



Aragon's Jazz Ensemble performs. GABRIELA JONES

Jazz concert celebrates students' achievements

Lauren Bennett
NEWS WRITER

The spring jazz concert took place on April 16 in the Aragon Theater. The concert featured the Jazz Band and Jazz Ensemble, with two guest vocalists. This was Aragon's last jazz performance of the year.

The concert was centered around highlighting students and their achievements. With multiple solos from a variety of instruments in every song, almost every student was showcased. The night also featured the presentation of both national and school awards to recognize student achievements.

The night was bittersweet for band director Kevin Gal-

lagher, who is in his fourth year teaching at Aragon. The class of 2022 is Gallagher's first graduating class that he taught all four years.

"I'll never forget this senior class because it was my first class," Gallagher said. "I do the best I possibly can to not only educate [them] in music but also help my students be good people and then I have to let them go. I'm just really happy that I got a chance to work with everybody. I'm going to miss everybody desperately."

The seniors in Jazz Ensemble returned this sentiment to Gallagher during the concert, following a speech by senior trumpet player Nicky Dobbs, thanking Gallagher

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



Students dance at prom. ALESSANDRO RIEDEL

Prom marks the first indoor dance since the start of the pandemic

Kiara Lopez
NEWS WRITER

On April 9 at 8 p.m., Aragon High School held its first Prom at the San Francisco Design Center since 2019, which was open to juniors, seniors and their guests. This year's prom theme was "A Night in Neverland," inspired by the movie "Peter Pan."

"We were really hyped for our first prom as well as giving the current seniors their last and only prom," said junior Dance Commission member Beth Yeung. "We were all trying to keep it under wraps

so that [students] wouldn't get hopes up but also making sure that we were going to be able to have it before we would start advertising everything and talking about it."

With Winter Formal being canceled back in January, the possibility of Prom occurring was uncertain until the San Mateo Union High School District announced that high schools could have dances.

"I was pretty bummed out [to hear Formal was canceled] since I wanted to go," said junior Xavier McKenzie. "It was the second school event back in nearly two

years and the last time I went to [a school dance] was the Winter Formal of my freshman year."

Due to COVID-19 limitations and communication with vendors on uncertain plans, the Leadership Dance Commission, which is in charge of organizing all school dances, spent months preparing for Prom.

"We canceled the Winter Formal in January, and we've been working on Prom ever since," said junior Dance Commission head Cerise Curtis. "With COVID-19 restrictions, it's been difficult. So that's why we've been

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Talks about 2022-23 bell schedule currently underway

Felix Ma
NEWS WRITER

The bell schedule for the upcoming 2022-23 school year will likely feature minor adjustments to the current bell schedule, including the length of passing periods, the order of block days and the placement and length of FlexTime. The San Mateo Union High School District Bell Schedule

Committee is currently discussing the exact changes.

The Bell Schedule Committee was formed at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic with the goal of creating a unified district schedule during distance learning and facilitating the transition back to hybrid and in-person learning. Next year, the SMUHSD schools will continue to run on a unified schedule.

"There's a few reasons that we've gone in this direction," said Assistant Superintendent Dr. Julia Kempkey. "[It's easier for] teachers that work across the District at two sites. [A unified schedule] is also helpful for dual enrollment students [because college] classes can be scheduled in a way [that is] more accessible to them."

As the impact of the pandemic recedes into the back-

ground, the decision to maintain a unified schedule has been met with mixed opinions.

"Never in the history of this district has there been some uniform schedule across the District," said Aragon Committee Representative and English teacher Genevieve Thurtle. "Each site has always had the freedom to determine their own bell schedule based on the needs of their students. One major

concern at Aragon is that we actually had ... [a schedule] that we felt really suited the needs of our students and worked well with the different content areas."

Physics teacher Steve Ratto shared Thurtle's view.

