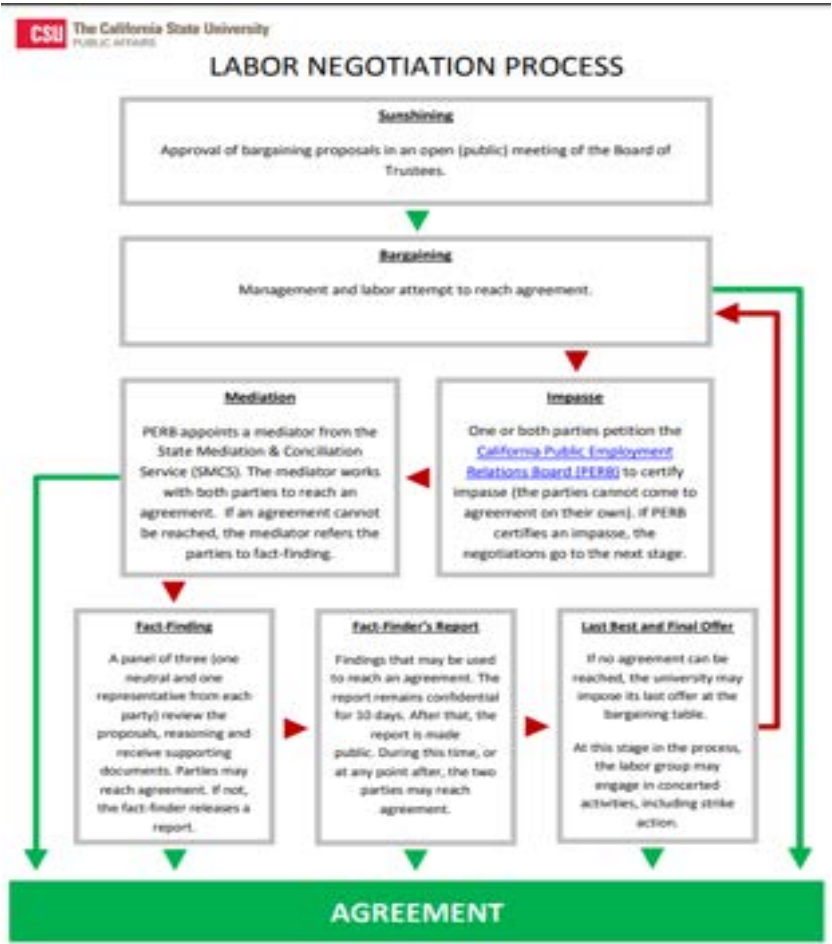


Courtesy of Kim McCarthy
The pie chart represents how the district recieves revenue

\$97,010
Is the average teacher salary at CUHSD.

\$123,616
Is the possible pay for a teacher of 28 years or more at CUHSD.

\$274,773
Is Superintendent Robert Bravo's 2024 salary excluding benefits.



Courtesy of Christopher Mock
This chart demonstrates the process for which the negotiations take place

TEACHER PAY

SPREAD

THIN

Teachers struggle to keep up with helping students and negotiating pay

While the negotiations are affecting teacher salaries, they're also having a domino effect and disrupting the education of Campbell Union High School District (CUHSD) students.

Because teachers are putting so much energy into achieving higher pay, they are unable to put as much effort into teaching and doing tasks outside of instructional periods to help students. One key issue that the Campbell High School Teachers Association (CHSTA) is trying to solve with the current negotiations is a high number of teachers leaving the district.

At CUHSD, a first year teacher will make \$75,815. To contrast, CUHSD superintendent **Robert Bravo** made \$274,773 in 2023, while someone teaching for over 28 years would only make \$123,616, less than half of Bravo. For reference, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor, the average salary in San Jose is just over \$113,000.

CHSTA President **Kim McCarthy** recognizes this as an issue in all schools in the district.

"We've had some sites with incredibly high teacher turnover," McCarthy said. "They call it the churn, because people are just coming in and leaving in a fairly short number of years."

Special education teacher and former union representative Nicolas Cortez thinks that the negotiations with the district are unnecessarily difficult.

"It's very hard to negotiate with the district office," Cortez said. "They make things extremely difficult, and we always tend to need a mediator. They're also not positioning themselves well to attract and retain teachers."

Cortez also has doubts over the district's instincts and motives.

"We don't trust that the district's being forthright and bargaining in good faith," he said. "They come back to the same place every year. There's tons of money, and there's zero willingness to create any real solutions."

According to Cortez, this constant changing of staff can take its toll on the schools.

"You try to get to know a teacher and they're gone," he said. "How do you ever develop a school culture, or have any kind of long term planning with a school site if your staff is constantly leaving."

Assistant Superintendent of Business Services **Meredyth Hudson** points out that a large portion of the time, they are not losing teachers to other districts with higher pay but for other factors instead.

"We don't want to lose teachers," she said. "What happens most often, is that people will decide to leave teaching altogether, or they're leaving the area due to the cost of living."

The Bay Area is one of the most expensive areas globally, and the cost of living continues to increase. According to Norada Real Estate, the median cost to purchase a home in San Jose is \$1.4 million as of August, an increase from 2.4% from last year.

"It's ridiculously expensive to live here. We know that, and we really want our staff to be able to live in this region," Hudson said. "That's a

really complex challenge that is going to have to be solved at another level, beyond just at the school district level."

While these increased housing costs can make conditions harder for teachers, it can also have its benefits. Since the district is primarily funded through taxes, according to Cortez, increased property taxes should result in more funding and resources.

"You can predict pretty accurately what you're going to have from year to year. And with property taxes and property values in our area constantly increasing, and with a ton of new development, you can imagine there's going to be more expensive properties, more taxes coming in," Cortez said.

Even so, these constant negotiations can wear down the teachers and add unnecessary stress and difficulty to the job.

"There are many people who have gone through this year after year," McCarthy said. "There are teachers who have been through this many times and are feeling pretty fed up."

McCarthy also points out how extended bargaining can take a toll on teachers who voluntarily join the negotiations.

"Teachers take time outside of the classroom to negotiate," she said. "For the management team, this is part of their job. It's part of their regular responsibility."

If teachers are taking time to negotiate they can easily get overwhelmed, as their energy is divided multiple ways. Chemistry teacher and CHSTA Vice President **Juan Fernandez** said that this the main reason that teachers decided to end the "work to contract".

"Bargaining creates unnecessary stress for everybody," Fernandez said. "We're working right now without the contract, and spending time that should be devoted to our students, not to bargain."

A possible outcome of these work to contract negotiations is a strike. If a strike is declared, then teachers will stop teaching and start picketing outside of the school. The school would then be forced to get substitutes to fill in the spots, costing the district money.

"When teachers go on strike, it tends to invigorate them," McCarthy said. "It tends to result in better contracts."

Currently, the teachers are spreading their message through public displays such as teacher walk-ins, passing out flyers at events such as the college fair, and eating lunch in the quad and talking to students, in addition to the aforementioned working to contract.

Fernandez believes that the most effective way to move along these negotiations is to get the community involved.

"We invite [students and community members] to write board members or to attend board meetings to express their support," Fernandez said. "It doesn't matter for whom, but the community has a lot of power to steer negotiations in one way or another. We need to end this cycle."

STUDENTLIFE

STUDENT LIFE CALENDAR

Visit @bhsbearwitness for updates on student events

SCHOOL EVENTS

Link Crew Freshman Fall Night: Oct. 25



Yujin Cho/Bear Witness

Branham's Link Crew presents an engaging and fun fall night for freshmen filled with pumpkin decorating and watching movies. This event intended to help the class of 2028 connect with each other and build a better sense of community.

