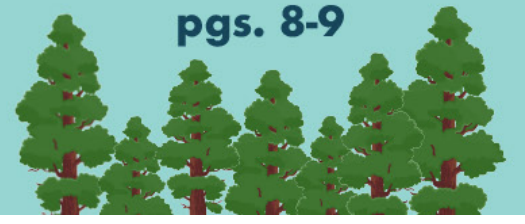


Blazing new trails!

Where the class of 2021 is going after graduation

pgs. 8-9

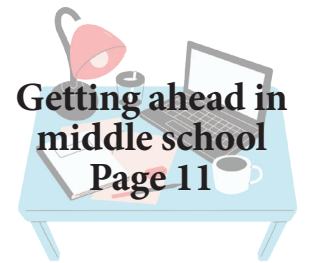


The ARAGON OUTLOOK

Thursday | May 20, 2021 | Volume 61, Issue 5

900 Alameda de las Pulgas, San Mateo, CA 94402

Aragon High School



Aragon Drama will stream "Forbidden Broadway" on May 21 at 7 p.m.

KAYLA SHIAO

Spring musical to premiere online

Kamron Ramelmeier
NEWS WRITER

Aragon Drama is concluding the year with a livestreamed performance of "Forbidden Broadway," which will take place on May 21 at 7 p.m. The musical satirizes different popular Broadway shows such as "The Lion King," "Annie" and "The Phantom of the Opera," and will be shorter than is typical fall musicals.

Director and drama teacher Shane Smuin originally did not have plans to organize any shows for the 2020-2021 season and only became open to the idea later in the school year.

"I didn't want to do anything because I didn't know what the students' responsibilities were going to be in Zoom and school," Smuin said. "Last semester was definitely bizarre. An activity we did [for Advanced Drama] was useful, productive and fun, and since it worked well, I decided to do a musical."

The cast is virtually preparing and rehearsing through Zoom, which poses some technical challenges.

"[Rehearsal isn't] going to be in person, which is a nightmare from an actor's perspective, because sometimes computers will glitch, you can't hear people correctly

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

Staff Oling, Hontalas and Imbimbo to retire

Marlee Cherkas
NEWS WRITER

Teachers Guy Oling and Susan Hontalas and music accompanist Kevin Imbimbo will be retiring from Aragon after the 2020-2021 school year.

Oling, Aragon's head golf coach and a physical education teacher, plans to retire to make time for travel and relaxation. During his time at Aragon, Oling especially appreciated his relationships between colleagues.

"A real value of teaching is the learning situation for the students but also the interaction and collegiality of the teachers, administrators [and] coaches," Oling said.

Throughout his years at Aragon, Oling taught U.S. history, government and Earth Science, ultimately switching to PE in 2005. He also held the position of dean of students. Outside of the classroom, he has been a championship-winning coach of swim, soccer and golf teams.

"Most of the goals that I set [have been] accomplished," Oling said. "Being able to work with students has been successful not only in the classroom, but [also] in the field."

Hontalas has taught classes at Aragon since 1999, including Foods and Nutrition, Culinary Arts and Independent Living, where students learn to support themselves

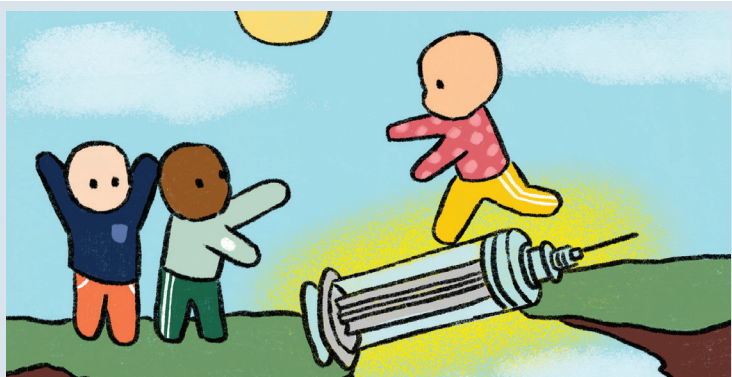
in adulthood.

"My biggest goal was to be a life skills teacher, and it was really important to me to teach students life skills," Hontalas said. "I feel that I've been successful in that."

In September of 2019, Hontalas broke her arm, which led her to consider retirement since she wanted to spend some time traveling. The uncertainty of the future was what ultimately caused Hontalas to end her teaching career.

"It really was breaking my arm [that] spurred me on to thinking, 'What if something else happens to you, and you won't be able to do what you wanted to do?'" Hontalas said.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



EMILY FENG

Students share their COVID-19 vaccine experiences

Alexandra Ding
NEWS WRITER

On May 10, the Food and Drug Administration approved the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine for 12 to 15-year-olds as clinical trials reported the vaccine had 100% efficacy for this age group. Two other companies, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson, are conducting their own clinical trials and plan on making vaccines available for adolescents as early as fall of 2021. Until then, the experiences of many Aragon students over 16, who were vaccinated mainly because they are essential workers, offer a glimpse of what will come.

Senior Taylor Rokala works at Sibby's Cupcakery in San Mateo and was eligible for a COVID-19 vaccine at the end of February thanks to her food service worker status. Her employer encouraged her to receive the shot, and after several visits to the registration website, Rokala secured an appointment for Pfizer's vaccine at a Walgreens in San Francisco. She brought pay stubs as proof of her employment, but found them unnecessary.

"It was pretty easy," Rokala said. "I just showed [the Walgreens employees] my confirmation and my ID, and they were like, 'Okay, fill this form

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Retiring staff members Guy Oling, Susan Hontalas and Kevin Imbimbo bid farewell at the end of the 2020-2021 school year.

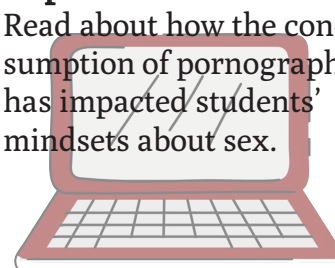


RAHUL VISHWA, AIDAN GERBER AND COURTESY OF EL TESORO

FEATURES

Impacts of Porn

Read about how the consumption of pornography has impacted students' mindsets about sex.

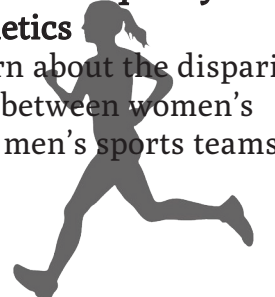


PAGE 12

SPORTS

Gender Inequality in athletics

Learn about the disparities between women's and men's sports teams.



PAGE 15

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The San Mateo County Fair will reopen on June 5.

GRACE XIA

San Mateo County Fair to reopen

Kiara Lopez
NEWS WRITER

The San Mateo County Fair will take place from June 5 to 13 at the San Mateo Event Center after a year of suspension due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Since San Mateo's tier switched from red to orange on March 17, the county fair was permitted to host a traditional walking fair rather than the proposed alternative of a drive-thru fair. Since then, San Mateo County moved to the yellow tier on May 11.

"There [has] been a lot of excitement, ... [and] ticket sales have been phenomenal," said county fair event coordinator Kerry McArdle. "A lot of people are saying 'Thank you' and 'Glad that the fair is back.' It's such a tradition, and last year, to not hold the fair, was so devastating for some people. [That's] one of the reasons why the county wanted to do this for the community and be able to bring it back."

The county fair has been running for 87 years and has become an annual tradition for generations to enjoy. It was originally called the "Little Flower Show," but became the "San Mateo County Fair" during its revitalization in 1935. With a mission to promote and educate about culture, technology, agriculture, arts, horticulture and sustainability, the fair's motto is "Where Tradition Meets Innovation."

"[The fair is a] diverse place where you can eat, watch concerts and competitions [and] even see animals, so there [are] ... activit[ies] that any person can do," said freshman Aimar Cruz Parada. "Everyone deserves to experience it at least once."

California's orange tier allows for 25% capacity. To minimize physical contact, tickets will only be sold online and digitally scanned at the entrance. The fair will follow COVID-19 safety regulations by requiring the use of face masks, a distance of six feet in between groups, composed of a maximum of three households and sanitation of contact points every 30 minutes.

"There'll be a couple of health questions upon entry and a temperature check," McArdle said. "Halfway through the day at 4

to 4:30, they're going to clean all the carnival equipment. That's something that has not happened in the past. You'll [also] see a lot more hand sanitizers [and] plexiglass."

The fair will include its usual treats and activities: carnival rides, funnel cake, pig races, animals, barbecue, the ferris wheel and many other activities, one of which includes demonstrations from the robotics team. So far, the set list of performers has not been finalized due to the fair's last-minute announcement of reopening plans in mid-March.

"Typically, [we] would have started planning in the fall of 2020," McArdle said. "[This year], everything's going to be done in a short time frame. [However], because of COVID-19, [there] will be limited attendance and [less] commercial vendors ... than in the past."

Aragon Robotics has attended the San Mateo County Fair for the past several years. This year, they will be stationed at the drone zone on June 5 and June 12, allowing guests to operate a robot created by the team.

"[The fair] really gives Aragon Robotics more exposure to other people and more contact with potential robotics members in the future," said sophomore robotics team member Bethany Yeung. "It also allows us to reach more kids ... [to] get them interested in the STEM field, robotics, programming and technical building, which is super fun."

Due to distance learning, in-person meetings have been limited to a small number of Aragon Robotics members, resulting in a tight schedule.

"The robotics team is very excited to be back at the fair this year," said sophomore Andrea San Miguel, Aragon Robotics' outreach captain. "When we heard it was cancelled last year, everyone was bummed out as it's one of our most popular and fun outreach events that the whole team loves to get involved with. We're very excited and thankful to have been invited."

Although the county fair will look different this year amidst the pandemic, it nevertheless will offer its annual activities and booths for all San Mateo County residents to enjoy.

Students propose climate emergency declaration to the SMUHSD

Carolyn Mish
NEWS WRITER

New environmental policy is on the horizon in San Mateo. On March 11, during the San Mateo Union High School District board meeting's session for public comment, San Mateo High School junior Atiya Shah urged the board to agendize a discussion of a climate resolution for the scheduled April 1 meeting. This resolution, similar to those passed at local and state levels, declared a state of climate emergency within the district and highlighted actions that they would take to prioritize sustainability and environmental concerns. It passed unanimously on April 1.

Shah represented the San Mateo County Youth Commission as the Environmental Justice Committee's co-chair. The SMCYC consists of five subcommittees, including environmental justice, and focuses on including youth perspectives on county issues. In their presentation to the board, the group aimed to emphasize the urgency and importance of passing a declaration.

The declaration of a climate emergency outlines the sensitivity of the issue and holds the board accountable for not only passing the document but committing to the creation of the climate action plan. This action plan must address points such as green buildings and grounds, the addition of climate literacy and advocacy to curriculum and attention to campus biodiversity.

For the student leaders, the climate resolution is anything but the end of their efforts towards reaching sustainability on a district level. During the 2020-2021 school year, the San Mateo County Office of Education and the SMUHSD partnered to create a sustainability committee comprised of students, faculty and community members.

The committee worked on creating the climate

resolution with long term action items, goals and the district's budget in mind. A declaration would commit the group to following through with suggested projects. It was this committee that led Shah, Mills senior Lilian Chang and junior Maram Ahmed towards their public comment on March 11.

"[The declaration] outlines the importance of declaring [a] climate emergency and what aspects of the climate

make policy more accessible and understandable to all district stakeholders, including students and families.

"It's super important that we have a formal call to action because the district should be really transparent with students, faculty and parents about what they're doing on campus to be more sustainable," Shah said.

These action items will center the results of baseline audits on each district site to

"The district should be transparent with students, faculty and parents about what they're doing"

emergency the school district will be committed to providing further initiatives [for] or to working on creating action items," Chang said.

Students are urging the district to utilize existing policy on sustainability, as well as focus on key points such as green energy, climate literacy and the sustainable management of waste.

The SMCYC originally developed the climate resolution as a resource that any school district could implement and adapt based on its needs. After the creation of the sustainability committee demonstrated momentum and traction at the district level, the action plan was personalized to the SMUHSD and brought to the board.

"We talk a lot about all the different ... small fixes we'll do here and there to create a more sustainable district," Shah said. "This declaration will really formalize and [publicize our goals] so that people know what's going on ... [and] that we're actually attempting ... to make a difference."