"We have had the feeling of being our own independent school for a while," Ratto said. "When you lose that, it feels personal. I think some of the teachers feel

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

FEATURES

Goat farmer Zoe Neil
Find out about Neil's passion for goat farming



PAGE 11

SPORTS

Boys Lacrosse
Read about boys lacrosse's successful season



PAGE 15

NEWS

Middle College
Learn about the Middle College program and students' experiences

PAGE 5

Aragon hosts first Prom since pandemic



Students dancing at Prom
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1
working on it for so long.”

Dance Commission actively collaborated with junior and senior class councils in planning Prom. Ticket sales took place from March 16 to April 7 with prices ranging from \$45-60 depending on the week. Other schools in the District, such as San Ma-

teo High School, had a starting prom ticket price of \$90, and Hillsdale sold prom tickets at a starting price of \$75.

In order to purchase tickets, Aragon students were required to include their proof of vaccination for two shots or agree to test for COVID-19. Aragon attendees interested in taking guests had to fill

out guest passes, which required the guest's proof of vaccination for two shots or agreement to test for COVID-19, and their school site administrator's approval.

Dance Commission had to reach out to vendors to include professional photos, a video game section, a flip book photo booth and a DJ at this year's prom. While planning for the event, uncertainty was constant.

“We put our time into an event, and crossed our fingers and hoped that it would work, especially with spring break happening right be-

prepared by making everyone take home a COVID-19 test and having everyone show proof of vaccination.”

With the theme of Neverland, the event center was decorated with greens and golds, featuring lantern and Tinkerbell cutouts to resemble the classic representation of Tinkerbell. Sophomores in class council helped set up and prepare the venue.

This year's prom will be the first and last experience for seniors to celebrate this western culture tradition.

“Honestly, it sucks that we didn't get to go last year

to be one of the last memories with my whole senior class and junior class so I'm happy and grateful [for] the experience.”

Although there were concerns regarding COVID-19, students were still excited for the opportunity to experience Prom.

“I think [what makes Prom special] is that the idea of dressing up, and going to a party makes everyone come together for something really fun and exciting,” Buenrostro said. “Especially at school dances, because you get to party with your friends. Not a lot of that happens outside of school, where the whole school goes, so I think that's what makes it really fun.”

Prom has been a tradition for years at Aragon and will continue to provide a chance for students to celebrate together before they finish the year and go on their own separate paths.

“The idea of dressing up and going to a party makes everyone come together for something really fun”

fore [Prom],” Curtis said. “We were really hoping that there [wouldn't be] a spike, and [if] there was, we were

because of COVID-19, but I'm really grateful that we do have it this year,” said senior Sofia Buenrostro. “It's going

Adjustments to bell schedule considered

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1
that way. We spent a lot of time and effort to make [the schedule] for what [our school] was.”

The results of the recent panorama survey in the District showed that 73% of respondents liked the current four-day block schedule periods, 91% preferred 10-minute passing periods and 79% of people supported period ending times at :00 or :05 of the hour, as opposed to :03 or :47. Eighty-two percent agreed that there should be consistency in passing period length across the week.

“The [current] schedule helps me learn effectively,” said freshman Jonathan Wong. “[Each period's long duration] guarantees that [students] learn the whole lesson and have time for review or [to] begin the basics of the next lesson. I find myself able to retain more information about the subject because the lesson isn't cut up into multiple segments.”

One of the Bell Schedule Committee's biggest challenges is finding a schedule that satisfies everyone.

“This is always a challenging process,” Kempkey said. “There's usually some people that are unhappy and some that like it. We're doing the best we can to make as many people feel like it's a schedule that will work for them.”