CUHSD Garba Night: Oct. 26



Aadyant Suresh/Bear Witness archives

Branham's South Asian Student Union, in collaboration with Westmont, Prospect and Leigh, will host the second annual Garba Night in the Branham cafeteria at 6 p.m. Garba Night is a traditional Indian dance performed during the Indian holiday Navratri, and it serves as a unique opportunity to bond over Indian culture, music, dance and food.

Band Fall Concert: Oct. 29



Reese Gardner/Bear Witness archives

The Music Department will perform its annual Fall Concert, "Symphony Shadows," in the Branham Cafeteria at 7 p.m. It will showcase all four bands—Wind Ensemble, Jazz Band, Symphonic Band and Concert Band.

—Compiled by Mila Windell

ELECTION

BRUINS HIT

New voters on campus make their voices heard in election

ARYELLA FINKEL-HOZER
Opinion Editor

As the presidential election unfolds and Branham seniors reach the legal voting age, they have a new opportunity to voice their opinions in the 2024 presidential election.

According to Circle, a research organization on civic engagement in the United States, 27% of eligible voters between 18 and 29 years of age voted in the 2022 midterm elections, the second-highest turnout of the 21st century. There is a new realm of 18-year-olds now allowed to cast their vote.

AP United States Government and Politics teacher **Kirk Selfridge** highlights the importance of educating his students on political matters, including understanding the election process and the government.

In his class, he leads informative discussions about prominent issues in the political world which are specifically affected in elections. Selfridge wants students to understand their role as possible voters in the upcoming election.

"It is a way to get them connected and understand their role in making those [voting] decisions," Selfridge said.

Not only has Selfridge found the discussions and curriculum of the government class beneficial and informative, but students have also realized the importance of learning about the democratic system. Senior **Gautam Khajuria** reflects on the impact this class has had on him.

"The way I used to understand politics before this class was a lot of what I'd see on the news and social media," Khajuria said. "I didn't completely understand how the government works and why things happen."

In today's digital age, social media has become a more prominent platform for those of younger ages, to access political information.

Senior **Hailey Schlosser**, a newly eligible voter, identifies how she can obtain information on politics.

"I don't know much about our government; I only knew what the three branches were," she said. "[In class we have] gone really into depth about how our government was created and what each government branch represents."

Schlosser acknowledges the opportunity to find information on social media platforms such as TikTok and Twitter, which attract viewers with quick, attention-catching videos, even if the videos are not proven to be fully truthful. However, this can dictate how students feel and lead them to believe false information.

Being a government teacher and seeing students exert their knowledge, Selfridge notes how the easy accessibility and addictive design of social media pulls them into these fast-paced, attention-grabbing videos.

"The one positive thing I can see from TikTok is it will get them thinking about a topic. I hope that whoever they don't take [information on TikTok] as being completely factual, and that they take that to do their research on it," Selfridge said.

While it may not be seen as reliable, students are usually found looking to social media sites to obtain political information as they fulfill a more light-hearted and accessible way of getting ideas. Although not able to vote, Khajuria has acknowledged the positive impact of the government class that all seniors are required to take.

THE BALLOT



Irene Yoon/ Special to the Bear Witness

57%
of people aged 18 to 34 years old say they are extremely likely to vote.
Source: Circle

As seniors step into adulthood, their knowledge strengthens, and they gain a political voice and opportunity to participate in American democracy. Through education and curiosity, students can recon-

27%
of eligible voters between 18 and 29 years of age vote.
Source: Earthwise

sider their opinions and use this opportunity to vote. "I'm just one person. I'm just one vote," Schlosser said. "But one vote can make a difference."

CLUBS

BROADENING YOUR HORIZONS

Branham clubs provide students with volunteer opportunities

COLIN KALANGES
Staff Writer

Branham offers numerous opportunities for students to engage with their communities and help others. From Best Buddies to Bake-a-Change, there are many different volunteer organizations that appeal to every student's own unique interests.

Pave the Way is a new club this year aimed to educate students about volunteering and provide opportunities to students. The club provides encouragement for students who want to be more involved in their community but are unsure of where to start. The president of the club, junior **Aldina Metovic**, has a goal to make it so students aren't overwhelmed by the prospect of volunteering.

"I feel it's hard to get involved in our community, and I really

want to help people with that," Metovic said. "We are [going to] help kids figure out ways to efficiently organize all their hours and how to log [them]."

Similar to Pave the Way, Branham's Key Club also offers students a wide range of volunteer options. Key Club is an organization all around California that is centered around connecting high school students to different organizations such as schools, food banks and charities.

"We're so busy with our own lives that Key Club gives an opportunity for students to develop a new perspective by involving themselves in things that are going on around them," junior **Erica Kim**, the president of Branham's Key Club said.

Kim claims that not only is volunteering a good way to gain experience for college, but it also is very rewarding for many students. For Metovic and Kim, volunteering has given them a new way of seeing things.

"Volunteering itself offers so much more," Kim said. "not only do you get to spend time with your friends, but you get to spend time in the community."

According to Kim, students are afraid to join clubs as they think the time commitment is difficult to manage. Yet she believes that it shouldn't stop anyone from joining and learning from such experiences.

Another club based on volunteering is Bake-a-Change. Its goal is to connect students with non profits through fundraising money by selling baked goods. The club president junior **Michelle Dong** is committed to using her passion for baking as a means to help people in her community.

"It's a great experience. You get to meet new people and open up to a lot of new opportunities. You can meet other people in the club who love to do similar things," Dong said.

MEET THE EDITORS



Introducing the Bear Witness Adviser and Editorial Staff for the 2024-2025 school year.



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ANABELLE WALKER
Managing Editor



YUJIN CHO
News Editor



MILA WINDELL
Student Life Editor

TUTORIAL

TUTORIAL RESTRICTIONS

Branham implements Flexisched, a new tutorial scheduling program

NEVAEH GUTIERREZ
Staff Writer

This year, Branham implemented the new tutorial scheduling system FlexiSched, which allows students to digitally select their tutorial rooms at the start of the week and for teachers to assign or remove students from their rooms.

FlexiSched replaced the old system 5-Star, which required students to enter their ID numbers at the start of each tutorial period. While this allowed students to have up until the start of tutorial that day to decide where they're going, it enabled students to get away with skipping because of inconsistent attendance taking.

Additionally, FlexiSched lets teachers schedule their tutorials for things like retakes or review days for certain students, providing them an easier and more organized way to do those.

Assistant Principal **Scott Savory**, who is the official administrator of the rollout of FlexiSched, said Westmont High School had success implementing FlexiSched last year which is what inspired the Branham administration to use the program.

Branham administration got the chance to tour Westmont after they had been using FlexiSched for a while and talked with students to get their honest feedback on the system.