Additionally, the climate resolution ensures greater transparency regarding the measures taken on a district level. The resolution intends to

evaluate the current sustainability practices and waste. These audits were conducted by the sustainability committee and ended in March 2021. Aragon was evaluated as the first school to include environmental responsibility within its student conduct guidelines, and one of the first sites to include tri-bin waste sorting on campus. On campus, the Eco-Action Club has examined the three bin waste system and its current efficiency and found that it is underutilized and in need of improvement.

"I would hope for this to go beyond just the district," said senior Eco-Action Club Secretary Joshua Wing. "Obviously it's great for schools to be more aware of their carbon footprints and how they're affecting that, but we're not just students. We're also citizens."

Going forward, as site sustainability coordinator positions are filled and the climate action plan is drafted, an emphasis is being placed on the impact this resolution will have on a larger scale.

"We are waiting for [students] to bring their ideas to ... sustainability facilitators," Ahmed said. "[Students should] talk to peers [and] adults and [not get] discouraged when [their] ideas are met with resistance because usually this resistance is for the benefit of [their] project."

Nearby district students may use the momentum of this resolution to jumpstart their own. The Sequoia Union High School District unanimously passed their version of the declaration on April 28, following student-led advocacy. As the climate crisis worsens, activists hope that more institutions will recognize its severity and implement policy to combat their own carbon emissions. Students believe that by visibly advocating for the environment within local communities, young people can be inspired to jumpstart change.



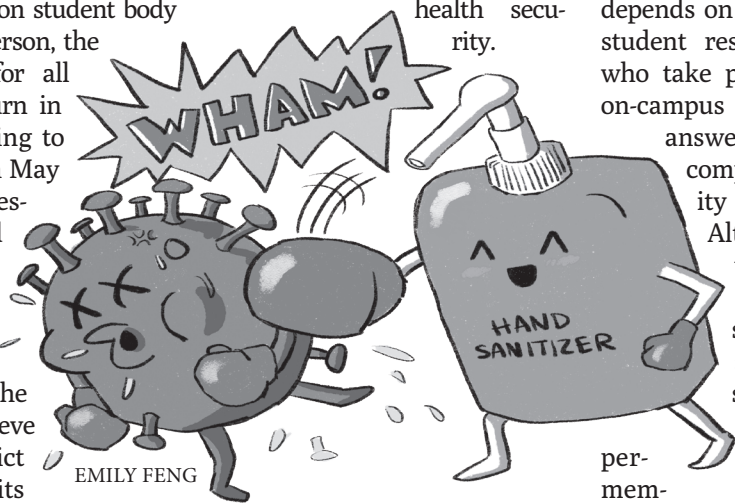
Editorial: we need comprehensive COVID-19 screening

This editorial represents the opinion of all 14 Outlook editors.

After over a year of closed campuses, lack of extracurriculars and limited social interaction, students and staff have returned to campus. Students who chose to return to campus for the remainder of the spring semester are required to test for COVID-19 every three weeks and complete a screening form on the LiveSafe app every morning before arriving on campus. While only about half of the Aragon student body is learning in person, the district plans for all students to return in the fall, according to a memo sent on May 5. Although questionnaires and basic testing procedures are already in place, the editors of The Outlook believe that the district must improve its infection mitigation techniques by implementing additional health screenings and sanitary procedures.

Since the return to in-person learning on March 29, the Aragon community has been informed of four positive COVID-19 cases through text messages and

emails from the SMUHSD. Aragon currently offers the Curative SARS-Cov-2 test, which collects an oral fluid specimen to detect the presence of viral RNA, for the majority of students and teachers. On Jan. 4, the Food and Drug Administration advised that these tests be confirmed with another test of a different specimen due to potential false negative results. With infrequent and potentially inaccurate testing, Aragon runs the risk of giving the community a false sense of health security.



EMILY FENG

Furthermore, students on campus who are not part of athletics or extracurricular activities have only been required to test twice: once before spring break and once again the week of April 26. By allowing students back on campus without requiring immediate testing, especial-

ly for those who have traveled, Aragon compromised student and staff safety. According to the World Health Organization Director Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, recovery from COVID-19 can take an average of two to six weeks, which is enough time for them to spread the virus to other students or faculty and return to a healthy state before the next testing cycle.

While LiveSafe provides some degree of screening, the integrity of the questionnaire depends on the truthfulness of student responses. For those who take part in athletics or on-campus extracurriculars, answering honestly could compromise one's ability to participate. Although a questionnaire is necessary to document student health, it should not be the sole form of daily screening used to permit members on campus.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention suggests that temperature checks should be part of daily health screenings and that those with a temperature of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or higher should not be allowed to attend work or be on campus that day. Although temperature

checks are not 100% effective in testing for COVID-19, especially if one is asymptomatic, they are still beneficial when paired with the LiveSafe questionnaire.

Students should also be re-

nationwide as a significant proportion of the population will choose not to vaccinate.

The extent of COVID-19 testing and precautions will depend on the state of the pandemic

“The integrity of the questionnaire depends on the truthfulness of student responses”

quired to sanitize their hands before entering each classroom. Providing sinks for handwashing in hallways would help students and staff keep the surfaces they come into contact with clean.

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, children accounted for 22.4% of new COVID-19 cases in the U.S. in the last week of April, compared to 3% around the same time last year. The District should continue to promote availability for the vaccines and give community members frequent opportunities to receive vaccines. Although many community members will choose to receive the vaccine, stronger testing and screening procedures must be in place. Furthermore, “herd immunity” — the theory that communities will eventually develop resistance to the virus due to previous infection or vaccination — isn't likely to develop

next school year and the proportion of the community that is vaccinated. Those who can provide proof of vaccination should not have to go through the same rigorous precautionary procedures that are required of unvaccinated students.

The editors of The Outlook believe that health screening reforms will create a healthier environment for the school community. Students deserve to feel safe every day they set foot on campus and should not have to constantly worry about endangering themselves or others by going to school, especially when the only other option for next year is enrolling in completely asynchronous classes. With temperature checks, more frequent and reliable COVID-19 testing and the increased promotion of vaccines, Aragon can work towards fostering a healthy learning environment.

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& Josette Thornhill
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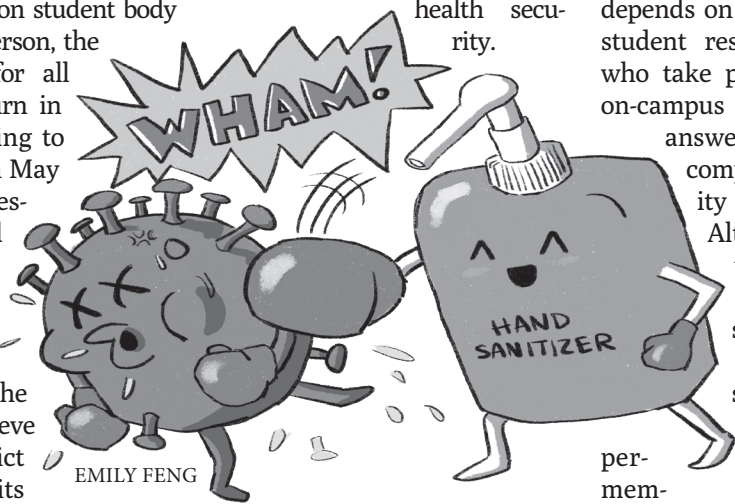
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Students rehearse for the spring musical.

KAYLA SHIAO

Spring musical adapts to the pandemic

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1
or you have to turn on original audio, and it's all over the place," said senior cast member Alex Bloom. "I feel like we're

spring break. The production will be livestreamed on Zoom after weeks of rehearsal.

"We're using a software program called Soundtrap

"I think part of [why this musical is more doable] is the fact that the show is designed for a small cast"

going to make it work for this show in particular because we know [Zoom difficulties] better than we did last year, and we're working with what we have with the COVID-19 situation."

"Forbidden Broadway" is artistically different, as it's structured in a unique way.

"In this show in particular, there's zero plot, and it's mostly a comedy and variety show rather than a traditional musical," Bloom said. "We're taking all these songs from very popular Broadway shows like 'Wicked' and 'Chicago,' and we're basically parodying them."

"It's mostly a comedy and variety show rather than a traditional musical"

Preparation for the musical began on April 12 when students returned from

to record the audio sides [of the show]," Smuin said. "Once we're in person and recording in front of a camera, the actors are actually going to be lip syncing to the singing that

"We still have to try to sing and perform with joy"

they've already [pre-recorded]. They'll get the recording of the music the day before, so they can listen to it. In the actual rehearsal, they play their audio, sing along with it,

to do one or two songs every day and not just Mondays and Wednesdays. Since there's no blocking and choreography, we're getting away with that."

Senior cast member Danny Rose thinks that this particular musical is easier to perform virtually relative to others.

"I think part of [why this musical is more doable] is the fact that the show is designed for a small cast," Rose said. "Usually we have big musical numbers and dance numbers, but for this show we have just one singing soloist and occasionally an ensemble part. Having more

solo work in a smaller cast without having to focus on the razzle-dazzle parts like [groups of people] dancing makes it easier for us to [rehearse] individually and then come back as a whole to perform in person."

However, Rose still has some misgivings about rehearsing virtually and performing for the audience to watch online.

"Obviously, it's not the same rehearsing so far away from each other as we're not getting the same feeling of community from being inside the theater every day and laughing with each other," Rose said. "But we still have to try to sing and perform with joy. [The show] won't only be a great experience for us, but it also will make the audience have a great night once they see our final product."

The individual casting for the characters has not been disclosed yet, as each known cast member will be playing multiple characters from a mix of original Broadway shows throughout the musical.

Aragon staff members retire

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Her initial plan was to retire after the 2019-2020 school year. However, many of her students were looking forward to taking Culinary Arts after Hontalas had convinced them to enroll, so she decided to stay.

Imbimbo is the piano accompanist for Aragon ensembles and music classes. He is pri-

Oling coached freshman Grace Tao on the Aragon Golf team this spring season.

"He has always been very encouraging," Tao said. "Especially just before a match, [he] helps dissolve your nerves and make sure that you go out there and do your best."

Sophomore Sanjna Hegde is the president of the Baking

"He adds some nice jovial lightness and always has very positive things to say"

marily retiring because of the uncertainty of the pandemic.

"There were so many things up in the air, even at Aragon," Imbimbo said. "I wasn't sure [how long] my position as accompaniment would still be there or just how soon we will be able to make music in person."

Imbimbo plans to continue his music career in Las Vegas and travel to some of the places that the choir has taken trips to in the past.

"I'm really proud of the music program [here]," Imbimbo

Club and has spent club time collaborating with Hontalas who is the club's advisor.

"I really hope that she continues her love for cooking and baking," Hegde said. "She is really passionate about what she does, and I hope she continues doing what she loves."

Freshman Mia Weinberger is part of Women's Ensemble and has worked with Imbimbo virtually this school year.

"He's very funny, and he likes to tell a lot of stories, which [are] really nice to hear," Weinberger said. "I

"She is really passionate about what she does, and I hope she continues doing what she loves"

said. "What the teachers have done over the years [at Aragon] and having been a part of it has been a joy and a blessing."

Administrative assistant Becky Foster has known Oling for years working at Aragon.

"He adds some nice jovial lightness and always has very positive things to say about staff and his students," Foster said.

would love to get to know him more, but I'm happy that he's able to move on with his life [beyond Aragon]."

The coronavirus and the uncertainty of the future has helped lead to Hontalas', Oling's and Imbimbo's retirement. These teachers all left their mark on Aragon and made lasting relationships with the Aragon community.



Retiring teachers will leave behind classrooms and campus.