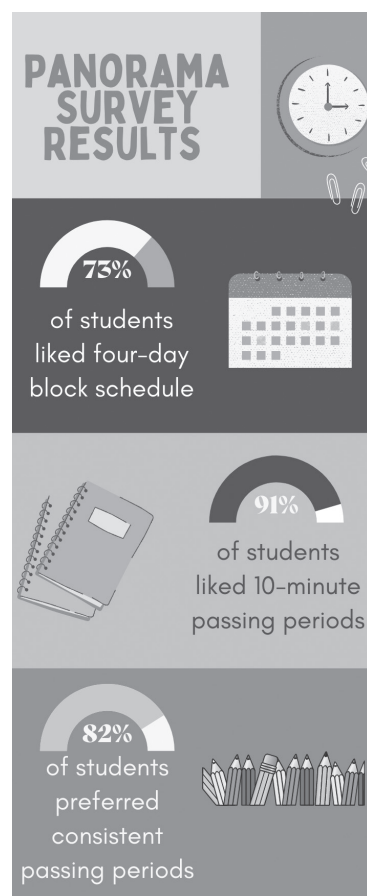
While the bell schedule hasn't been finalized yet, there are several changes in discussion. For example, it is possible that the order of odd and even days will be switched, so longer odd days won't fall on Fridays.

“We've seen some of the feedback saying that we should flip [the block days] because it's hard to do that longer [odd block day] for staff and students on a Friday,” Kempkey said.

Passing periods may also be adjusted to the same length every day to avoid unnecessary complications. The position and span of FlexTime in the day is also being discussed.

“The difference between the even days' and odd days' ending time is pretty big, and it could throw off extracurricular scheduling if the dismissal time is always inconvenient,” Wong said. “Maybe increasing the amount of FlexTime that we have could help bring the dismissal times closer together.”

After the Committee decides on a schedule, it will present it to the Board for approval. It is likely that the proposed schedule will be brought up in board meetings on April 21 and May 7, possibly yielding a final decision.



SOPHIA QIN

Aragon jazz concludes with last concert of the year



Freshman Natasha Efron playing the drums

PURVI SINGHANIA

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1
for everything he's done for the music program in the last four years. Gallagher was then presented with a present from the Jazz Ensemble, a fedora he proceeded to wear for the rest of the concert. Gallagher, an Aragon alumni, often wore fedoras while performing in the Aragon jazz program when he was a student.

The setlist for the night was extensive, with the Jazz Band performing five pieces and the Jazz Ensemble performing seven pieces. This included an extra special song at the end of the concert that was dedicated to the Dobbs family, who have had a student in Aragon music for the last twelve years and have been very involved in the music program.

One of the main highlights of the night was the presentation of the awards. In Jazz Band, the Most Improved Award went to freshman Theon Gardiner, the Most Valuable Award went to junior Ayman Ahmed Khan and the Woody Herman National Jazz Award went to junior Luke Childress. In Jazz Ensemble, the Most Improved Award went to junior Zachary Zane, the Most Valuable Award went to senior Nicky Dobbs and the Louis Armstrong Nation-

ble and the importance of working together to create great music.

“It was fun preparing for [my solo],” Tun Zan said. “Since it's jazz, part of it is just doing whatever you feel like. A lot of it isn't necessarily about learning what to play individually, but [rather knowing] what else is going on in the song. Listening to what other people do and what other sounds are happening helps form what you can do to sound [better].”

With so many pieces and solos that had to be ready for the concert, preparation time was somewhat short. However, both groups managed to pull everything together for the performance.

“Our preparation time was actually pretty limited and I am glad we got all of the music sounding good in such a short time,” Nelson said. “There are always little details to figure out when playing music, which involves many instruments. It's part of the process and if there were any difficulties at first, they were always easily resolved.”

The culmination of the jazz program's efforts this year were displayed in the spring concert, and after over a year of online school, Aragon Jazz is back in full swing.



Sophomore Joshua Lott playing the trombone

PURVI SINGHANIA

Editorial: Aragon students and alumni should be included in mascot discussion with administration

This editorial represents the opinion of 12 out of 13 Outlook editors.