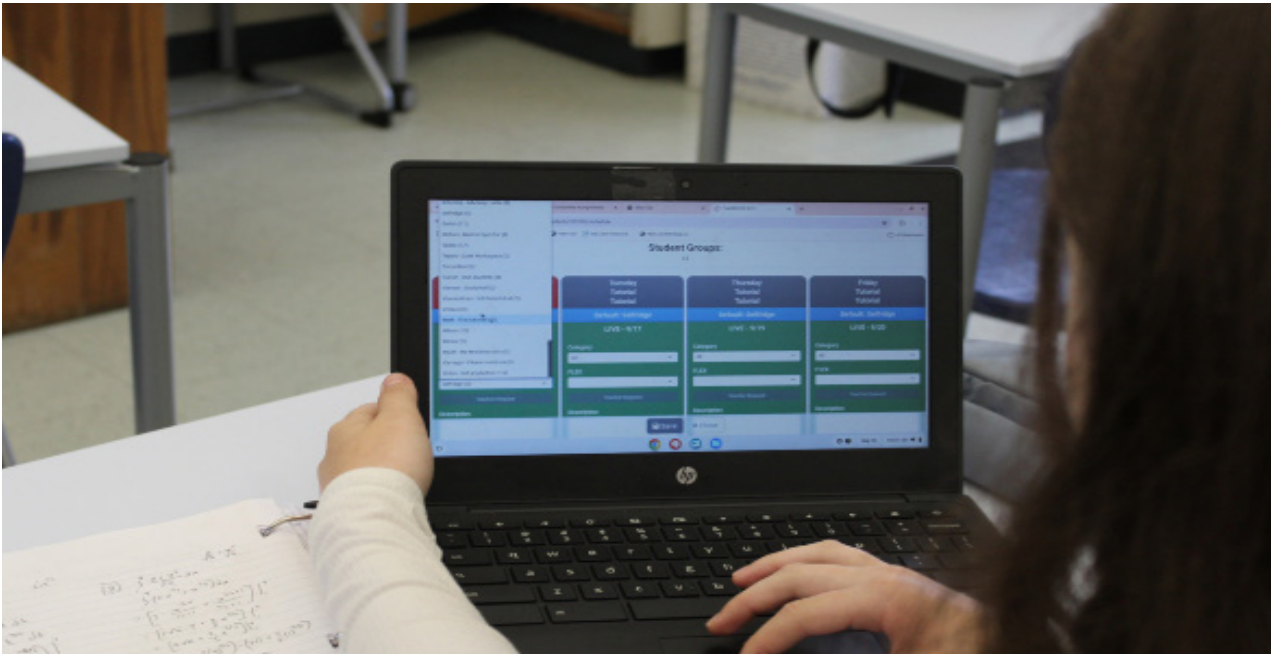
"[Westmont students] said it was really hard when it first rolled out, just because they were used to 5-Star they said it was very confusing and they didn't really understand it," Savory said. "That was at the beginning of the year, they were already half-way through the second semester, and they said nothing but great things [about FlexiSched]."

Branham students are experiencing the same confusion with FlexiSched as students at Westmont had. Some students, like senior **Kevin Toren**, said that the implementation of FlexiSched felt very rushed and made the transition difficult. Toren, who is familiar with programming, is not confident that it will be successful because of the errors with the serviceability of the program.

"[Flexisched] seems like something a first-year college student might do in a computer science class," he said. "[It has a] basic user interface, and it errors all the time and is slow to load."

Toren says that FlexiSched was not the right solution to students being unaccounted for during tutorials, as he feels as though the administration is being distrustful of students.

"[I] was not the type of person who would just get Chick-fil-A during tutorial, but I appreciated being able to walk around and not have to worry about scheduling my day," Toren said, "I'm a



Nevaeh Gutierrez /Bear Witness

good student, I shouldn't be penalized [because] a couple of people went out [during] tutorial."

Junior **Narasa Jandhyala** also dislikes FlexiSched saying that it has created more of an inconvenience. In certain circumstances, students such as herself, may not know what tutorials they need to sign up for the week prior.

"[What if] midway through the week, we get an assignment that we think we need help on, but the sign-up times close at the beginning of the week?" Jandhyala said. "Then we're not able to get help from that teacher on time."

However, Savory says that there are plans to allow students to schedule their tutorial up until about an hour before they begin.

"Any time that you're rolling out a program to 2000 students and over 100 staff members, it's going to be a little bit of a slow process," Savory said.

Assistant Principal **David Levy** says that FlexiSched has already shown a positive impact on campus as the administration is already seeing fewer students roaming the hallways during tutorials compared to previous years.

"[FlexiSched] allows students to know where they're going and know [if] they [are] able to be there," Levy said. "It hopefully gives them the full tutorial time to be engaged with whatever they need to do."

Savory says the administration is working to make the rollout of FlexiSched as smooth as possible and despite the minor hiccups, he is optimistic that students will come to like FlexiSched.

"Teachers have been great and patient about it. Students have been working with us on it," Savory said. "I think ultimately it'll be really effective in helping everyone know what [they] need to get done during tutorial."

PHONE POLICY

NEW POLICY TAKEOVER

Districtwide cell phone policy introduced at Branham

TIBAULT THOEN
Staff Writer

In August, Campbell Union High School District rolled out a new district-wide cell phone policy for 2024-2025 school year. The policy requires all personal electronic devices to remain silenced and put away during the instructional day, defined as from 8:30 a.m. to the last enrolled period, excluding passing periods and lunch.

This policy aligns with a broader national movement aimed at curbing smartphone use in schools. In high schools, Pew Research Center noted that 72% of teachers view phone distractions as a major problem in the classroom, contributing to an environment less focused on learning and more on digital engagement.

To combat this, Gov. Gavin Newsom signed the Phone-Free School Act, which requires every school district, charter school, and county office of education to implement a policy that limits the use of smartphones by July 1, 2026. This new state policy has forced CUHSD administrators such as Director of Student Services **Courtney Schembri** to take further action.

"Upon returning from COVID, there was a concern about student behavior," Schembri said. "When surveyed, staff reported student cell phone use as a main issue seen in our schools."

Since the phone policy is districtwide rather than on a teacher-by-teacher basis, it has gained more cooperation from students regarding phone use and maintaining cognitive focus in the classroom. For students like senior **Dylan Lear**, this change has been a positive one.

"The new phone policy has improved my learning experience because now I'm less distracted by others who were previously ignoring the teacher and causing chaos," Lear said. "At the end of the day, putting your phone away is just 20 seconds between the beginning and the end of class. You do it when you're walking through the door. It's not affecting your day."

This differs from the old policy that didn't clearly state that students were not allowed to be on their cell phones while going to the bathroom and outside the classroom during class.

The district's stricter stance has yielded noticeable changes in behavior and classroom dynamics, according to math teacher **Jennifer Brady**, who has observed positive shifts in her students' focus.

"Conversations and engagement are up," Brady said. "If students had the control to police themselves, it wouldn't be an issue, but my experience is if they have access to their phones, they're going to use them."

She added that since the policy's implementation, her students seem to be adapting well, with fewer reminders needed to put phones away.

One of the main reasons for enacting the policy was the lack of student control over their own devices. Teachers have emphasized to the district and the board about the need for a policy that would limit student's control of their devices.

English teacher **Jeannine Black** echoed Brady's observations, appreciating the consistency that the districtwide policy has brought to the school environment.

Black believes policing phones is commonplace but wholly unnecessary. She views it as a waste of energy and time, as it detracts from vital instructional learning hours.

"I'm seeing fewer kids in the halls with their phones, which means more kids are in their classrooms doing their work," said Black. "It feels like the energy around here is calmer, more focused. I've gotten far less pushback on my original cell phone policy."