AIDAN GERBER AND ELIZABETH VAN BLOMMESTEIN



EMILY FENG

AVID and Mock Trial attend virtual field trips

Cameron Leung
NEWS WRITER

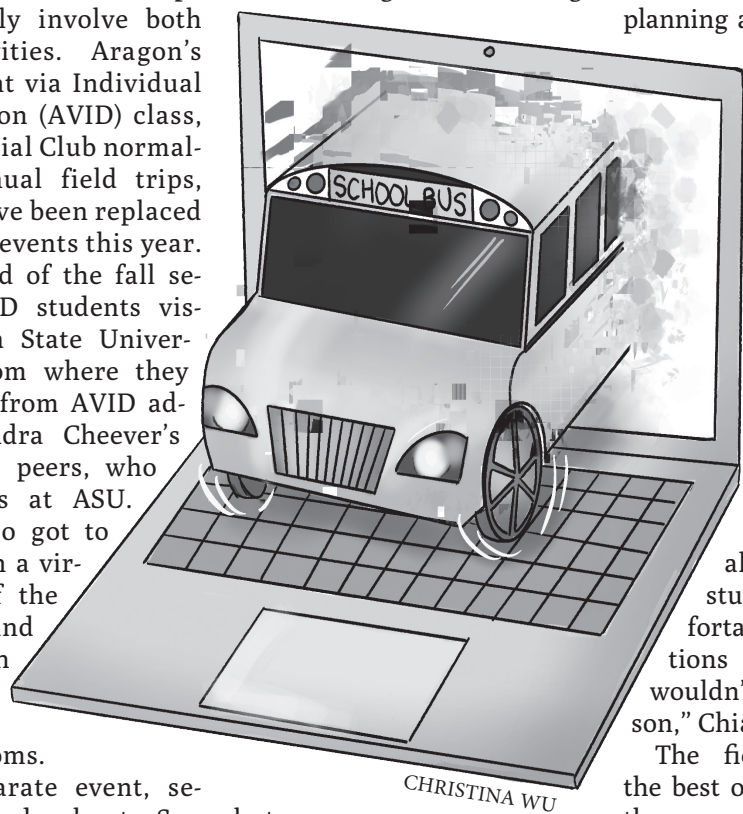
The pandemic has prohibited people from meeting in large groups and traveling, which poses difficulties to school field trips that typically involve both those activities. Aragon's Advancement via Individual Determination (AVID) class, and Mock Trial Club normally host annual field trips, but these have been replaced with virtual events this year.

At the end of the fall semester, AVID students visited Arizona State University via Zoom where they got to hear from AVID adviser Alejandra Cheever's son and his peers, who are students at ASU. Students also got to interact with a virtual map of the campus and connect with university students in breakout rooms.

In a separate event, seniors learned about San Francisco State University's Metro College Success Program. The SFSU website describes the metro program as a community that enrolls freshmen in support courses and pairs them with upperclassman guides. These

meets served as the two annual fall semester college tours the class takes.

"[The tours] have definitely given me motivation," said senior AVID student Victor Gonzalez. "Just talking about college is one thing,



ing in the spring to a museum or a theater show. These trips give students an opportunity to experience the arts in the Bay Area through school-led activities.

While these occasions often take months of advanced planning and an entire school day to execute, this year's virtual Oakland Zoo visit operated on fewer class and planning hours. On April 16, a few weeks after AVID adviser Tiffany Chiaro sent an email to the zoo's outreach program, a docent came to AVID's Zoom class and gave a presentation.

"The chat was really helpful because students felt comfortable asking questions when maybe they wouldn't normally in person," Chiaro said.

The field trip exhibited the best of both worlds since there was opportunity for both virtual and face-to-face discussion. Cohorts returned to school in April, so students got to chat with each other in the classroom during the zoo presentation. Each trip resembled an in-class guest speaker session, so there were no con-

flicting schedules or administration forms.

Similar to the AVID trips, the Mock Trial field trip organization and timing were also easier. Their Law Day event on April 30 was shortened from the usual two hours to a little over one hour, which spanned from lunch through Flex

Although students could contact their friends outside of the Zoom webinar, there was a large social disconnect between participants. A webinar differs from a meeting in that it only allows select people to present, unmute and operate their cameras. Last year's virtual Law Day presented the same limitations.

"Just talking about college is one thing, but once you get there, reality hits you"

Time. Law Day has always been held by the San Mateo County Bar Association, to celebrate the County's 14 high school Mock Trial teams. The agenda consisted of a luncheon, a speech by a prominent figure in the law field, a debrief of the trials and an announcement of awards and scholarships.

"In previous years, we were short on time because there were so many schools being bused in, and it was a bit hectic and crowded," said senior Mock Trial member Michaela Cornejo. "It was a field trip in the middle of the day, and they provided lunch for everyone. It felt very catered to us, but now it feels more like a meeting than a whole ordeal."

"Last year, it was my first time going, and it was held online for the first year ever," said sophomore Mock Trial member Angelina Parker. "It was strange because I hadn't been to a lot of Zoom meetings in my life at that point. It was a little underwhelming because everyone had their cameras off, and only three people were talking the whole time giving out awards."

Some students that attended either the AVID or Law Day field trips felt less excited without public interaction or a break from Zoom classes. However, hosting them virtually has been more efficient and academically productive, as transportation, socialization and missed class time were reduced.

Students share their COVID-19 vaccination experience

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

[out]. Then they gave me the shot within 10 minutes. ... It wasn't super strict."

Rokala waited in her car for 15 minutes to monitor for severe reactions. Although she didn't experience any symptoms after her vaccination, flu-like side effects such as fatigue or fever are common. Of the participants in v-safe, a system created by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to monitor vaccine side effects, 69.4% reported reactions outside of the injection site after their second dose. Younger people appear to experience these side effects more.

"I had soreness for the first day [after the first dose], ... just for a little bit," said junior Darshan Gupta, who received Pfizer's vaccine at the

Others were more fortunate in their search. Senior Malia Pollock's parents were eligible for a COVID-19 vaccine in late February, and received their first dose of the Pfizer vaccine at the Golden Gate Regional Center. Their appointment was late in the day, and when they arrived they were told that the site had extra doses.

"There were, I think, 27 no-shows, and so [the vaccination site] had 27 extra vaccines that they would have had to throw away," Pollock said. "[My parents] brought my sister and I back, and [the people at the vaccination site] let us get vaccinated with the [vaccines] that they were going to toss out."

Vaccinating students is important to stopping COVID-19's spread; while teens' risk of dying from COVID-19 is low, they

For example, a vaccinated student who is in contact with a COVID-19 case but is asymptomatic would not have to quarantine, while an unvaccinated student would.

"Get the vaccine, that's my advice," said SMUHSD Superintendent Dr. Kevin Skelly. "That's what the president suggests, that's what the scientists say [and] that's how we beat [COVID-19]. ... Get ready [to] get the vaccine [because] it's a no-brainer."

Several barriers can complicate receiving a vaccine — early in distribution appointments were scarce, and few sites serve minors (only Pfizer's vaccine is approved for those above 12). The SMUHSD has begun collaborating with the City of San Mateo and San Mateo County to use its schools as vaccination sites. It hosted its first vaccine clinic on May 1 at San Mateo High School. The clinic encourages appointments but also welcomes walk-ins, unlike many other vaccination sites.

"There are a whole bunch of students whose parents have neither the time nor the ... ability to get [their kids] vaccinated, and

we've got to get them vaccinated," Skelly said. "I think schools are really well positioned to make a big push on this vaccination front. ... The sooner we get people vaccinated, the better."

In the coming months, many more

students will receive a COVID-19 vaccine. Though the mechanics of vaccinating students are changing, the purpose — to end the pandemic and resume normal life — will not.

"[The people at the vaccination site] let us get vaccinated with the [vaccines] that they were going to toss out"

Moscone Center in San Francisco. Then [after] the second vaccine ... I felt like I had the flu, but it only lasted for one day, so I was good."

Before going to the Moscone Center, Gupta and his mother spent a few days checking if CVS Pharmacy had surplus vaccines, but didn't have any luck.

transmit the virus as much as adults do. According to Sara Devaney, the San Mateo Union High School District health coordinator, vaccinations are crucial if the SMUHSD plans for all students to return to campus in fall. Vaccinated students will be exempt from certain requirements per the CDC's guidelines.



..... Interviews by Aakanksha Sinha, Caitlin Kaliski and Penelope King Interviews have been edited for concision and clarity.

Samantha Kennedy
Chapman University (Business)



When did you know you wanted to go to Chapman, and do you have any specific memories?
I had a Zoom call with the softball coaches and one of the girls on the team. They were all super nice and supportive, [which] made me want to go there, but it's such a big decision so I [kept] my options open for a while. Once I got in, I realized that's where I want to go most. [When] I went there to visit, I fell in love with

the area and realized that's where I belong.

Did you get recruited for softball, and what are you looking to accomplish being on the Chapman softball team?
It's a [Division 3 team], so there's no scholarships like how they recruit in [Division 1 or 2]. I emailed the coach saying I'm interested in going there, and she invited me to play there if I got in. But I had to apply regularly like everyone else. I'm hoping to improve and [to] keep growing in softball and to keep getting better ... also to meet new people and learn new things with new coaches and new teammates.

How has Aragon helped shape your decision?
Aragon has really taught me the importance of academics. Freshman year, I didn't really care much or know much, but once I got to sophomore year, I realized the importance of getting a good education in college. I also found that I was more interested in the math side of things through math teachers that I had at Aragon who have been super helpful, and I enjoyed those classes more. I realized ... I wanted to major more in business and finance.

Sophia Subramanian
Reed College (Biology)

What are your plans for fall 2021 after you graduate high school?

[I'm going to Reed College, but over the summer], I'll be travelling ... domestically ... going to different horse riding places. ... Right now I'm a riding instructor at a therapeutic riding barn that also teaches dressage to off-the-track race horses, so it would be a continuation of that, working with kids with autism.

Was there a certain moment when you decided you want to travel after high school?
The first three years of high school were pretty intense, and I felt a little burnt out [during] those years]. I knew going directly into college would be a little hard. Especially during [the pandemic] when I started my job, I started realizing I have these cool opportunities outside of what I was doing now, and I want to take advantage of them. This year was a

progression of me realizing that I could [travel]. I want to start domestically and then go to [a] barn in Colorado [that] works with veterans. After that, there are places in Taiwan, Ireland and Germany where I [am thinking



of] go[ing] as a working student. These are big dreams, but [they] could happen.

Has Middle College impacted your decision of what you wanted to do after graduating from high school?

Yeah, for sure. The two

years at CSM and then transferring to a UC [option] is a really cool opportunity which I was considering before [deciding to do] Middle College. After doing Middle College, [my time] gave me a little bit of college experience to want to go to a four-year university, and it gave me the time to do other things.

Do you have any advice for students who might be interested in a pathway similar to yours?

My advice is to work with your parents and the people around you, [and] also [to] plan earlier than I had. If you [want to go to into] a program you like, plan that in advance. Even if your parents are opposed to it, you [should] make a good case and I recommend finding mentors in the field you're interested in for a gap year, so you know what you're getting into.

Pritish Das

Why did you want to go out of state?

I think [going] out of state is a good experience because it really helps enforce that independent, college experience that you get. ... Personally, I want to try [to] get used to adulthood and [learn to] take care of myself. ... Also a new environment, a new setting ... is perfect for a totally fresh experience that college should be.

Why computer science?

[Computer science is a] ... big field and an important part of tomorrow's world. It gives me a clear idea [of] ...

what kind of job I'm going to be doing in life. I ... value having that straight, direct vision of what I'll be doing, and it's a fun, cool field to work in ... with how every day there [are] different kinds of problems you need to [solve]. I think it's [going to] be a positive experience.

Can you explain your major and your future career in more detail?

Computer science is a broad field. It's kind of like math: there [are] a bunch of different subsections that all are loosely tied together based on the idea of how computers operate. Personally ... I want to get into ... computer security.

I want to work in that subset field because I feel it's very important in today's world. I feel like every couple months ... "X" has a database breach or "Y's" passwords have been leaked. Because of its importance, I want to participate in that and help it become a better place in the world.

Do you have any advice for students who want to follow a similar path as yours?

Get started early or try to interact with the field as much as possible. If you can, get experience. I think that's the big thing. Just try to ... find out and have an idea of what

Emily Kiefer
College of San Mateo (Undecided)

Why CSM?

Because of COVID and ... [with] everything still being up in the air ... it made a lot of sense [to me] to stick around for a bit [instead of going to a four year]. Also financially, it made sense. And not having much of a junior and senior year, I didn't really feel as prepared for a four-year [university].

Was there a specific influence that helped you with your decision to go to CSM?

I'm on the cheer team and I remember talking with a senior last year when I was a junior, and she was talking about how she chose to go to CSM. It made a lot of sense for her, and she told me kind of the reasons why she chose CSM. And I think that sort of gave me an incentive to because I was hearing someone's personal experience where they chose to go. And ... just hearing that others were going that I knew kind of helped.

How has Aragon helped shape the decision of going to CSM?

Hearing about others that chose to go to CSM helped me choose. It



was also a little bit difficult considering there's ... stigma of going to community college ... but overall I felt comfortable in my decision, and Aragon definitely supported me.

Do you have any advice for students who are considering CSM? Especially those who are playing into the stigma community colleges hold.

I'd say I definitely played into that stigma for a bit because I have two older siblings that both went to four-year [universities] right away, and ... it was kind of ingrained in me that I should go to a four-year right after high school. I think if it makes sense for you like it did for me, I think you should go [to a community college]... You can still get the same education, and it'll save you money.