Members of Equity ASAP, which stands for Aragon Student Action Panel, recently presented to the Aragon faculty after a social media and paper campaign to change the school mascot. Equity ASAP is a student group that has been fighting to get rid of the Don. In that meeting, the group spoke about how they believe the mascot conflicts with Aragon values and presented possible paths forward. The editors of The Aragon Outlook encourage the Aragon administration to approach the discussion about possibly changing the

cerned about the potential costs of changing the mascot and whether that funding could instead go back into programs that benefit students, such as performing arts, elective classes and sports equipment.

Regarding the voting process, changing the mascot should give everyone, including students, faculty and interested alumni, the opportunity to vote on the issue. Interested alumni can participate in a community forum set up by the school and then be sent a ballot to vote. Ensuring that everyone is given an equal chance to provide input on the debate through discussion and vot-

“The mascot should only be changed if its advocates and critics are well-informed about the issue”

school mascot by including both students and alumni.

Before a voting process or any procedures toward changing the mascot can commence, every student and interested alumni should have the chance to participate in the discussion. The mascot should only be changed if its advocates and critics are well-informed about the motivations and issues surrounding it. For students, discussions within classes or smaller groups would increase the quality and quantity of perspectives weighing into the debate. This would also ensure that all students are able to properly voice their opinions and participate in the decision, rather than stand on the sidelines or make uneducated votes. Presentations and discussions of the issue could be prompted during live announcements. This would create an opportunity to practice and model respectful dialog about an issue.

To ensure fair consideration of both sides of the possible change, presentations should include reasons in favor and against changing the mascot. Reasons for

ing is crucial for representation and also gives an introduction on what it is like to vote on larger issues. Because the issue of changing the mascot affects both the school and local community, a decision in favor of changing the mascot should require a supermajority of the votes. This would ensure that a distinct majority of the school makes the decision, which avoids hinging the decision on a small margin and causing a large part of the student body to be unhappy with the decision.

If it is decided that changes are to be implemented, the administration should be transparent about plans and funding and should present a detailed and feasible timeline. While changes cannot and will not happen overnight, concrete action should be planned and communicated. For example, students and faculty could propose new mascots and vote on the most popular suggestions through a ranked-choice voting system to ensure that the process continues to include everyone in the decision-making process. Changes will take a while to be fully

“Transparency from the school will only become more important as the process continues”

changing the mascot could include the potentially elitist connotations of the Don, as it was an honorific used to address a high-class individual in Spanish society. Comparably, in 2007, The Aragon Aristocrat was changed to The Aragon Outlook, as the name “aristocrat” was deemed overtly classist and didn’t represent the publication’s values. A similar argument could be made for changing the Don. However, critics argue that changing the mascot would irrevocably alter the identity of the school. Some are also con-

carried out, but transparency about what will be changed and what is already being changed is important.

Changing the school mascot will undoubtedly be a lengthy endeavor, and transparency from the school will only become more important as the decision-making process continues. The editors of The Aragon Outlook call on the Aragon administration to continue communicating about the possible change of the school mascot and to strive to include all members of the Aragon community in the process.



JESSICA FU

The ARAGON OUTLOOK

aragonoutlook.org

Elizabeth van Blommestein & Grace Xia
Editors-in-Chief

Scott Silton
Faculty Adviser

FEATURES
Carolyn Mish*
Vedant Gaur*
Sarah Yu*
Carole Darve
Lipika Goel
Aakanksha Sinha
Amelia Butler
Lian Sterling Cualoping
Mikaela George
Charlotte Gregory
Ellen Li
Ruhi Mudoi
Sophia Zhou

VIDEO
Mia Dang
Mat King

SOCIAL MEDIA
Carolyn Mish*
Purvi Singhanian*

TECHNOLOGY
Thomas Jadallah*

NEWS
Sophia Qin*
Peyton De Winter*
Kamron Ramelmeier*
Cameron Leung
Kiara Lopez
Lauren Bennett
Marlee Cherkas
Felix Ma
Liza McGilpin
Eesha Gupta
Darren Lo
Frankie Mayor
Ayman Ahmed Khan