72%
of teachers view cellphones as a major distraction in the classroom
Source: Pew Research Center



Mila Windell/Bear Witness



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Opinion Editor



ELLIOTT YAU
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AIDAN WEILER
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FRANCISCO PHAM
Sports Editor



YALE WYATT
Bear Witness Adviser

"I'm happy that I'm advising the always-exciting Bear Witness newsroom."
Yale Wyatt, Bear Witness adviser

SPORTS

Sports briefs

Football - Football: The Branham football team is trying to recreate the magic from the last two seasons and make another push for CCS. Currently, Wide receivers senior **Zayne St. Laurent** and junior **Brayden Hodges** are both 1st (654) and 2nd (517) in receiving yards in the Mt. Hamilton league, respectively. Additionally, senior defensive end **Thomas Nguyen** is leading the league in sacks (6.5).Senior Quarterback **Jack Lewis** is also leading the league in passing. **Record:** Varsity: 4-2; JV: 3-3

Girls volleyball The team is contiuing their dynastic run in the last few years and is hoping to be crowned league champions once more. Senior **Giselle Paedon** currently leads the team in Kills Per Set (4.2) and hitting percentage (0.33%) **Record:** Varsity: 16-2; JV: 10-8

Field hockey The Bruins are doing well in general play and are looking to make a run at CCS. Senior **Lilia Chatfield** leads the team in goals (11) and assists(7) . **Record:** Varsity: 7-3-1 ; JV: 1-2-2

Girls tennis The tennis team sits just above .500 and will look to contiune to add wins for a run at CCS. **Record:** Varsity: 9-7

Boys water polo The boys water polo team struggled in a higher division this year, and are currently winless on the season. They wil look to gain more game experience and caputre their first win of the season. **Record:** Varsity: 0-9; JV: 2-1

Girls water polo The girls water polo team is currently sitting at just above .500 and will look to gain momentum for a playoff push. **Record:** Varsity: 3-2;

Cross country Both cross country teams are doing well, however with only 2 league meets they must capitalize for a run at CCS. **Record:** Boys: 1-2; Girls 2-1

Compiled by Francisco Pham

For the latest updates and home game recaps, vist @bhsbearwitness on instagram.

GAME ATTENDANCE

EMPTY STANDS

Some sports receive more student attendance than others

YUJIN CHO
News Editor

Football games are characterized by roaring encouragement from the student section, live music and enthusiastic cheerleaders. However, this level of student participation is not the case across all sports at Branham. In a poll surveying 299 Branham students on sports attendance, results showed that 76% of students attended two or more football games per season, compared to 31% of students for volleyball, 9% for water polo and 5% for field hockey. Athletic Director **Kaleb Lane** explains how the sizes of certain teams contribute to varying amounts of participation from students. “The football team carries over 100 people on that team,” Lane said. “If you think about those 100 people having their groups of friends out throughout the school, they’re going to have a greater population they know that will go to their games.” Additionally, junior **William Tischhauser** says some sports are more embedded in standard high school culture than others. “Football games and high school are synonymous with each other,” Tischhauser said. Junior **Talia Heneghan**, a varsity field hockey player, believes that the common public misunderstanding of the sport and its nuances are the main reasons why field hockey does not attract as many spectators as other sports. “It kind of sucks sometimes,” Heneghan said. “There’s fewer people there to cheer for you, but I’ve never really played a sport that people watch.” According to Heneghan, who also has a background in club field hockey, the levels of attendance for club games are similarly limited to family members. Although a smaller audience lessens the spirit and encouragement,



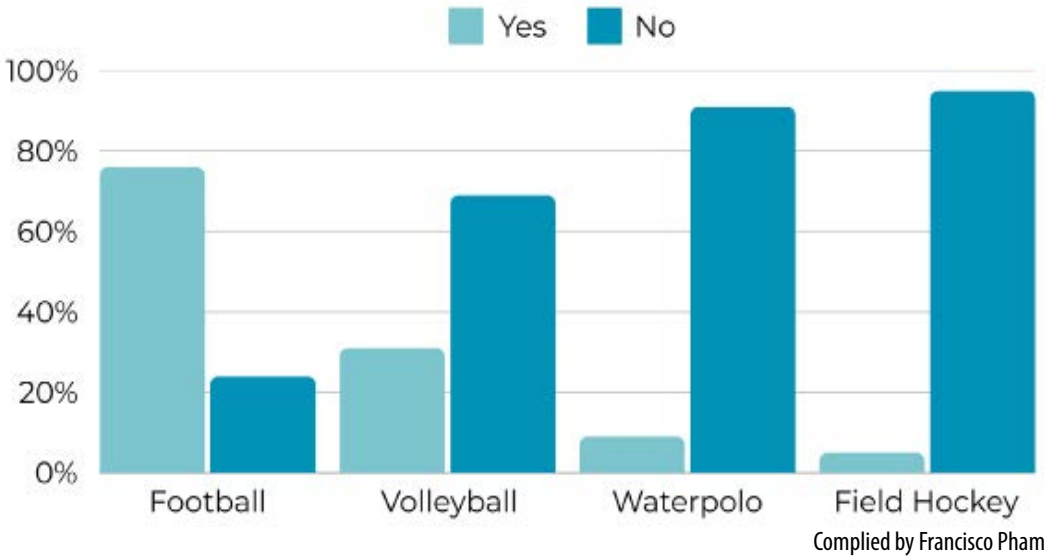
Francisco Pham/ Bear Witness

Branham students cheer in the student section at the football home-opener last year.

it also decreases the pressure to win and perform well. In addition, the mainstream consumption of sports such as football encourages students to attend more of those nationally popular sports rather than less frequently consumed sports. According to Statista, a data gathering company, football (National Football League), baseball (Major League Baseball) and basketball (National Bas-

ketball Association) were the three most viewed sports based on data from 2023. “The popularity [and mainstream media] of certain sports and the popularity of what these sports have been doing [also contributes to the difference],” Lane said. “Not too many people know the nuances of field hockey out here in the states, including water polo. They’re not as mainstream as football or volleyball would be.” Lane also believes other factors may draw attention to certain sports as well, such as the success of the teams. In his perspective, the girls volleyball team’s three consecutive league championships and the recent Olympic debut of Taylor Averill, a former member of the boys volleyball program, have contributed to a rise in student attendance at the girls volleyball games. For Tischhauser, mandatory attendance as a member of the band and the differences in spirit from themes and events are the reasons why he mainly attends football games over other sports. Specifically, themed games and collaborations with different communities and organizations likethe Best Buddies games and Dig Pink make football more attractive than other sports. “It’s just more enticing to go to a football game when there’s a cool event going on,” Tischhauser said. “It feels more put together like an actual event rather than just a game. You’re actually being a part of something by contributing and doing your part [by participating in themes].” Overall, the athletics department is working towards finding ways to improve student attendance across all sports offered at Branham. “[Sports attendance] always has a positive impact,” Lane said. “The more people that come to games, the more people are supporting, and the more supported the team feels.”