Matthew Ko

UC Berkeley (Nuclear Engineering)

How did Aragon shape your decision to do engineering?

A bunch of my friends started taking Eng Tech and so I was like, "I don't really know what EngTech is, but this seems like a cool class." I always walked in my chemistry class in sophomore year and saw the EngTech people just under me like building things. I was like, "what is this?" So [that convinced me to] take Eng Tech. ... I [also] took a couple engineering programs over the summer, online ... and started to like engineering even more.

What are you looking forward to the most at college?

Definitely the independence and meeting new people. Living with my parents for a very long time, there

are certain restrictions that get tiring, so independence will definitely be a welcome change. Living in a dorm room could be really fun.

Do you have any advice for students that may want to follow a similar path to you?

I would say GPA isn't really everything. I know that mine wasn't perfect, nor was it extremely better than other students at Aragon, but I did a good amount of extracurriculars leading up to my senior year. I tried different things like Boy Scouts, music, sports. ... I decided to start a new project in my garage. ... I would say... don't be afraid to try a bunch of things and only stick with one or two of them.

University of Wisconsin — Madison (Computer Science)

you want to do and pursue. Then ... see all the different strengths and weaknesses of different colleges and how they tailor to yourself.



Specifically in what you want to do ... which is a big question when you're still a teenager, but a general outline never hurts.

Is there a specific event or memory you have at Aragon which you're going to miss?

I really enjoyed the lip dubs were well-worth the filming days. While... [it] could be a little bit tedious, because ... you might have to retake a shot or whatever and get the shot over, I still like the energy and then the final put together [lip dub] video [was] fantastic.

Dasha Herrera

Do you have any advice for students who might want to follow a similar path as you? Work hard. This applies for any major, really, but just try to find what you're passionate about. Sometimes people go into careers or [a] job that they think that they'll like, but they don't really realize the realities of that job. So I'd say do your research, try to figure out if that's really what you want to do and then go for it.

How does it feel to be a first

generation student?

It's a bit scary. ... I couldn't really ask my parents for help when it comes to the college process, but AVID really did help me with that. ... I'm also ... setting an example for my younger sister who'll probably end up going to college too.

How has taking AVID all four years impacted you? Do you think it's something that you recommend to other students?

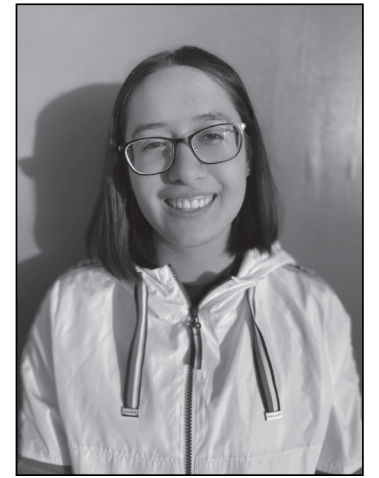
Yes, definitely. AVID doesn't

just help you with going to college. It also helps you with preparing for it, [like with] refining your note-taking skills. They also help with learning how to ... improve your [public speaking] skills and also gain more confidence. I feel like [AVID has] given me a support system. If it weren't for AVID, I probably would be having a really hard time right now getting to college.

Do you have any advice for

students who may also be first generation students?

It might seem a bit challenging, or it might seem out of reach. ... Honestly I feel like if it's difficult figuring out what sort of career you want to go towards; explore your passions [and] explore your interests and what your hobbies are. ... If you feel like you might struggle financially, definitely start applying for scholarships early.



Emily Tsao

New York University (Music Education)

How do you plan on doing music in college? I'm planning to immerse myself as much as possible, but since I don't know what the college workload is yet, I figure I'll do whatever is required for my major. I also want to join this a cappella group which I really like [at NYU].

How has Aragon shaped your college decision? Joining choir freshman year was a really good choice because I got to know people who went to my middle school better. ... I got to make a lot of connections and the community in choir helped me [grow into] a more confident person. ... It really helped me become more comfortable with my voice and my talent.

When did you know you wanted to go to NYU?

Being in New York brings back a lot of memories, and it's fun there, with an atmosphere I like. ... I bought a sweatshirt and that was the only sweatshirt I bought from a college I visited. When I was applying there, I went to a school counselor, and she told me it was a "reach school" based on my stats. ... Weeks leading up to the decision coming out, I wore my sweatshirt



[from NYU] as a good luck charm. When I opened the [acceptance] letter, I was like "No way, are you kidding me?!"

Is there any advice you'd give to students who want to go to NYU or into music education?

Once you know you want to go into music, start right away. There are a few things I wish I had started when I was younger like piano lessons and music theory. ... I think keeping track of your studies is important. Making sure you're a well-rounded person on your resume to show leadership potential because that's a redeemable quality. As well as ... being yourself in interviews.

Lorenzo Vasquez

Santa Clara University (Business Management)

Why business management?

The first [real] job my dad got in the U.S. was a car salesman, ... so he became a general manager and that was about the time when I was in elementary school. I started working a summer job over at Putnam Automotive and being the general manager's son, I'd be able to go into the meetings with him. ... I've just grown up around [business]. I really do want to get to know more about it.

Do you have any advice for students who want to focus on business management?

Take a class over at CSM. Take Business 100. This basically goes for any major. If you're thinking of going into law, if you're thinking of go-

ing into biology, you should probably take a class at CSM because it'll give you a taste for the major, and if you don't like it then pick a different one.

How does it feel to be a first generation student?

Pretty cool. My dad came here from Nicaragua. ... Everything I do, I do it knowing that I'm doing it for the Vasquez name. I'm doing it for [my dad], I'm doing it for my mom, doing it for the people that are still over in Nicaragua

What will you miss the most?

The friends that are going East Coast, even though I'll see them during the winter and [other school holidays].

Lucy Yin

UCLA (Computational Biology, Pre-Med)

Do you have a specific memory where you realized that you really wanted to do something in computational biology?

In my sophomore year in AP Biology we did a group project where we researched a disease, and we researched the prognosis of it — the diagnosis and treatments for it and the biological mechanism behind that disease. How to tackle biological mechanisms behind a disease really interest me. Medicine is a very long path, but you're constantly learning every day.

Women are underrepresented in computational biology. How do you feel about potentially pursuing such a career?

I'm confident that whichever school I

go to, I will be supported in those fields, with both my peers as well as the faculty in the school in general. The structure that [these schools] have and the opportunities they give to women and people of color make me feel excited to pursue something in this field, even though we may be historically underrepresented.



Nour Alaoui

CalPoly SLO (Communications)

Why did you choose communications?

When I first came [to Aragon] I really thought I was going to go the science route. At first I wanted to be a doctor, so I was taking all the science courses. Then after I took those I realized that I wasn't [a fit] for that, and I didn't ... [like] such an intensive, technical [field]. I didn't love aspects that everything had to be like spot on [with] perfect results. [I wanted] ... more wiggle room, and so I took more English classes and stuff like that. I think that was what really drew me away [to a] more ... [a] more liberal arts [path].

Do you have a dream job?

My dream job would be working

abroad in Europe, in London or Paris, working for some luxury fashion brand. That's my biggest dream. I just think it'd be so much fun and I really like the style of it ... [and the idea of] working for campaigns and setting up for fashion week and stuff like that.

What fashion brand would CalPoly SLO be?

[Jacquemus] does a lot of his shows in rural France and in these beautiful fields. And his work is really inspired by that. and CalPoly is ... surrounded by these beautiful hills. And all this lush greenery that looks so amazing. It's something you would never find anywhere else.

Carson Convery

Columbia University (Physics)

Why Columbia?

There are two main qualities I was looking for in schools when I was searching: they have a good physics department and [have] an environment I could never get bored in. I think a lot of me choosing Columbia had to do also with being quarantined for so long. I think I was so bored I felt like I was wasting a lot of time, so I want[ed] to be in a place where there's always stuff going on [so] that I couldn't possibly be bored. Columbia is in New York, so that's a good place to kind of have that. I'm kind of compensating for lost time [in a way].

Why do you want to major in physics?

I wasn't too sure up until this year. I had experiences in it. I've always been kind of into math, and I want to figure out a way to apply that. I think being a physics major also offers a lot of opportunities [outside] physics because I think once you understand how the world works, there's not a lot you can't do, right? I like understanding how the world works, and there's so many different career paths you can go into.

What is your favorite memory you made at Aragon?

I was on the improv team for three years. My favorite moment probably [is] ... my first show. I really loved that experience of getting on stage and having fun with [some of my] friends. ... Also the camaraderie of all my teammates and everything.

What is one thing you will miss at Aragon?

I feel very at home in Aragon, everyone's very supportive. I think moving across the country is a little nerve wracking. I think that Aragon has always been, es-

pecially the past four years, really homey. All the teachers have been great, all my friends [too].

Do you have any advice for underclassmen who want to major in physics?

For majoring in physics [I'd] say don't be intimidated by the obstacles. ... It's a very confusing subject, so I think it can turn people away. But if you're really into it, I would say, really just go for it. Just do things that you're interested in. During COVID, I didn't really know what to do, so I kind of was bored. I was just kind of reading some stuff, and I started making some YouTube videos about some stuff I was interested in for physics. [I would recommend to] keep staying curious, always [look] for new stuff [that is] interesting, because there's a lot of stuff out there.

What sub-category of physics would Columbia be?

I would say thermodynamics because ... the law of thermodynamics is all about how in a system, there's always going to be more disorder, and I think in a big city like New York there's always so much going on and so much chaos. It kind of resembles how ... systems dissolve into chaos.





Small businesses like Create Mix & Mingle, Avenida Restaurant and The Market at Edgewood kept their doors open during the pandemic.

JOSETTE THORNHILL AND
MADELINE CHO

How small businesses adapted to COVID-19

Catherine Wang
FEATURES WRITER

In April of 2020, The Aragon Outlook spoke with local business owners to explore the pandemic's impact on them. More than a year later, here is how they have adapted their operations.

With the arrival of the American Rescue Plan, a \$1.9 trillion stimulus bill passed in March, the economy is gradually recovering. The bill included \$1,400 stimulus checks for eligible individuals, unemployment program extensions and support for businesses. According to Vox, about \$50 billion was set aside for small businesses.

However, financial aid has its limits. Local businesses had to implement new strat-

egies to sustain themselves, and those who were unable to faced bankruptcy.

"COVID-19 was a [temporary] silver lining [for us]"

egies to sustain themselves, and those who were unable to faced bankruptcy.

Aragon parent Deborah McNamara owns a studio called Create Mix and Mingle in San Mateo that holds art classes, camps, birthday parties and other events. Her business was hit hard early last year when customers started canceling their sessions.

"We are a small business that is woman-owned and self-funded, so we don't have a lot of capital to work with," McNamara said. "Refunding all of that was impossible, so ... [we] started ... to pivot ... to a virtual model."

Hosting the events through Zoom was easy, but the business needed to find a

way to distribute art materials to the guests.

"We had to ... buy packaging, set up shipping and ... ask for [reusable] items to be returned," McNamara said. "It seemed like [we were working] harder than we've ever worked in eight years."

Adding the virtual model proved useful in compensating for the lack of in-studio camp attendees.

"We [held] three [in-person summer] camps, ... but ... we had eight kids attending [each when] we ... used to [have] 30," McNamara said. "[Although] the virtual classes were two hours [compared to the] ... in-studio classes [that] were five hours per day, I felt like ... we could have never stayed open [without that] camp revenue."

Emel Mutlu helps her fa-

ther Mustafa Mutlu, who was also interviewed by The Outlook last year, run The Market at Edgewood in Palo Alto: an independent, family-owned grocery store that expanded from Crystal Springs Produce in San Mateo.

"COVID-19 was a [temporary] silver lining [for us]," Mutlu said. "A lot of people who were locked up at home started to cook, ... which [increased] ... their shopping."

The Market at Edgewood didn't have a strong need to change its business model since the pandemic began.

"There was a ... boost in business ... from March 2020 until the end of May," Mutlu said. "[Then it] ... started to slowly decline back to [usual] levels."

Aragon parent Dr. Wen Wu owns a dental office in Foster City. The office's patient flow is not back to normal yet because of the social distancing requirements.

"We treat [patients] ... with

"We received two PPP loans ... [and] would [have] absolutely gone out of business ... without [them]"

no overlaps," Wu said. "Regular cleaning used to be 30 minutes. Now ... we need ... another 15 minutes to [sanitize] the room."