GRAPHICS
Alexander Lo
Yue Yu
Jessica Fu
Genevieve Bigue
Kyle Delmo
Zelda Reif
Allyson Chan

BUSINESS
Thomas Jadallah*

SPORTS
Catherine Wang*
Amanda Hao*
Stephanie Lin
Emma Quanbeck
Pratham Valluri
Cooper Wong
Veda Yama
Gary Green
Chin-yi Kong
Charlie Henderson

PHOTO
Purvi Singhanian*
Alessandro Riedel
Nailah Blake
Anna He
Sanne Hoogenraad
Gabriela Jones
Kendall Makuta
Brienne Martin

CENTERSPREAD
Audrey Smietana*

*denotes editors



YUE YU

Leadership's logistics

Cameron Leung
NEWS WRITER

As students request classes for the upcoming year, many subjects are easy to enroll in. Leadership classes, however, require an extensive process. The 2022 Leadership application procedure happened in February and students were accepted on a rolling basis.

"I transferred, so this is my first year at Aragon, and I was really interested in learning the campus and [getting to know] people more," said sophomore Arianna Koop. "I'm also looking forward to helping with organizing Prom or pep rallies because I feel like ... [knowing that I made it happen is a really cool feeling]."

Students were required to submit written responses and a teacher recommendation in their applications. Afterward, they attended in-

terviews with current Leadership students. which creates a system in which current students welcome new students to the community with specialized meet-ups. This program is unique to Aragon, and it has expanded in the 2021-22 school year to include sophomores whose first year of high school was online.

"When I was a freshman, I was really shy," said junior and Associated Student Body Treasurer China Porter. "When I joined the Leadership program, I was hoping to step out of my comfort zone. It made me open to speaking in front of a lot more people because we do live announcements."

In addition to public speaking and teamwork skills, students have reported developing better work ethics in Leadership classes.

"I was surprised at how much work went on behind the scenes," said senior and Executive Commissioner Rowan Cary-Clark. "When you see

"[Leadership] is skill-based as opposed to content-based"

a rally or a little event, you're like, 'Oh, that's so cute, they must have just planned it.' Not really. There's actually so much work that goes in behind the scenes of even the seemingly smaller events."

The program employs a "backwards" planning system which first establishes campaign goals. Then, Leadership coordinates details such as size, date, relevance, setting, marketing and cost. After advertising, connecting related parties and hosting the event, Leadership members reflect on campaigns' effectiveness to better embody the school's values in the future.

"In the last couple of years, we've been implementing more cultural celebratory events to try to ensure that the student body doesn't only celebrate the traditions or beliefs of the majority," Perino said. "Leadership has a finger on the pulse, listens to the community, then tries to adapt in order to meet those needs."

History, AVID and Link Crew teacher Courtney Caldwell manages 4th period Link Crew,

which creates a system in which current students welcome new students to the community with specialized meet-ups. This program is unique to Aragon, and it has expanded in the 2021-22 school year to include sophomores whose first year of high school was online.

"I was surprised at how much work went on behind the scenes," said senior and Executive Commissioner Rowan Cary-Clark. "When you see

around campus that most of us are familiar with, the Aragon Don is a symbol of colonialism and oppression, holding weapons and dressed in military gear," said senior Vivienne Scott. "It feels wrong

Equity ASAP continues its push to change the mascot

Eesha Gupta
NEWS WRITER

The Equity Aragon Student Action Panel, formerly known as DecolonizeAHS, launched an ongoing education campaign on Nov. 4, 2021 and proposed a land acknowledgement to continue its efforts to change the Don mascot into something more inclusive.

Equity ASAP members felt that the Don's ties to colonialism in California made it unfit to be Aragon's mascot.