BRANHAM SPORTS ATTENDANCE



STUDENT ATHLETES

Scoring goals and A's

Balancing school and sports

ENOCH SHIN
Staff Writer

An athlete at night and a student in the morning. The double life of a student-athlete is complicated and has benefits and downfalls, no matter what sport a student plays. As students settle into the new school year, the back and forth of athletics and academics causes friction in many student-athletes’ schedules. One such drawback is the wearing down of a person’s physical body and time, according to Global Town School’s blog from February 2024. Physical Education teacher **Abby Harris** believes that while being an athlete is difficult to manage school work. “I think the more competitive you get, and you know, the more time that you’re focused on your sport, it does take away from your academics,” Harris said. Yet so many students keep on playing a sport due to the enjoyment and benefits, such as a higher percentage of better health and lower rates of depression than a non-student athlete, according to a study done by the National Library of Medicine. Some students quit sports after a few years for many reasons such as personal preference or the pressure of competitive sports. Senior **Taylor McKeon**, who is middle on the Varsity Volleyball team, believes that there are many benefits to being a student-athlete, such as making more friends and learning time management. “I have learned to manage my time well, and I made a

lot of friends,” McKeon said. McKeon, who has been a part of the volleyball program for all of her 4 years in high school, had learned to manage her time and along the way made new friends. The difference in being a student-athlete is from its demand for more commitment, especially in volleyball. With Branham Girls and Boys volleyball winning around 11-12 CCS awards individually since 2008, volleyball is much more competitive at Branham. “Branham takes playing sports a lot more seriously,” McKeon said. “That’s what makes our volleyball team so good.” Harris claims that taking your sport seriously is an important factor students have to manage. “It takes a lot of commitment and a lot of time. I think the more competitive you get and the more time that you’re focused on your sport, it does take away from your academics,” Harris said. For many reasons, students might choose to take PE for 2 years instead of 4 years of sports. According to the Centers for Disease Control, “Supporting schools to establish physical education daily can provide students with the ability and confidence to be physically active for a lifetime”. But no matter what a student takes: a sport, PE, or no exercise at all, exercise is important for mental and physical well-being. It also gives students who don’t play a sport a chance to exercise with their classmates. Harris insists that taking P.E. for two years at Branham is a much better option rather

than taking a sport. She believes that with the different P.E pathways currently available, it also allows students to focus on what type of exercise they want to participate in, similarly to choosing a sport. “I think the easiest and the best option is just taking P.E. for two years, we’ve opened up our P.E. program to allow different pathways now,” Harris said. “We now offer options for weight training and personal fitness,” Harris said. Harris claims that P.E. Is a great program to get into for athletics, but also mentions that the camaraderie of a school sports team is also valuable. “I think you have a great social aspect of it. You are committed to a team. You have that team camaraderie,” Harris said. “You get to participate in the games, to be a part of that Branham community.”

“ I feel like you just have to learn to balance your time. For me, I began to write more on my agenda. I use my calendar a lot more than I used to. Overall, I try to figure out what I need to do and try to focus on it day by day. ” Freshman **Vesper Bottu-Manzi** Frosh-Soph Volleyball player

ATHLETIC SCHOLARSHIPS

SCHOLARSHIPS OR FUN?

Students play sports for college or recreation

KIANNA SANCHEZ
Staff Writer

Sports take a lot of time and effort from student-athletes both on and off the field. While some utilize these extracurriculars to earn scholarships for college, others pursue sports for enjoyment.

According to Educational Week, around 57% of high school students living in the U.S. participated in a sport their high school offered in the past year. However, the National Collegiate Athletics Association stated 2% of high school athletes earned athletic scholarships to college.

Not all athletic scholarships are full rides; in fact, most of them are partial. According to Next College Student Athlete, only 0.1% of students in the U.S. get a full ride athletic scholarship. This means the other 1.9% of students getting a scholarship get partial scholarships, rather than a full ride.

The vast majority of student-athletes don't pursue scholarships because of the slim chances of success. Many high school students don't intend to earn athletic scholarships because of the slim chances of earning one or their ability to do so.

Sophomore **Graciela Ebner** plays on the girls' tennis and soccer teams. She consistently played tennis for about nine years every summer. After losing touch with tennis as a kid, Ebner joined the Branham tennis program to get back in the flow of practicing tennis, falling back in love with the sport as a way to have fun.

"I've [played tennis] since I was pretty young. [I would play tennis] every summer, consistently for a few years, and then I stopped," Ebner said.

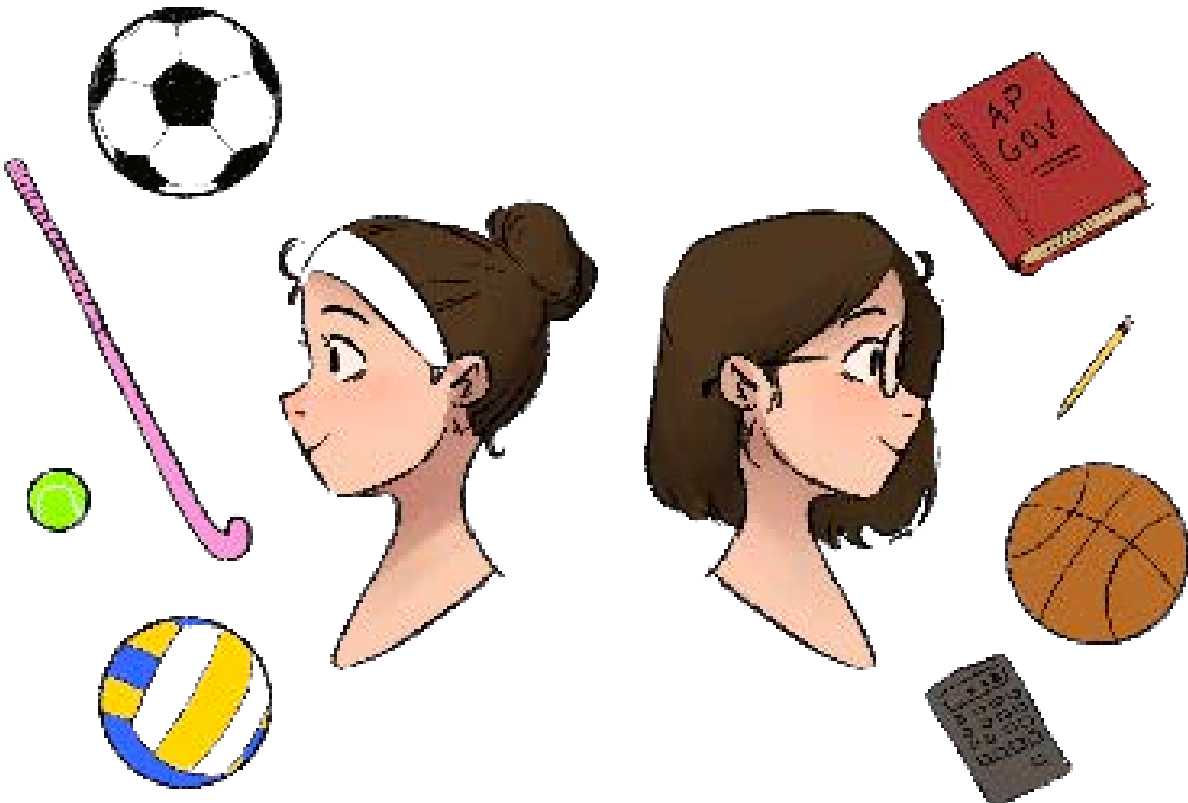
While some athletes like Ebner don't intend to pursue collegiate sports, other dedicated athletes are interested in college-level sports to continue their passion or take advantage of scholarship opportunities.

Sophomore **Megan McAllister** is a goalkeeper on the varsity water polo team. When she was younger, she played for fun and the physical benefits, but she became interested in college water polo as she got older. Now, she hopes to earn a scholarship at a coastal college in California.

"[My mindset] shifted," McAllister said. "A scholarship would be really great."

Varsity field hockey head coach **Sarah Pereyra** previously coached at clubs like Strikers and San Jose Fly before she began coaching at Branham three years ago.

"I know we had someone go play [field hockey] in college last year," Pereyra said. "Two or three girls wanted to go [and play in college], but ultimately, only one went."



David Tran/Bear Witness

Pereyra explains that only a few girls had the goal of gaining a scholarship to play field hockey in college. She also claims that only one actually succeeded in that process. Other girls have different motives for playing field hockey as a high school sport.