Wu applied for the Paycheck Protection Program, a forgivable loan program created by the coronavirus relief bill passed last March. According to the U.S. Small Business Administration, a second-draw applicant would need to demonstrate that their business had at least a 25% revenue reduction between 2019 and 2020 in order to qualify for the program.

"At the beginning of [this] year, my business was maybe only 70% back to normal, ... so I got a [second] loan [that kept] ... the office running despite the high rent [and slow] business," Wu said.

PPP loans were also crucial in Create Mix and Mingle's survival.

"We received two PPP loans ... [and] would [have] absolutely gone out of business ... without [them]," McNamara said. "[We still] ... try [to] ... look for business wherever we can find it."

Through deliberation and marketing, the studio became much more versatile with its services. With on-

line learning, there was a growing demand for a space where working parents' kids could be supervised.

"We were able to offer a distance learning pod in our studio," McNamara said. "We

provide a place for [students] to be socially distanced. [The] learning coaches make sure they [stay] on track."

Having a good business reputation before the pandemic struck was a bonus.

"We did a lot of telemarketing [to connect] with our old customers [and ask them] to spread the word [that] we were open," McNamara said. "A lot of people wanted to see us succeed."

Avenida Restaurant, a modern Filipino restaurant in downtown San Mateo, opened

[and come] ... up with new deals [and] promotions. [We took] alfresco pictures and pictures of food and ... drinks ... to [get younger] guests to ... try out our outdoor dining ... because [they're] always the ones looking at Instagram."

In the end, the social media outreach paid off.

"[Through] ... Google Analytics, we saw ... [an] increase in online traffic, which meant our sales went up too," Salum said. "[We] would have been a lot less successful back then [without] the marketing team."

There is hope for the businesses as San Mateo is now in the yellow tier.

"For Mother's Day, we [had] four ... classes ... and three other events," McNamara said. "They were the first public events ... we were able to offer."

Salum also reflected on the improvements in their restaurant's current state.

"We are ... almost back to normal from last year," Salum



EMILY FENG

at the beginning of 2020 and needed to find a virtual way to build up its customer base. Restaurant manager Catch Salum participated in Avenida's marketing team.

"Our marketing team started back in July," Salum said. "We would ask ourselves what [we could] post on Instagram

said. "I'm surprised, because ... with ... the 50% capacity rule, you would think that we would make less, but since we have outdoor dining, there is more space."

Local businesses will continue to adapt to the unique circumstances imposed by COVID-19.



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Split-screen school

Sophia Zhou
FEATURES WRITER

After a year of distance learning, some Aragon students and teachers have returned to campus through a hybrid learning model, which currently splits students into three cohorts, A and B — alternating between in-person classes and distance learning — and Cohort C, in which students are on campus four days a week. Students and faculty must adapt to mask wearing, sanitation and social distancing.

While having 30 students sitting closely together used to be the norm, classrooms are now limited to a few people, sitting distanced apart. All students continue to receive instruction through Zoom, so screen time fatigue has not reduced.

One of the biggest adjustments for the return to campus has been mandated mask-wearing, but sophomore Sydney Johnson has not experienced major difficulties.

“Learning with masks on is not much different, except in PE and dance,” Johnson said. “Then I feel as if I ran a marathon.”

Even so, dancing in the studio allows for turns, leaps and

an actual piece of paper from a student?”

The smallest aspects of a school day have returned, and while the hallways aren’t packed with people, regaining these moments has been a highlight after a year of social isolation.

“It felt weird to walk to class but also comforting in a way,” Johnson said. “Social interaction has made school better. I was talking to my friend, and I thought, ‘when was the last time I did that?’”

One of the biggest challenges of virtual learning is staying engaged when distractions are tempting.

“Having classes in person is very effective [for] participation and focus rates,” said junior Frances Chua. “It gives students a chance to connect [with others].”

Some students may be worried that COVID-19 safety measures such as mask-wearing and social distancing will become more relaxed. However, with vaccinations becoming available for those over age of 12, more people should be protected.

“I’m concerned about COVID, ... but I believe that the sooner we all get vaccinated,

“The smallest aspects of a school day, including walking to class with friends, have returned”

movement, which is one of the upsides of returning.

For faculty, teaching with masks on required adaptation, particularly when speaking.

“I have to ... make my teacher voice even louder [so that] everyone can understand what I’m saying,” said math teacher Robert Flores. “When students are wearing masks, I’ve noticed it’s more difficult to understand them, so I’m very cognizant about it.”

Teachers continue to make changes to their methods of instruction, but the goal is to ultimately teach a class normally.

“I can’t wait to be teaching a live class with all the students in person again,” Flores said. “Not being able to [connect] to the students has been challenging. Who knew I’d be really excited to write on the dry erase board again or to collect

the stronger [and] more immune we’ll be,” Chua said. “By then, we can hopefully get back to a modified normal.”

Although returning to the classroom has been challenging, many are grateful that Aragon has put effort into making the transition seamless. For Chua, the experience of coming back was disorienting, but she quickly fell back into the familiarity of the school day.

“I felt like a freshman who was lost on campus,” Chua said. “It was a little rough at first, but for the first time this year, I finally feel like a junior.”

Stepping foot into the classroom brings hope for the arrival of a post-pandemic world. As the Aragon campus starts to come to life, with students roaming the halls again, hybrid learning is a welcome change.

Students in middle school get ahead with academics

Vedant Gaur
FEATURES WRITER

As the number of college applicants rises and competition for admission grows, the prospect of higher education stands prominent for those seeking to pursue such a pathway. Many decide to facilitate their own exploration, beyond what the public school curriculum offers, and this endeavor to prepare starts early for some. Programs like the Russian School of Math, better known as RSM, introduce elementary through high school students to a wide range of mathematical and reading concepts.

“[RSM] is just repetition, getting used to the numbers,” said junior Josh Koe, who started the program in sixth grade and continued through the end of 10th. “[I was able to] spend my time solving different equations and quadratics when I was younger, and that gave me the experience that a lot of people don’t have [access to].”

Initially established in Boston, Massachusetts, the company now has numerous branches across the U.S. Ian Nelson, the current principal of the San Mateo RSM branch, attended the program as an early high schooler in Massachusetts.

“My goal at the time was ... to do more math,” Nelson said. “It was always my favorite subject. [RSM] was pretty cool, ... [and] I realized once I got into high school [that] I was ahead of pretty much all my classmates.”

Classes like RSM are advertised as being an accelerated supplement to conventional schooling. Yet tuition prices, reaching up to \$101.50 per class, is not be feasible for many families.

“We ... have financial aid, ... and we distributed a lot [to our students], especially this year with the pandemic,” Nelson explained. “We want to make sure that if RSM is a priority for your family that we can help your child by whatever means.”

Kumon is a similar supplemental program that focuses on math and reading. Minimal information regarding financial opportunities on the RSM and Kumon sites can be found online, although both sites do offer a consultation for program placement. Families seeking monetary opportunities will most likely have to do further contacting.

“Although I wasn’t forced to join [RSM], [the fact that] my parents took the time to find [RSM] out really ... pushed me to be proactive about learning,” said junior Sakshi Thoutireddy, who was previously enrolled in

RSM. “You can’t spend a lot of money on frivolous things; you have to be committed to it. So it [was] always like, ‘You can’t blame it, you can’t miss classes, you’ve got to do the homework.’ Otherwise, why are you spending such a huge amount of money?”

While some programs do focus on a variety of subjects, RSM primarily focuses on mathematics.

“Contrary to the popular belief, it’s not that everyone who takes RSM loves math,” Koe said, regarding his own experience. “A lot of [the time] it’s the parents who want you to do it. ... At the

families. The purpose of the proposal was to take a more holistic approach on access to advanced resources for marginalized communities.

“Someone wrote in an email ... if we don’t support this proposal, we’re supporting the continuation of tracking in sixth grade math,” said trustee Noelia Corzo, who voted for homogenized sixth grade math. “When you track kids in school, you teach kids lessons about who is smart and who is not smart. Those lessons are not good for any of our kids. ... I hope we can all agree that all kids can be successful in math and in

“[Attending RSM] when I was younger ... gave me the experience that a lot of people don’t have [access to]”

same time, I realized that just because math isn’t my whole passion doesn’t mean I shouldn’t take it seriously.”

Guramrit Dhillon, a sophomore who briefly took lessons at Kumon, highlights why taking such courses at a younger age may not promote efficient learning.

“I don’t think there [should be] a lot of pressure to get ahead in middle school, [because] ... you should just be a kid,” Dhillon said. “You’d get ahead, but you [may] not [be] learning the material. There [could be] some holes in what ... you’re learning [and] you could mess yourself up for future courses.”

A nearly eight hour San Mateo Foster City School District board meeting on April 22 approved a proposal to provide a single math curriculum for incoming sixth graders with a 3-2 vote. The decision entailed the omission of advanced courses provided by the district for the grade, as well as a reworking of the current split pathways — a point of contention for many elementary school

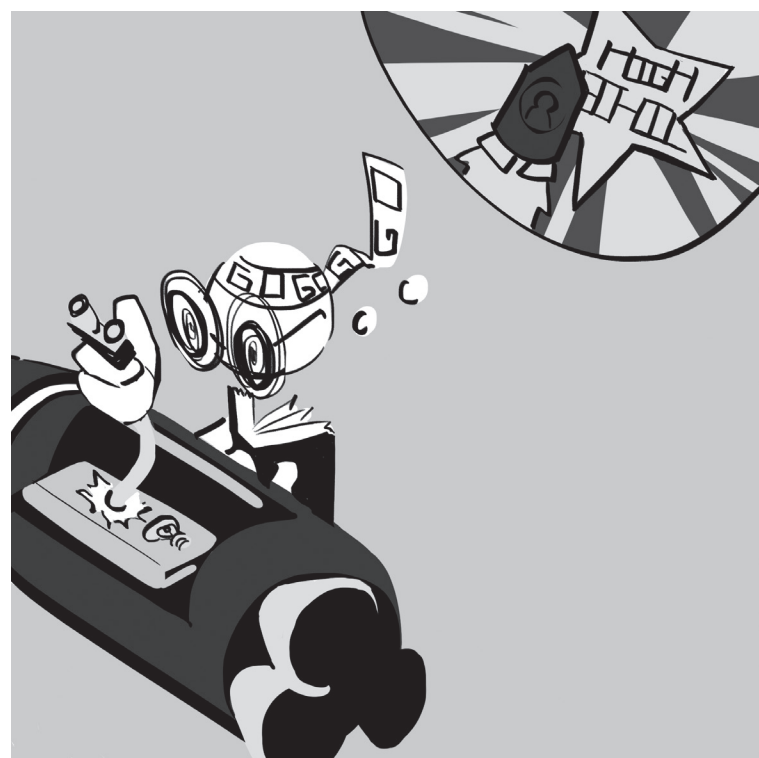
every subject when they are given the right tools and the right support.”

Yet, parents who want their child to continue accelerating always have the option to look into private tutoring and programs. Thoutireddy explained why such a verdict might further the learning disparities between kids.

“People who are able to spend the money will eventually go out and look for these programs,” Thoutireddy said. “It might [create] a divide ... because ... more kids are ... learning extra material [anyways].”

Nelson agreed that the adoption of a single math curriculum wouldn’t be effective.

“Another way to put [the proposal] is [that] it’s as if you’re on a basketball team,” Nelson said. “You’re a freshman, and you’re better than all the varsity players, but they won’t let you play varsity ... [until] you’re in 11th grade. It’s not a policy that is going to foster ... impactful positive growth or love for the topics.”



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Effects of pornography consumption on teens

Audrey Smetana
FEATURES WRITER

A Playboy magazine tucked under the covers, a VHS tape stuffed in a drawer and a hastily-closed incognito window on a computer: pornographic material is nothing new, but its form has evolved rapidly. What once may have been photographs of scantily-clad women are now millions of videos, thousands of sites and seemingly infinite variations to choose from — all available at a click of a button.

Much to the likely dismay of parents, this widespread accessibility extends to teenagers, or possibly even preteens. Take senior Zack*, who first watched pornography at 13 years old during the summer before his freshman year of high school. Looking back, he describes that first experience as “[redacted] pure bliss.”

“I intentionally sought it out,” Zack said. “I heard from my friends that it was a pretty neat thing, a very good feeling. I thought ‘What’s the worst that can happen?’”

Pornography consumption among young adults is an unspoken norm, an open secret of sorts. There is a hushed obscurity surrounding the topic — even though most are somewhat aware their peers are consuming pornography, no one really wants to acknowledge their own support of the industry. If they do, it’s rarely a serious discussion and almost always layered under a veneer of dirty humor, as Zack recalls occurring once in class.