"From our research, we know that Don has a variety of definitions in Spanish, but when taking into account the visuals of the mascot, we found that it was tied to the rancharo system," said junior Dariush Norton, one of four members of Equity ASAP. "'Don' was used as [an] honorific title, like sir, to refer to rancharos who owned and controlled ranchos, which enslaved indigenous people and used their labor. [Indigenous people] had a death rate twice that of African American slaves in the South."

"When taking into account the visuals of the mascot, we found that it was tied to the rancharo system"

However, "Don" also has positive connotations in Spanish culture.

"The term 'Don' is the title of nobility ... from the 16th century," said Spanish teacher Alejandra Cheever. "Today, it's used among Spanish speakers frequently to ... show respect to someone. People call [my dad] Don Víctor all the time, or my mom Doña Cleo. [Don] also can mean a gift or talent. In the movie 'Encanto,' [the characters] have their dons, [or] their special gifts."

The Aragon student body is similarly split on Don's meaning. A survey conducted by Equity ASAP found that 15% of students who responded defined "Don" as a title, 15% as a "colonizer," 13% as a conquistador and 13% didn't know what a

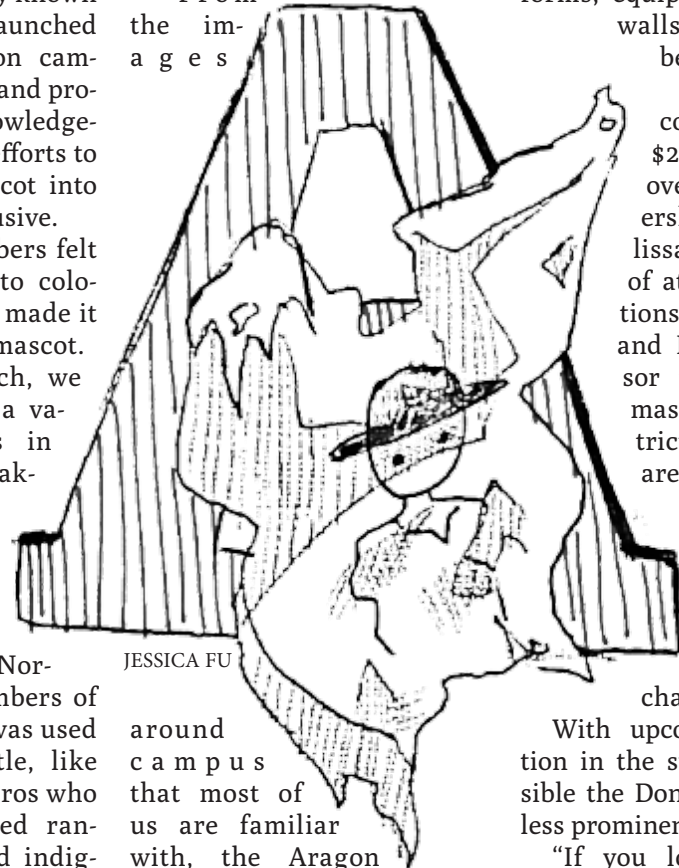
"The educational part of our campaign is so important to us because ... this mascot is not representative of us"

Don was. Junior Alessandro Riedel, a member of Equity ASAP, felt that this confusion, as well as possible negative associations, necessitated a change.

"Is a mascot really worth it to rally behind ... if no one can agree on what it is?" Riedel said.

According to the Equity ASAP survey, 60% of the respondents were in favor of replacing the Don.

"From the images



JESSICA FU

around campus that most of us are familiar with, the Aragon Don is a symbol of colonialism and oppression, holding weapons and dressed in military gear," said senior Vivienne Scott. "It feels wrong

Changing the mascot would come at no small cost, as the turf in the football field, gym floors, athletic uniforms, equipment and some walls would have to be replaced.

"The estimated cost is between \$250,000-300,000 overall," said Leadership teacher Melissa Perino. "A lot of athletic organizations, such as Adidas and Nike, will sponsor the changes of mascots. The District budgets, which are in the millions and millions of dollars, and outside organizations, [could fund] these changes [too]."