"Some people are doing it for sports P.E., and then [they] end up really liking it," Pereyra said. "Some people are doing field hockey

because they've played it since they were little."

According to Pereyra, few people play field hockey with the intention of continuing their journey after high school, with most playing for other reasons, a common one being sports P.E.

"If they want to go further, then they go further, but at the end of the day, everybody's here to have a good time," Pereyra said.

P.E. OPPORTUNITES

Long a-weighted P.E. alternatives

Newly introduced classes can fullfill P.E. credit

EMMETT SPEARS
Staff Writer

This school year, Personal Fitness and Introduction to Weight Training, two new alternative physical education classes, have been added to the course list. Both courses are available to those who have passed P.E. 1.

In order to allow students a wider variety of options, the Campbell Union High School District decided to create a Personal Fitness class and change the original Weight Training class to Intro to Weight Training, according to P.E. department chair **Laura Andersson**.

"We realized that not everybody fits the mold of traditional P.E. and might want other options," Andersson said.

Personal Fitness focuses on teaching students about health, exer-

cise methods, and fitness principles. Sophomore **Stella Kokologiannakis**, who is taking the class, said these lessons can positively change her life.

"I realized Personal Fitness was probably better to take in order to allow for more flexibility in my life," Kokologiannakis said. "It also allows me to take what I'm learning in this class and apply it to something that I can actually use."

Personal Fitness teacher **Greg Stefani** sees the class as an opportunity to teach students methods of exercise they may not have considered previously.

"Students should take this class if they're interested in learning about all different types of workouts," Stefani said. "We use the weight room often, but we've done tai chi this year. I plan on doing a whole bunch of different types of workouts [since] everyone has a

different style of workout that they enjoy."

Introduction to Weight Training is the other alternative to standard P.E. being offered this year. Students learn various weight training exercises and get a chance to utilize many machines and other equipment in the weight room. Sophomore **Solei Lao** views this new class as a change of pace instead of a repeat of last year.

"I really didn't feel like retaking P.E. again because it's inconvenient to do the swim unit, and I didn't want to dance [again]," Lao said. "It's almost the same stuff, so I thought weight training was a better alternative."

These classes are an improvement to the standard P.E. class for many as they get to do more things that they believe are beneficial for their health, such as weight lifting, learning how to use workout machines, and cardio exercises.

"I enjoy that it pushes you harder than a regular P.E. class would because in weight training, you're actually forced to do harder workouts," Lao said.

For P.E. teachers throughout the district, this decision comes along with a noticeable cultural shift among students in favor of fitness.

"We understand there's been a shift in culture, so I'm just making that shift to what people really want to focus more on," Andersson said. "If they're going to work out more personal health, less team-oriented or partner-oriented activities."

Besides teaching students about physical exercise, these classes can provide benefits areas such as mental health. According to a study by The Lancet Psychiatry, individuals who exercised regularly had an average of 43.2% fewer self-reported "days of poor mental health" and a lower mental health burden.

"I think it's always really important to understand why we do what we do, the connection, especially between mental health and exercise," Andersson said. "I'm hoping that people understand the importance of physical exercise and how it makes them feel while taking these classes."

Accompanying students' growing interest in fitness is a curiosity about other teachable skills that they believe they can learn in these classes.

"Something that would be really important would be self-defense or learning more about how to do things more practically down the line," Kokologiannakis said.

Additionally, P.E. teachers and the department are continuing to investigate how these classes can be improved to support the students, as the courses are still in their infancy. As the classes continue to improve, Stefani and Andersson have hope for the future and are happy about students willing to try the new courses.

"It's nice having some students that want to work out," Stefani said. "They want to learn, as opposed to [us] forcing them because it's their choice that they've taken it."



Emmett Spear/ Bear Witness

Two students practice lifting weights in Intro to Weight Training, one of the two new P.E. classes introduced this year.

ARTS & CULTURE

MINI REVIEWS

MOVIE



Beetlejuice Beetlejuice
Directed by Tim Burton
Warner Bros Pictures

What it is: Released on Sept. 6th, this sequel to Beetlejuice (1988) follows Lydia and her daughter Astrid as they tackle unfinished business with tormenting supernatural beings and the afterlife.

Liked: Similarly to the first Beetlejuice, this movie was very comedic throughout and provided me with some good laughs.

Disliked: There was one scene in the movie where all the characters were singing, and it felt a lot like a musical, which was a little out of place.

— Tamara Restrepo

ALBUM



Short n' Sweet
Sabrina Carpenter
Island Records

What it is: Sabrina Carpenter's sixth studio album, released on Aug. 23. Featuring themes of love and modern day romance, the record traverses a musical landscape of the emotional ups and downs that come with a relationship. It features a wide variety of genres, drawing inspiration from classic R&B, disco, and rock.

Liked: Each song on this album has a unique sound, yet they all come together to create a surprisingly cohesive listening experience. Songs like "Slim Pickins" and "Taste", driven by memorable country and rock guitar melodies, sit comfortably alongside songs like "Espresso", a funk and disco pop song. The album's diversity provides listeners with something for everyone to enjoy.

Disliked: The album lacks depth as many of the lyrics are very surface level. There are some moments on the album that have no meaning further than creating a catchy hook.

— Dylan Collisson

MOVIE



Blink Twice
Zoë Kravitz
MGM Pictures

What it is: "Blink Twice", released on Aug. 23, is about a woman and her friends who were invited to a billionaire's luxurious island. The women appear to be having the vacation of their lives until they realize that it wasn't what it seemed.

Liked: I liked how creative the women were after they found out what was happening to them and how they took back control.

Disliked: I really disliked the acting of Channing Tatum, who played the billionaire Slater King. It was clearly intentionally unsettling, but I think he did a bad job portraying that characteristic.

— Ava Stark

FASHION

FITTING IN

Branham students use fashion as a form of self-expression

MILA WINDELL
Student Life Editor

At Branham, fashion plays an integral role in self-expression and allows students to truly showcase their individuality.

From meticulously crafting pieces the night before school, to sporting bold outfits in the hallways, how students dress each day reflects their personality, confidence and freedom to be whoever they want to be.

As a previous Fashion Club advisor and English teacher, **Lauren Cellini**

has seen firsthand how important fashion is to students.

"Fashion is an expression of someone's identity," Cellini said. "Not only can fashion express personal style or identity, but it can also show interests that are [a part] of finding an identity."

Senior former Fashion Club president **Ian Angelopoulos** knows this all too well. For him, fashion is more than an appearance; it is a way to express the truest version of himself.

Growing up, especially in middle school, Angelopoulos was judged for not fitting in. While he's always had

a knack for designing, it wasn't until high school that Andropolous felt comfortable embracing his style unapologetically.

"Middle school was such a close and small circle, and everyone knew each other," Andropolous said. "Being gay, I was made fun of for being different than them. But then I really embraced [my fashion] when I came to high school."

Angelopoulos believes that the scale of diversity at Branham helped him break free from the pressure of conformity he felt tied to in middle school. Angelopoulos began embracing "eclectic" and "at times funky" outfits, and eventually his passion for fashion spiraled into founding the Fashion Club, where he helped others feel confident in their uniqueness without judgment.

"If I was still stuck in middle school with middle school bullies, I don't know where I would be," Angelopoulos said. "I know I would not be this person right now if I didn't have the freedom to express myself through fashion."

Despite the freedom Angelopoulos appreciates about fashion, Cellini ac-

knowledges that while stepping outside of fashion norms can be intimidating, Branham students can feel comfortable wearing whatever they want.