“This person was following a popular internet trend: putting a pornographic actress’s name as their Kahoot name, and seeing if the teacher rec-

ognized it was kind of a way to expose the teacher,” Zack said. “It [was] funny, in a sense.”

Although the frequency of porn consumption amongst teens is difficult to get exact numbers on, the regularity is likely high, or at least higher than most parents and adults would like to think.

“I didn’t even know how common [watching porn] was,” said senior Xander Furlong. “Once I was with one of my friends, and I said that I had never watched any before. He said, ‘No, you’re lying. Everyone has watched it at some point.’”

And the research seems to align with this; according to a study by The Pennsylvania State University, around 90% of boys and 60% of girls report having been exposed to pornographic content online before the age of 18. While the exact numbers vary across studies, most put the rate of pornographic exposure amongst teens at least over 50%.

It’s no surprise, considering its easy online accessibility. It is so accessible that almost 15% of boys in the study reported exposure to porn before their 13th birthday, as was the case with Jake*, a senior at Aragon.

“Honestly, the first time ... I was probably [around] 10,” Jake said. “I think I was just on Google looking up stupid [stuff] like ‘hot, sexy, naked girls’ and then I saw it. It was really immature and uneducated ... just me trying to look at naked pictures.”

Jake is adamant that this early first exposure didn’t have any significant effect on him. In fact, he claims to barely remember it. But health educator and author of “Sex, Teens, and Everything in Between” Shafia Zaloom alleges that over-dramatized or falsified depictions of sexual activity common in porn create misguided images of sex for impressionable adolescents.

“[In porn], there’s no modeling of sexual communication that grounds [sex] in mutual respect, safety, dignity and care,” Zaloom said. “And so if someone doesn’t think [those things] are necessary, and they’re just trying to recreate what they see in porn in their love life, that becomes a problem.”

Research has found that many people, especially adolescents, do tend to treat pornography like an educational manual. One study published in the National Library of Medicine

around 40% of scenes included at least one act of physical aggression, the most common of which were spanking, gagging, slapping, hair-pulling and choking. Of the people receiving the aggression in these scenes, 97% were women, and the most typical reactions were either positive or neutral.

“Pornography is often one-sided in terms of who gets to experience pleasure,” Zaloom said. “It’s male-dominated, and that can be problematic. In particular, content ... that is not behind a paywall is notorious for being very misogynistic. There is a lot of strangulation, choking, slapping, demeaning language and name calling — all



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kinds of things that are abusive towards women but veiled in this sort of normalized and exaggerated [sexual] response.”

When considering the demographics of pornography consumers, the disproportionate amount of aggression directed at women in mainstream pornography is easier to comprehend. Although an increasingly large share of porn viewers each year are women, with Pornhub reporting 32% of their site visitors in 2019 being women, the primary audience catered to, by in large, remains men. As a result, the most popular types of pornography align with male tastes, and many feel the consumption of it does carry much more stigma and shame for women.

“For [girls], it’s a common notion that they’re supposed to wait, be innocent, keep their virginity, keep pure,” said senior Michaela Cornejo. “Whereas with men, it’s a rewarding thing to [be told], ‘Oh wow, sexual maturity, good for you.’ [Watching porn] is seen as completely normal and even necessary to develop as a boy.”

Women may also turn to other forms of sexual content besides mainstream porn, often using soft-core content or erotic literature and audio instead.

“When I was talking with my girlfriend about porn ... she told me she watched less graphically sexual content,” Jake said. “Instead of going to Pornhub, she would read sexual [books] like ‘Fifty Shades of Grey.’”

Beyond the misportrayal of healthy sexual intercourse, the excessive consumption of any type of media carries the risk of addiction or habitual overuse, and porn is no different. While the American

Psychiatric Association does not classify porn addiction as an official addictive disorder, most experts do agree that excessive porn consumption can have negative effects on an individual’s mood, mental health and relationships.

phy unless a teacher is directly asked by a student. Yet there may be value in addressing this complex subject, uncomfortable as it may be.

“Porn literacy should absolutely be included in the curriculum of high schools’ sex

“[In porn], there’s no modeling of sexual communication that grounds [sex] in mutual respect”

“I don’t think [porn addiction] is necessarily just because of porn,” Cornejo said. “I think there’s some deep-rooted psychological issues, like [an] absence of love or affection. It manifests itself in [a fixation on] porn and sex, but it could also manifest itself in other [ways].”

Yet the risks of pornography delve deeper than mental health issues or addictive behaviors — it can also hurt the performers involved. Shortly after Zack watched porn for the first time, he began going on the “dark web” to seek out more content.

“It was child porn: ... I saw some naked 14-year-olds, but I was 13 at the time. It didn’t look anything different for me,” Zack said. “I don’t think anyone who’s [accessing the dark web started] that when they were in middle school. I just did that because I had stupid friends, and I had the means and the smarts to be able to access those sites.”

The “dark web,” a part of the internet only accessible through special software, grants users anonymity. As a result, it has gained infamy for the lurid, often illicit content that can be found on there, which unfortunately, also includes illegal sexual content featuring nonconsenting sex involving minors and adults.

“When people turn to the dark web, ... they’re seeing actual underage girls and actual non-consensual videos,” Cornejo said. “People think, ‘I’m not there. I’m not doing it. I’m just watching,’ but it’s not a fantasy anymore. People are genuinely getting hurt. That’s probably the worst effect of porn, that people don’t identify with it, because [they think] ‘Oh, it’s online. It’s not real.’ But it is real, ... [and the] people who watch it, they don’t want to accept that.”

But the biggest problem with teenage porn consumption may not even be the consumption itself, but rather the lack of real, serious discussion surrounding it. Currently, health classes for ninth graders at Aragon do not touch upon the subject of pornogra-

education. You can’t talk about sexuality with young people these days without addressing porn, otherwise you miss a huge part of what’s feeding them their ideas and messages [regarding sex],” Zaloom said. “Statistically, the majority of [teens] have already come across it and seen it, so you want to get in front of it and make sure [the sex education] is age-appropriate.”

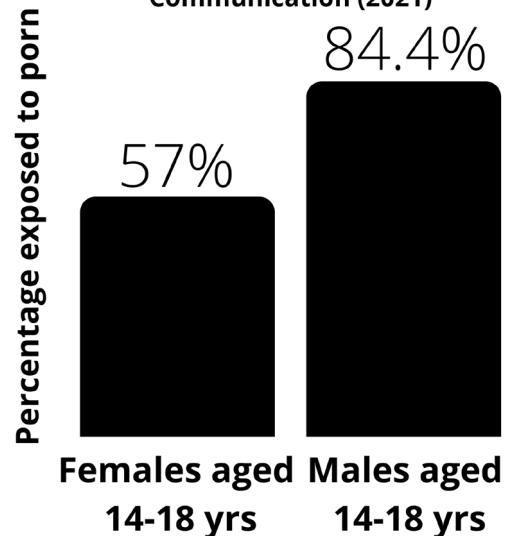
Cottrell attributes the lack of discussion about pornography in health classes primarily to parent reservations.

“There are some folks in our community that don’t want that discussion to take place, and I can respect that because as a parent, I don’t want teachers talking about pornography,” Cottrell said. “But ... it’s important for families to have, even if it’s uncomfortable, discussions with teens [so they] have trusted adults to talk to about it.”

For what it’s worth, today’s teenagers watch and will almost certainly continue to watch pornography. But what will be the price of ignoring this upward trend?

“In an ideal world, there would be healthier ways by which we explore sexuality, especially with kids. There are some things you just can’t unsee,” Zaloom said. “It doesn’t represent a lot of the positivity that can come out of sexual exploration for young people, which can be

Source: Journal of Health Communication (2021)



Females aged 14-18 yrs
Males aged 14-18 yrs

ANOUSH TOROUNIAN really fun and also a part of growing up and navigating the journey to adulthood. So, in those ways, I do think that the less porn, the better.”

*Students’ names have been changed to protect their privacy.

Additional reporting by Anoush Torounian.

Struggles of a freshman experience during online school



Carole Darve
FEATURES WRITER

When I heard my ninth grade year would take place online, I was devastated. I was unsure how I would get to know my classmates or stay motivated academically without any physical component of schooling. The first year of high school is a significant milestone in education, and I worried that many notable aspects of the experience would be left unfulfilled. While making friends and being on campus were inevitably missing, Aragon did an impressive job of adjusting to online learning and welcoming freshmen.

I first felt included in the Aragon community during Link Crew meetings; activities like a virtual escape room allowed me to interact with classmates outside the classroom. Later in the semester, one of my Link Crew leaders

mailed me a letter, congratulating me on having gotten through the first months of high school over Zoom. I smiled when I received the letter; it was touching to have someone reach out and relate to the difficulties of distance learning. My Link Crew group met again for St. Patrick's Day, and shared aspects of our life we were thankful for. Throughout the year, my Link

much to my disappointment.

However, when I came on campus for distribution day, I was thrilled to find that the biology teachers had found a way to conduct the investigation from home.

Despite Aragon's best efforts, some aspects of the freshman experience were inevitably missing. While I've gotten to know my peers better through shared classes, I

a friend online, I had to struggle to find convenient means of communication, a reason to contact a classmate and a crafted message to come off as friendly. During in-person learning, a friendly classmate sitting nearby would be enough to make a new friend.

Classes over Zoom made my relationship with my classmates formal and impersonal. The interactions I had with my classmates were in a strictly academic setting, and they were uniformly shared with everyone else in the class. Reaching out to a classmate felt equivalent to reaching out to a stranger, despite having been in the same class for nearly eight months.

The second major loss this freshman year was not physically being on campus. I have not yet slid into a desk of the new classrooms, unwrapped a sandwich over unfamiliar lunch tables or carried piles of textbooks up the new stairways. I have not familiarized myself with the hidden passageways and shortcuts

of the new campus. I have not benefited from the sky-blue swimming pool, the stunning 400-meter track field or the grand theater. In this way, I was not able to truly experience the transition from middle to high school that the freshmen before me could.

Next year as a sophomore, I will be unfamiliar with the experience of attending school in-person. The classmates I saw on Zoom for a year will walk past me in the halls and we will lack recognition of each other. But, gradually, I will come to enjoy the opportunities that the pandemic temporarily suspended: desks will be slid into, sandwiches will be unwrapped and life-long bonds will be made.

"Classes over Zoom made my relationship with my classmates formal and impersonal"

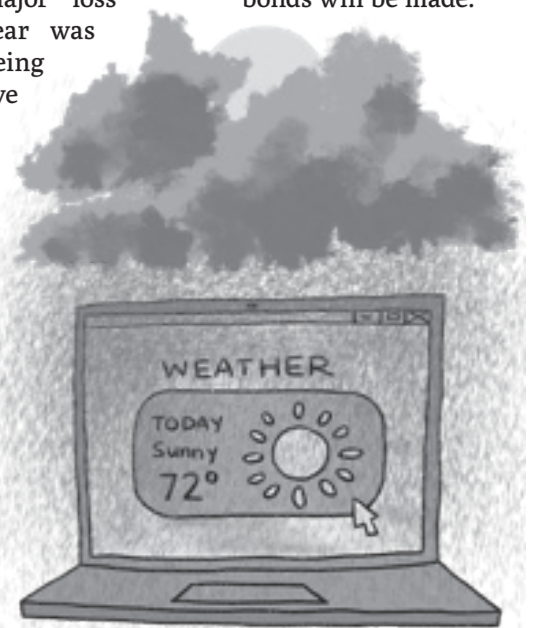
Crew leaders have been there when I had questions or concerns, welcoming me to the Aragon community.

Teachers started with an icebreaker and opened breakout rooms to encourage us to connect with other students. Although these efforts did not lead to many new friendships, they helped me get to know classmates better.

When my older brother was a freshman at Aragon, he told me about the owl pellet investigation he did in biology. It was one of the many things I had been excited to do: dissecting an owl pellet and finding a vole's jaw bones buried amongst fur. With this year being online, I figured I would miss out on that experience,

have yet to make new friends. While there were no times in class where I felt expressly lonely, it felt as though something vital was missing during online learning. I missed laughing with my locker partner as I struggled with my jammed lock. I missed panic-studying with my friends during lunch for the test next period. I missed exchanging glances with my best friend from across the room when the teacher announced there would be a group project.