"It can be scary for students to wear something different than everyone else. But I always encourage students to do what feels right for them," Cellini said.

Like Angelopoulos, senior **Jamison Nguyen** also shares a passion for styling his clothes and puts a lot of thought into his outfits. Nguyen's style mainly consists of T-shirts with funny phrases and clothes with his own designs.

He credits artists like Brent Faiyaz and Tyler the Creator for inspiring him to step outside of trends and grow his style. Often, his unconventional style results in pushback from others, but he still leans into his aesthetic. Instead of listening to critical comments, Nguyen has leaned into his unique choices as a sign of his individuality.

"I get criticism from my mom or people at school, but I just don't care," Nguyen said. "Wear what you want to wear. I wear what makes me feel good and that's the only thing that matters."



Naomi Bergman/Bear Witness
Jamison Nguyen (12) uses fashion to express himself in unique ways



Naomi Bergman/Bear Witness
Fashion Club president Ian Angelopoulos (12) has a passion for fashion

FANDOM FANATICS

Celebrities often unprepared for parasocial relationships that fans develop

NOA MUYAL
Staff Writer

Celebrity worship culture, where fans become too comfortable with public figures, is reflected in the media, whether it involves musicians, actors or athletes.

These relationships are described as parasocial — which means that the relationship between fan and celebrity is one-sided, and it often crosses boundaries when the two interact.

AP World History teacher and Taylor Swift fan **Sarah MacInnes** elaborates on how she sees this in today's society.

"It's hard for people [who are] fans of somebody because they connect with their [work], especially in today's social media age," MacInnes said.

Certain unreciprocated relationships have led some fans to violate the privacy of these admired celebrities. It has become a norm to follow celebrities and share their personal information online. For example, Taylor Swift's fans often track her every public move and discuss it extensively online.

This issue gained widespread attention recently after singer Chappell Roan posted a statement on her TikTok page saying she doesn't think it's rude to deny fans of her time for a picture or autograph. The message garnered support from many fans while others argued that such an invasion of privacy is simply part of the fame that

celebrities must navigate.

Junior **Madeleine Saunders**, a Chappell Roan fan, points out that this issue has multiple sides.

"It is a part of the job [of being a pop star], and you have to get around that," Saunders said. "But there's also points in time where [fame] gets too much or too crazy; then it could be a problem."

Intense attention from fans can be overwhelming for celebrities. These interactions can often take the form of fans bothering or harassing celebrities daily.



Justin Higuchi/Wikipedia Commons
Singer Chappell Roan, one of many celebrities to struggle with the mixed consequences of fame

However, being recognized by fans is an inherent part of the job, as MacInnes points out.

"It gets tricky because the artists are human beings," MacInnes said. "But they also chose a profession where they share a lot of themselves with other people."

According to her, parasocial relationships form because people do not fully realize how one-sided the perceived relationships are.

"[People] know the artist really well, but the artist doesn't know them at all," MacInnes said. "There's this divide between fans and the artist."

According to a Bear Witness Instagram poll, students agree that those in the entertainment industry deserve the same respect as strangers and should be relatively left alone.

"Celebrities are people too. If we can set boundaries with our friends, why can't they set boundaries with fans?" junior **Sydney Elliot** said in the poll.

Famous people sometimes struggle to find that fine line between their work and personal life. According to a BuzzFeed article, various celebrities told publications they couldn't grasp their level of fame and the impact it had on their privacy, leading them to hate their choice of career. It has led some to take a temporary or even permanent leave from fame. For example, singer Mitski took a temporary break in 2019



Raph_PH/Wikipedia Commons
Mitski, another musician, also took a break because of parasocial fans

because the rush of fame was getting hard to handle.

Similarly, Roan recently dropped out of the All Things Go Music Festival for mental health reasons concerning her overwhelmed emotions from new popularity.

This pressure often stems from fans' opinions of celebrities and their lifestyles. Those who admire artists may feel compelled to comment on their lives as if they are personally involved.

"Fans treat famous people as their friends or someone they know," Saunders said. "But [artists] don't know those people at all."

ARTS & CULTURE

CLUBS

MOVIE MEET-UP

Students express love of movies and connect with others through the Branham Film Club

DYLAN COLLISSON
Staff Writer

Branham is home to many different clubs, where students can find community and pursue their interests. Branham's Film Club, for example, holds in-depth discussions about films they choose weekly as a group.

In the film club, students delve into the world of filmmaking, going step by step through each element that makes a good movie.

Vice president **Sophia Begley** believes the club is helpful in fostering a community of people passionate for film.

"We created a group [of] people who like to watch movies, like to talk about movies, and who are passionate about film," Begley said.

Watching movies has become more than just a pastime. It plays a critical role in their social life, becoming a way to bond over the shared experience.

"We pick the movies out and then talk about them," club treasurer **Zoie Goldwasser** said. "It's a great way to get to know each other."

For Goldwasser, her love of film started at a young age.

"As a kid I loved Fantastic Mr. Fox," Goldwasser said. "After I watched it, I became really interested in stop motion animation. It sent me down a rabbit hole of researching stop motion, finding out how it works."

According to the club president **Melinda Kenney**, her passion for film stemmed from the community that is created when watching movies.

"It came from hanging out with friends and being around people experiencing something collectively," Kenney said. "The fact that it's so influential on people's lives, communities and cultures is really cool."

Kenney acknowledges that it may be overwhelming starting out in film, not knowing where to begin. Being the president of a club, she makes sure to highlight the importance of community when entering into the world of filmmaking while still encouraging others to pursue their dreams.

"Be open about what you're interested in and just seek out people that are like you, that will want to help you and are passionate about filmmaking as well," Kenney said. "It is cool to see different people's point of views and lives through their work."

The members of the club often analyze the work they watch, such as discussing its strengths and weakness. Goldwasser notes how this has affected the way she consumes media.

"The club has made me notice more things when I watch movies," Goldwasser said. "When I talk with other people about what goes into the making of a movie, it really puts into perspective what goes into making a film."

With their backgrounds in film analysis, some members hold strong opinions on what makes a good movie. From special effects to the environment, they believe it is really easy to make or break a movie.

"The soundtrack and the mood, specifically the lighting, play a large role," Begley said. "That really sets the mood. If you take a score out of a scene, it's not gonna feel the same."

Favoriting movies such as Christopher Nolan's Interstellar and J.R.R. Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings, both known for their memorable soundscapes, Gold-



Dylan Collisson/Bear Witness

Film Club treasurer Zoie Goldwasser (12), vice president Sophia Begley (12) and president Melinda Kenny (12)

wasser also pointed out how important music is to a scene.

"If you take the music out of the background of those movies, it can sound really empty," Goldwasser said. "Music definitely makes the atmosphere."

Having a love for horror, Begley believes movies like A24's Midsommar develop the story immensely through their costume design. Without the movie's subtle attention to detail, Bedley believes the movie would not have had the same effect.

"Their outfits are white mostly, which is perceived to be innocent even though they are a cult," Begley said.

Begley explains how watching low budget films allows her to see further into the movie beyond surface level impression.

"I got really into horror movies over quarantine," Begley said. "I like bad horror movies because they're just funny, but also because you can see a lot more of the production because they don't cover it up as much."

Along with that, Begley explains how her interest in special effects developed immensely while analyzing movie wardrobes.

"I like special effects," Begley said. "Seeing how people do the things like the hair and the makeup, especially for period pieces, are really cool. In the movie The Vvitch they use period costumes that are simple because the setting of the movie is on the American homefront."

In fact, this interest has led Begley to spend her time partaking in special effects for Branham's own projects.

"I sometimes do hair and makeup for the plays here," Begley said. "I also do costuming for musicals. I recently did Geeks Versus Zombies. I did all the special effect zombies and I was the main makeup artist."

But like most people, Begley did not gain her skills overnight.

"I learned from a lot of YouTube videos, looking up good products," Begley said. "Products are important. It's a lot of trial and error."

When asked about how one should take the first step into the world of filmmaking, Goldwasser emphasizes the importance of exposure.

"Watching the work of a lot of other people is the best way to get started," she said. "You can see different perspectives on how people do things, and how creative you can get."

Looking ahead, Begley hopes to be able to take her passion for film further.

"My dream job is to be a special effects artist for movies," Begley said. "If I could get into special effects for anything, it would be really cool."

On a similar note, Goldwasser would also like to work in film.

"It would be fun to work on a movie set, especially making sound for movies," Goldwasser said.

NEW CLASSES

NEW CREATIVE OUTLETS

Course provides opportunities for students to learn filmmaking skills and express themselves creatively

ABIGAIL MEDEIROS
Staff Writer

This school year, Branham introduced Digital Filmmaking as a new class, which not only fulfills CTE credits but it also provided a new avenue for the creative minds of students on campus.

Before this year, theater and digital film production teacher **Jennifer Sorkin** advocated for Digital Filmmaking to be added to the course list. Sorkin, who has a CTE credential for the pathway of Arts, Media

and Entertainment, taught for fifteen years, including seven years at Branham. With a new course, Sorkin was interested in teaching it because filmmaking is a valuable and important skill.

After the class was formally added to the Branham course catalog, a surplus of students like sophomore **Autumn Burns** signed up. She wanted to experience the newly introduced class, desiring to branch out into digital filmmaking and be the among the first Branham students to take the class.

"I heard [the class] was new, and I liked the idea of learning how to create things," Burns said.

Digital Filmmaking opens opportunities for a new kind of art at Branham while also teaching students things they may not learn in other classes.

"I believe it's important to be an educated media consumer. This class allows me to teach students the difference between good art and bad art," Sorkin said. "Filmmaking is a valuable skill, and students are sure to appreciate everything that goes into creating content for the public to see."

Not only does this new course benefit students taking the class by introducing a creative career path, it may also contribute to clearer communication and community on campus with announcements and film festivals.

"It is my hope that once we get the course going, we will be able to increase communication on campus by offering weekly announcements," Sorkin said. "I am also looking forward to hosting a film festival at the

end of the school year where film students can show their art to peers, parents and Branham staff."

Although new classes come with the challenge of building them from scratch, Sorkin explained how she feels equipped to handle any unknown aspects that come with being the first to teach a brand new class. Part of this is due to her experience in the arts.

"Digital Media Production has a good amount of overlap with theater in terms of organization, design, and storytelling, so that's helpful in starting a new class from scratch," Sorkin said. "I have experience in using the editing application we are using because I used it as a way to still produce plays online during the pandemic."

Not only is Sorkin confident in her own abilities, she is also confident in the abilities of her students to use their resources and other teachers within the Campbell Union High School District who have experience with teaching this course.

"YouTube videos are usually helpful. Our sister CUHSD schools have helpful film teachers who have a lot of experience teaching the class," Sorkin said. "The students themselves are pretty resourceful when it comes to figuring out technology."

Burns has enjoyed the class a lot so far, and many share excitement and anticipation for what the class has to offer in the coming year.

"I do recommend this class," Burns said. "If you're interested in any field of filmmaking, such as directing or editing, it's very helpful."

ARTS CALENDAR

IN SCHOOL

Band

Fall Band Concert

Oct. 29

Branham High School Cafeteria

What it is: At 7 p.m., the Branham Band will gather in the cafeteria to perform in their first concert of this school year. Viewers will witness the spooky music come to life before their eyes.

OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL

Crafts

SJMADE Holiday Fair

Nov. 29-30

Santa Clara Convention Center

What it is: From 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., people of all ages can participate in the holiday themed craft fair for free. The theme of Nov. 30 is Small Business Saturday, featuring artists and small business owners.

Music

Sabrina Carpenter's "Short n' Sweet" Tour

Nov. 9

San Francisco Chase Center

What it is: Following the release of her sixth studio album "Short n' Sweet", Sabrina Carpenter is bringing her music to San Francisco's Chase Center. Throughout her elaborate stage show, she will be performing songs from her new album, alongside songs from past projects.

Billie Eilish's "Hit Me Hard and Soft" Tour

Dec. 10-11

San Jose SAP Center

What it is: Local tour dates for Billie Eilish's tour supporting her latest album, "Hit Me Hard and Soft". Each show has its own theme for fans to match with Billie Eilish herself.

Movies

Terrifier 3

Oct. 11

Directed by Damien Leone

What it is: This new Christmas-themed horror movie shows a scary side to the joyful holiday. The third installment in the Terrifier franchise is expected to be horrifying as Art the Clown returns with a vengeance and hopes to ruin the Christmas cheer.

Smile 2

Oct. 18

Directed by Parker Finn

What it is: Smile 2, the sequel to the infamous original movie released in 2022, is a horror mystery starring actress Naomi Scott. The film will follow a similar plot line to the first movie, but instead will affect the life of fictional popstar Skye Riley as she battles to face her past.

Wicked

Nov. 22

Directed by Jon M. Chu

What it is: Wicked is the 2024 movie adaptation of the famous Broadway musical. Based on the book written by Gregory Maguire, the movie stars pop singer Ariana Grande and Cynthia Erivo, recounting the events that happened before Dorothy arrived in the Land of Oz.

Albums

Shawn

Nov. 15

By Shawn Mendes

What it is: "Shawn" is the self-titled, fourth studio album by Shawn Mendes. Featuring newly-released singles such as "Why Why Why" and "Isn't That Enough", the album is Mendes's first album release in over four years since his last record, which was titled "Wonder".

—Compiled by Dylan Collisson and Abigail Medeiros



Aidan Weiler/Bear Witness

COSTUME COUNTDOWN

As the leaves turn yellow and the winds become cooler, Halloween day creeps up on us. Here’s a deep dive into the opinions of students and teachers on one of the spookiest days of the year and its traditions of costumes and at-home festivities.

—Compiled by David Tran and Naomi Bergman
Illustrations by Naomi Bergman



Are students going trick-or-treating?

58%
of respondents plan on going trick-or-treating.

42%
will not go.

Department Dress-up

Every year, teachers from different departments coordinate their costumes.



Science teacher **Kevin Kalman** enjoys the spirit that teachers indulge in by organizing costume themes among their departments.



“One thing I like about Halloween is that kids can choose to be whatever they want. If you want to be a dinosaur, go be a dinosaur; [if] you want to be a ballerina, go be a ballerina.”

—**Jennifer Brady**, Math Department chair, whose favorite themes were Math Rocks and Where’s Waldo.



“We’re a really tight-knit department. We all genuinely enjoy working with each other, and we’re friends, so it’s fun.”
—English 1 teacher **Lauren Cellini**, who loves dressing up with her fellow department members for their group costume.



Ways to Celebrate the Spooky Season

- Going trick-or-treating
- Watching a scary movie
- Putting up spooky decorations
- Telling ghost stories
- Connecting with friends and family
- Going to pumpkin patches
- Passing out candy

What genre of costumes do students want to see?

42% Horror **36%** Pop culture **14%** Fantasy **8%** Sports