The barriers distance learning created between having classmates and making friends was unavoidable. In-person learning provides circumstances that can not be replicated virtually. To make



EMILY FENG

Pandemic highlights the need for an updated curriculum



Lipika Goel
FEATURES WRITER

Ancient textbooks are falling apart at the seams, with jokes scribbled in the margins and publication dates from before teachers were born: suggestions for an updated curriculum often entail tossing them out. However, finding alternative materials that adhere to state guidelines would prove costly for the school district.

Instead, the district should take a more holistic approach to learning. In 1992, Neil D. Fleming and Coleen E. Mills identified four different learning styles — visual, auditory, reading or writing and kinesthetic — known collectively as the VARK learning styles. Following this model, districts have a responsibility and must cater to students who fall across this spectrum.

Even if we update textbooks, they will wear down and lose accuracy and relevance in a few years. Instead, schools should implement learning strategies that involve all the VARK modalities. Fortunately, the switch to distance learning inadvertently forced teachers to make progress into multimodal learning. Due to an abundance of information on the internet, textbooks became less prominent while articles and videos became more frequently used tools. In biology, videos conceptualize textbook readings; in modern world history, documentaries emphasize the significance of historical events; in language classes, matching activities on Google Slides are a fun way to learn vocabulary in new languages.

The transition to in-person learning is a perfect opportunity to make much-needed curriculum changes. Such changes would grant students who don't grasp traditional reading and writing methods a fair chance to understand the material. A friend of mine at a local private school struggled to comprehend the different aspects of a civilization, but a project involving a

model civilization prompted her understanding. Innovative curriculum assists students in engaging with concepts in a logical way.

Much of the curriculum is rooted in outdated biases, such as Eurocentric views on history or primarily Caucasian authors in English. Schools must provide students with more diverse perspectives that with broaden their global view.

In fall of 2020, the San Mateo County grand jury released "Hate@Schools — Opportunities Lost," a report detailing the district's current methods of tackling hate crimes and recommendations to improve based on their findings. In

both the report and the district's response, the solutions revolve around training staff to handle specific incidents and clarifying written policies. An inclusive curriculum,

known figure into the syllabus gave students a unique understanding of international affairs. By incorporating diverse materials into our district curriculum, students will develop

"There needs to be enhanced relevance in our ... curriculum."

which addresses hate issues from multiple perspectives, would also be instrumental in combating the issues described in the grand jury report. The response would demonstrate how the values being enforced apply to both academic and interpersonal aspects of school.

In addition to reading classics like "Romeo and Juliet" in English class, my friend living in Georgia was required to read South African comedian Trevor Noah's autobiography "Born a Crime," which details his experience growing up mixed-race in the Apartheid, which was a system of segregationist legislation against non-whites in South Africa. Incorporating a novel by a well-

a multidimensional outlook on the world.

Along with new perspectives, there needs to be enhanced relevance in our school curriculum. The topics we cover in school often feel disconnected from reality, discouraging students from engaging in class. Learning about RNA in biology might be boring, but connecting this to the mRNA COVID-19 vaccines would prepare students to apply their knowledge to real-world concepts. Because the pandemic was an issue affecting every student in the class, she found deeper value in the assignment.

During the pandemic, I examined our curriculum under a new lens, highlighting flaws that previously went unnoticed. Without innovating our learning practices, our classrooms will be permanently stuck in the past, remaining out of touch with the evolving world.



EMILY FENG



REPUBLIC RECORDS

‘Fearless (Taylor’s Version)’

Sarah Yu
FEATURES WRITER

Taylor Swift’s re-recording of “Fearless” has seen massive success since its release on April 9. “Fearless (Taylor’s Version)” has 26 songs: 19 from the platinum version of the 2008 album, one bonus track and six “from the vault,” previously unreleased songs from the era. The album has garnered over 400 million streams collectively on Spotify.

The new album cover is a beautiful recreation of her original cover. Instead of a tight white dress, Swift wears a loose tunic. The sepia and brown tones provide a low contrast that aptly draws parallels to her current stage of life; 2008’s “Fearless” was the start of her rise to stardom, featuring a dramatic, high-contrast cover, while this cover reveals that she has the freedom to do what she wants with her album, as demonstrated by the loose fit of her tunic. The new outfit could also be a subtle nod towards her song “Love Story,” where she and her love are Romeo and Juliet. Instead of being Juliet and wearing the dress, she is taking control of her life as Romeo, hence the tunic.

The most streamed song

OUR OUTLOOK



on the album is “Love Story,” which was released on Feb. 12 and has over 90 million Spotify plays. It is every bit as magical as the original, evoking a strong feeling of nostalgia, being as it is one of her best known songs and a classic from the 2000s. The music video earned her Best Female Video at the 2009 Video Music Awards where Kanye West infamously interrupted her speech, sparking a feud between them.

Swift chose to re-record her albums after the masters of her first six albums were

sold once to Scooter Braun in 2019, which was particularly upsetting as Braun managed West, and again in 2020 to Shamrick Capital.

Although Swift intended to recreate the songs exactly, her growth as an artist immediately becomes apparent. Her voice is more mature and refined, adding a more wistful tone to “Fifteen,” her song reflecting on innocent youth and naivety. The song now feels more like she is looking back at and teaching her old self about what life has in store instead of pointing out flaws in the way she used to act.

“You All Over Me,” featuring Maren Morris, was also released early and describes the difficulty of moving on from a relationship. Even as the song concludes, she doesn’t quite feel clean, hence “you all over me.” The lyrics are poignant and perfectly match the mellow melody: “So I lied, and I cried, / And I watched a part of myself die.”

A vault song, “That’s When,” features Keith Urban who she toured with in 2009. It describes the aftermath of a breakup and hesitation to get back together with her ex-boyfriend. The harmonious vocals in the song are another nod to her past self, allowing listeners to reminisce about the beginnings of Taylor’s career in pop.

“Today Was A Fairytale,” the bonus track that was originally released as a single in 2010, is romantic and full of joy, filling listeners with brightness and energy: “Can you feel this magic in the air?” The beauty of the lyrics and melody create a unique lightness and sense of fantasy. The song fits seamlessly with the rest of her “Fearless” era and flows nicely with the album.

“Fearless (Taylor’s Version)” is a masterpiece in its own right and breathes new life into the old album. Fans are still excitedly awaiting re-recordings of her other five albums including “Reputation,” which will undoubtedly receive the same, if not more, support.

‘Hummingbird Salamander’ warns of eco-threat

Peyton De Winter
FEATURES WRITER

“Hummingbird Salamander,” a spy fiction written by Jeff VanderMeer, was published April 6. It greets readers with a taxidermied animal and dives into ecological issues often regarded as the problems of the future. The narrator describes what the audience needs to know to understand the setting and nothing more. After a perfect setup at the end, she flips and completely subverts the genre.

The narrator introduces herself in an indifferent prologue, saying the reader can call them “Jane Smith.” Then Jane states bluntly, “I’m here to show you how the world ends.” Straight from that revelation, the book begins, painting a bleak picture for the remainder of the novel, leaving the reader guessing how the world would arrive at that point.

As I delved deeper into Jane’s story, I also discovered how closely related the setting is to the current time period. Refined drones owned by large corporations deliver products, but power hungry politicians and other technology remain nearly the same,

lost. More ways are discovered throughout the book, seeming as if they could apply to every situation Jane finds herself in. Interestingly, it can also be interpreted conversely: Jane forcing the animals to fit into any situation she found herself in to justify her drastic actions in investigating the taxidermy, as well as for following the story of the woman leading her along, Silvina.

As Jane investigates further, not only does she uncover more of Silvina’s past, but she also discovers more about her own background and how it was forever changed by the corporation and family of an eco-terrorist. She is eventually led to a solution created to solve the ecological issues of the time, but discovers that she took too long and the creators were long gone, one of them having been Silvina. Simultaneously, she realizes that she left everything behind in her desperation to follow Silvina’s clues and after more reflection, realizes what she lost in order to gain this knowledge, information she would never have a chance to use.

Through the demonstration of the solution Jane discovers in the facility, it is

realizes it is too late for any of the discoveries to matter. While she has been caught up in the puzzle, the world has changed around her, reaching unthinkable levels of natural disaster that we only hypothesize about now.

Jane lost her job, family and much of her moral compass in search of a vague mystery set up for her to learn about her past, but in the process failed

OUR OUTLOOK



to look around and see what it meant on a larger scale. She was so focused on what it meant specifically to her situation that she failed to notice what she was discovering could be useful in other ways. In the end, Jane learned the importance of species going extinct and started to want to work towards saving the environment more than before. Unfortunately, she was just in time to watch it all burn down.

VanderMeer’s novel seeks to bring to light the grave impacts today’s actions could have on the world in the future in the unique form of a spy fiction. As the book nears its end, it swaps out of the genre, instead drawing attention to how, in a real situation, these mysteries or spy investigations would not be very useful. By casting light on the world through the lens of what “could be,” the author conveys the message that we’ve been hearing across the world for years: we have to start working towards solving climate issues and saving our environment before it’s too late.

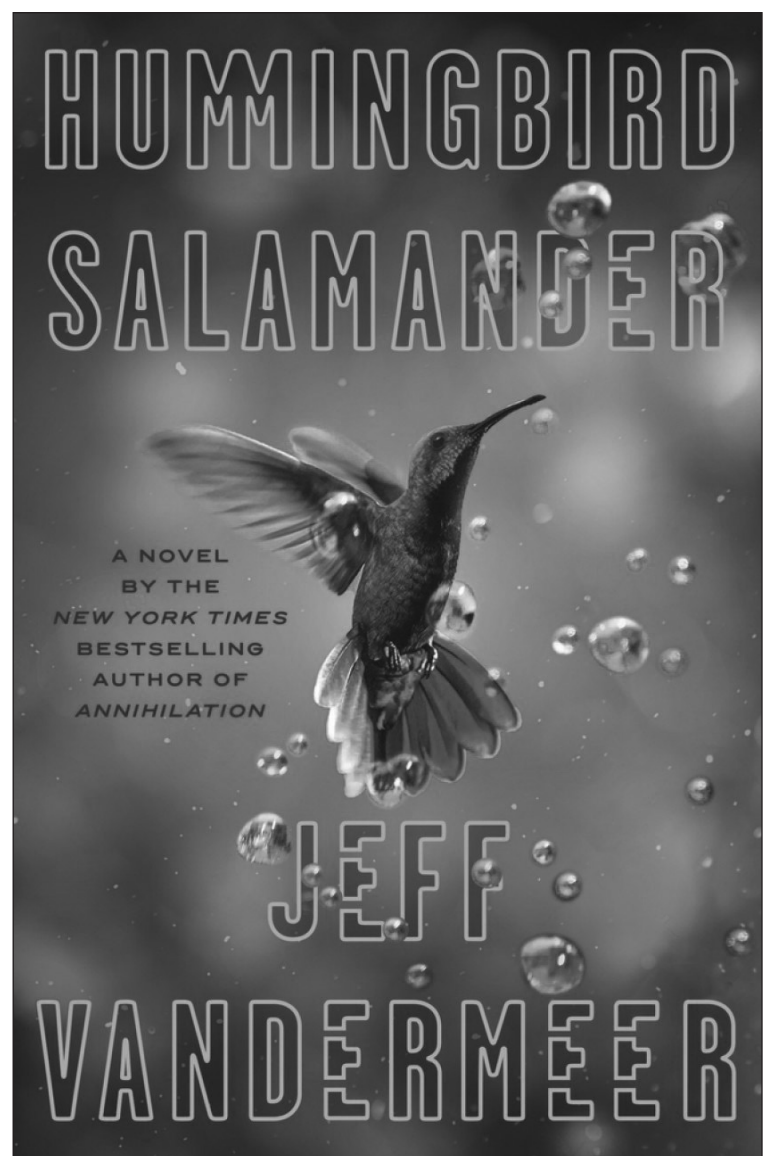
“VanderMeer’s novel seeks to bring light to the grave impacts today’s actions could have on the world”

implying that the book is set in the very near future. Across the “Hummingbird Salamander” world, natural disasters such as tornadoes and hurricanes surge across the landscape, and pandemics become increasingly common.

The background information illustrates the overarching theme throughout the book — one that differs from many of the author’s previous novels. In other eco-thrillers written by VanderMeer, life was replaced by more life, such as alien life coming to Earth and taking over the plant life and eventually the entirety of Earth. In contrast, life in “Hummingbird Salamander” simply dies without replacement. The novel doesn’t showcase a lifeless wasteland but rather demonstrates the destruction that ensues if we let our wastefulness continue to fester beyond the point of return.

A major motif in the novel is taxidermy: stuffing dead animals with synthetics to be used as decoration. Two taxidermied animals, an extinct hummingbird and an extinct salamander, each found at separate times, are clues left behind by an eco-terrorist for Jane to find and follow.

These seemingly unimportant animals serve as symbolism in countless different ways, including a reminder of the search she had begun, and occasionally the family she



FARRAR, STRAUS AND GIROUX

Gender inequality widely prevalent in sports

Colin Johnson
SPORTS WRITER

Men's sports have long been favored since organized sports in schools began to grow in popularity. Until the introduction of Title IX in 1972, a law that prevents schools from discriminating on the basis of gender, opportunities for women in sports were limited. Before Title IX, only 32,000 women participated in intercollegiate sports and 300,000 women in high school sports. After Title IX was introduced, numbers increased to 200,000 and 3 million respectively, with financial aid and funding increasing along with participation. However, big name leagues like the NCAA are still behind in enforcing gender equality in sports.

After the cancellation of March Madness in 2020, basketball was back in action this year with rivalries and upsets playing out in nail-biting games, albeit with COVID-19 restrictions. These limitations, meant to keep players safe, also ended up highlighting a problem that has existed hand-in-hand with sports: gender inequality.

The men's and women's tournaments were played in two different venues, each with their own courts and

plates and dumbbells, to the women's locker rooms which consisted of a single rack of small dumbbells and some yoga mats.

Big name athletes like Stephen Curry voiced their concern with the NCAA, and Stanford sports performance Coach

However, some critics argue that Title IX disadvantages male athletes, particularly in schools with less funding at the college level, according to the American Sports Council. Because Title IX calls for strict proportionality, meaning the amount of male

A root of the gender equity problem in sports is the lack of leadership positions that women hold. In the WNBA, women hold only 33% of general manager positions, and the International Olympic Committee just recently started requiring that a minimum of 20% of its board members be women. In addition, women hold less than 15% of interscholastic athletic director positions.

Without leadership representation, women's sports continue to be sidelined. As a

result, future generations of female athletes lose motivation.

"If these young athletes see that, then they start to say to themselves, 'Oh then maybe I shouldn't do this anymore' even though this is something that they love," said senior discus and shot putter Milika Afuhaamango. "It just totally disrupts that system because sports, to me, they were made to get away from all the other stuff that's happening. They're something that everybody loves doing."

"Columbia University spent around \$12.5 million on their men's teams and only \$6.1 million on their women's teams"

Ali Kershner compared the locker rooms on Instagram.

"This needs to be addressed," Kershner said in a post highlighting the disparity. "These women want and deserve to be given the same opportunities. In a year defined by a fight for equality this is a chance to have a conversation and get better."

Gender inequality in sports is not unique to March Madness. According to the U.S. Department of Education's equity in athletics data analysis, in the 2018-2019 school year, Columbia University spent around \$12.5 million on their men's teams and only \$6.1 million on their women's teams,

and female athletes must be proportional to the amount of male and female students enrolled at the school, the law forces under-funded schools to cut men's sports to comply with Title IX instead of adding to women's sports.

According to a study by the American Sports Council, which accounted for the increase of NCAA schools between 1981 and 2005, male athletes per school fell by 6%, and men's teams dropped by 17% with non-revenue sports like wrestling, tennis, swimming and gymnastics. On the other hand, female athletes per school rose by 34%, and women's teams per school rose by 34% as well. Since 1995, the number of women's teams has exceeded the number of men's teams.

Whether Title IX creates more opportunities for women at the cost of men's sports or not still remains an ambiguous question, especially with the sports arms race between top Division 1 schools in football and basketball still raging on. These sports take up almost 80% of men's sports expenses, leaving little money left for other sports. However, significant gender gaps still remain.



JESSICA FU

"In a year defined by a fight for equality this is a chance to have a conversation and get better"

locker rooms. However, not all locker rooms were created equal. In a video that went viral on TikTok, University of Oregon forward Sedona Prince compared the men's state-of-the-art facilities, which had weight racks with a full range of

spending 105% more on men's teams than women's teams, which is the greatest gender disparity in the Ivy League. The second largest disparity behind Columbia is at the University of Pennsylvania, where 83% more is spent on men's teams than women's.

Opinion: toxic masculinity surrounds the NFL's culture

Julia Renner and Amanda Hao
SPORTS WRITER AND SPORTS EDITOR

Over 91.6 million people watched the Super Bowl this year, outperforming every other televised sport. What was once a simple football game has evolved into a cultural event that monopolizes a Sunday each February. However, under the

glamour that surrounds the sport, at its core, football strongly perpetuates toxic masculinity, the culmination of negative qualities and behaviors that are stereotypically expected of men. These ideas are outdated and gendered, but the sport of football embodies them.

From 2009 to 2011, New Orleans Saints staff paid players bounties for injuring players on opposing teams. Although some staff members were suspended, the punishments were overall extremely light, accentuated by the main perpetrator, Gregg Williams, still being a high ranking coach in the NFL until he was fired in late 2020.

Some coaches and players believe that football is the most "manly" sport. Not only do men have to be tough to play, but if they don't play, they're seen as weak. They put their health on the line for this standard of masculinity. Only a few years ago, 19-year-old Jordan McNair on the University of Maryland football team lost his life because he was too scared to show weakness. He could barely

stand, but he pushed himself to keep practicing because of the toxic culture and pressure. This resulted in him collapsing and being sent to the hospital an hour later with a 106 degree Fahrenheit fever. Two weeks later, he died.

"Jordan knew that if he stopped, [his team] would challenge his manhood, he would be targeted," said one of his teammates to The Huffington Post. "He had to go until he couldn't."

According to Vox, over 2.5 million American children (mostly boys ages 5 to 13) play tackle football every year; from the beginning of their lives, young men have it drilled into their minds that if they show pain they are weak, if they lose they are weak and if they ever back down from a challenge they are weak. This mindset continues to spread and creates a disgusting and toxic culture of masculinity, putting these boys in potential danger. Like in McNair's case, for fear of having their manliness

questioned, many football players do not acknowledge serious injuries, which can lead to permanent damage or even death.

The encouragement of violence on the field also ends up translating to these men's lives off the field. According to the National Institute of Health, when a local NFL team loses a game they were expected to win, the rate of domestic violence in the area which supported the team on average increased by 10% — based on analysis from police reports of violent incidents on Sundays during the NFL season.

While football games can be fun to watch or attend, the NFL must work towards resolving the harms of toxic masculinity. The idea that a boy can only become a man by playing football needs to be erased, as does the normalization of intense violence. Not only do its teachings largely endanger players, but the ideals of manliness and toughness the sport perpetuates raise young men with toxic behavioral habits.



CHRISTINA WU

Dons defeat Warriors 5-0 on senior night



On May 11, the Aragon girls soccer team defeated South San Francisco 5-0.

AIDAN GERBER AND
PURVI SINGHANIA

Stephanie Lin
SPORTS WRITER

On May 11, the girls soccer team (8-0-1 overall, 8-0-1 Peninsula Athletic League Ocean Division)* shut out South San Francisco (6-4-1 overall, 6-3 PAL Ocean Division)* 5-0 in their last scheduled home game of the season.

Before the game began, the team celebrated senior night to congratulate each senior's ac-

"I'm just so happy that ... all the seniors are able to play their final year of soccer"

complishments with handmade posters, flowers and snacks.

Spirits were high during the game as the team cheered each other on.

"It's just been really fun to play as a team," said junior defender Natalie Thacker. "We've scored lots of goals ... [this season], ... and there's always a lot of energy on the bench."

The Dons pressured the Warriors effectively and kept the ball near their opponents net for the majority of the game. Subbing players in and out was smooth, and everyone who came into the game played efficiently and melded well together.

Off the field, the team has been able to create a strong bond and team dynamic despite the pandemic.

"Once we were able to get back together it kind of felt like life was normal," said senior striker Emma Hudson. "[Soccer] acts as a good escape."

The team intends to end the season strong.

"I hope to finish this season without any [more] goals scored against us," Thacker said.

Despite the difficulties they face, the team continues to stay positive and put forth their all.

"I think we need to [continue to] show them a lot of encouragement," said Head Coach Michael Flynn.

The team is grateful to

play their final year of soccer and that we were all able to get together," Hudson said.

The team would normally have a full month of practice before the official season starts, but because of this year's late start they jumped immediately into their league games.

The team has had to adapt to much more than a lack of a preseason. Because of pandemic safety regulations, the team has to play with masks on and train in a smaller group with fewer participants.

Additionally, this year the team has a new assistant coach, Ashley Lentz. She is an Aragon alumni from the class of 2013 who formerly played on the Aragon soccer team for four years and also played in college.

Although COVID-19 has provided many challenges, the girls soccer team has managed to deal with them well. As hopes for a normal 2021-2022 school year in-

"We've scored lots of goals ... [this season], ... and there's always a lot of energy on the bench"

play together as despite all the limitations.

"I'm just so happy that ... all the seniors are able to

crease, so do hopes for normal athletics seasons.

*Records as of May 17

Aragon baseball faces off against Mills

Cooper Wong
SPORTS WRITER

With the baseball season almost halfway over, Aragon's team has a record of 9-6 overall and 5-3 Peninsula Athletic League Bay Division*.

Even with the effects of the coronavirus, the team was only slightly impacted. They have been able to practice and play

"All the seniors got to play, and it was a really positive experience for everybody"

how they normally would, with a few minor exceptions of wearing masks and social distancing in the dugout.

However, some sports seasons were pushed back into the spring. Because of this, practices sometimes lacked the depth in attendance which limited the team on occasion.

"For a while we had quite a few guys playing football, but in any other year, football would have been over months ago," said Head Coach Lenny Souza. "Our practices sometimes have an insufficient amount of people, and we sometimes are a little bit more limited in what we can do because people are finishing other sports."

Even though some players might not have been able to at-

tend all the practices, the team still has a regular season roster.

Souza hopes to build off of the team's potential for a strong postseason.

"My goal is really to find out what we are capable of as a team and push the limits of that," Souza said.

In the team's non-league game on May 15, the Dons beat Mills (3-15 overall, 1-7 Peninsula

Athletic League Bay Division)* 8-0. It was also senior night, and the team celebrated and took pictures with their families before the game.

Senior Daniel Geller was the starting pitcher for this occasion. According to Geller, he had falsely tested positive for the coronavirus and had to sit out for two weeks.

"It's just good to be back," Geller said. "I had to sit out for two weeks while everyone was playing, but it's good to be back."

In the bottom of the first inning, Mills walked the first two batters, and senior shortstop and second baseman Jace Jeremiah hit a line-drive double to left-center to bat both of them in. He then proceeded to steal

third base and scored home after the throw to third went wild.

At the end of the first inning, Aragon was in the lead.

In the bottom of the second, the Dons scored once as senior shortstop and second baseman Ty Barrango slammed a double to right field. The team maintained their lead as Geller continued to shut out the opposing team.

Soon after, Mills switched pitchers. The replacement pitcher for Mills walked three batters until the bases were loaded. Senior Daren Randolph and Barrango both batted one in to make the score 6-0.

But at the top of the sixth inning, the game changed. A batter for Mills tipped the ball backwards, into the umpire's face. The umpire was knocked back instantly, fell unconscious and was unable to continue. Thirty minutes after paramedics arrived, the plate umpire was taken off the field on a stretcher. Fortunately, the coaches from Mills were former firemen and were able to provide support while the umpire was on the ground.

The teams decided to keep playing and have the field umpire call the balls and strikes from behind the mound.

Geller was replaced due to the time spent waiting for the umpire to recover. Overall it

was still an effective performance from him though, as he shut out Mills for almost six full innings. Junior Patrick Mori replaced Geller as pitcher and struck out Mills' last batter.

In the bottom of the sixth, Aragon scored two more runs to finish the inning.

To close off the game, Mori threw two strikeouts in a row and then ended it with a ground ball to the third baseman.

In the end, the team had a successful game as they added another win to their record.

"We did really well; we were a little thrown off because we

played all of our seniors today, so it wasn't our typical lineup," Souza said. "They did a very good job, and I am happy with the win. All the seniors got to play, and it was a really positive experience for everybody."

The team played well together and despite the delay during the sixth inning, the game went smoothly.

The Dons' next game will be away against Capuchino (15-3 overall, 7-1 Peninsula Athletic League Bay Division)* on May 21 at 4 p.m.

*Records as of May 17



On May 15, the Dons shut out the Vikings 8-0.

RAHUL VISHWA