With upcoming construction in the summer, it's possible the Don graphic will be less prominent.

"If you look around on campus, that big block letter A is also synonymous with Aragon," said Principal Valerie Arbizu. "I think that may be where we're headed [toward] for some of the large graphics on the buildings [during construction]."

Despite the current debate, it's unlikely that the Don will be disappearing anytime soon.

"By the time the Equity ASAP students graduate, there will [probably] not be significant changes because it's the beginning, and just like [any] meaningful change, it's a slow process," Perino said.

"The estimated cost is between \$250,000-300,000 overall"

Although [the Don] may hold [fond memories for] many Aragon alumni, these memories can exist without a mascot that represents pain for so many people."

Aragon would be the first school in the San Mateo Union High School District to change its mascot.

"It would have to start with our school agreeing that we

In the meantime, Equity ASAP is focusing on an education campaign, creating a website and posters as well as expanding an Instagram account.

"The educational part of our campaign is so important to us because we want to educate the student body on why having this mascot is not representative of us, the history behind our mascot and the way it's portrayed," said junior and Equity ASAP member Alexa Latini. "Hopefully, a part of our campaign can lead to changing the curriculum [to] be more representative of indigenous people."

In the meantime, Equity ASAP has met with Jonathan Cordero, founder of the association of the Ramaytush Ohlone tribe, and proposed that the Aragon administration writes a formal land acknowledgement, which Equity ASAP hopes to finalize by the end of the school year.

San Mateo Public Library opens new technology lending service

Marlee Cherkas
NEWS WRITER

In April of 2019, the San Mateo Public Library Foundation, a group of community members and volunteers assisting the San Mateo Public Library, began raising funds. Its goal was to lend new library materials to students and other members in the community. To decide what new materials would be lent, patrons were surveyed.

“The mission of a public library is to entertain and educate people,” said city librarian James Moore. “It’s different from a school where you sit down and someone tells you, ‘You need to read this book or do this homework.’ It’s meant to be where you could walk in and find whatever you’re interested in.”

Before Moore became a librarian in San Mateo, he managed Berkeley’s Tool Lending Library, which was created in 1979 and has grown to provide Berkeley residents with access to a wide selection of mechanical tools, such as carpentry and woodworking tools, that people can borrow. The TLL expanded to make cooking utensils available. Its success was part of Moore’s inspiration for the future of the San Mateo Public Library.

The items at the library are available to San Mateo and Hillsborough residents with a San Mateo Public Library card.

Items can be checked out for three weeks without renewals, and there is a 24-hour time window between when a person returns their material and a new patron can check it out.

When checking out books, patrons can place a hold to reserve a book when it is available, but no holds can be placed on the new materials at the library. During the COVID-19 pandemic, hotspots and Chromebooks became available, providing people ways to work from home. The new items offered include musical instruments, portable studios, Spire recorders and robotics kits.

Musical instruments were added after many local elementary and middle schools de-

done a lot of work running the program with the help of the foundation.

“There are some people who can sit still ... in a classroom, and that’s a lot of how our education system is made up,” Moore said. “But there are some people who learn better by putting their hands on things, building things, taking them apart [and] exploring. We offer books for those who like to sit still and read, and [the new program] is a way to offer items for people who are more hands on and learn better by tinkering.”

Students are looking forward to the program and the expanding availability of technology and other materials.

“I think that having a library for more things than just a

“[The new program] is a way to offer items for people who are more hands on and learn by tinkering”

funded their music programs in an effort to provide students with the proper technology to explore creativity. Portable studios and recorders were selected in light of the trend of podcasts and other popular uses in social media. The increase in interest in robotics and STEM programs in schools prompted the addition of tools for those programs as well. Moore has

book will be good for students,” said junior Louisa Varni. “Not everyone is a fan of reading and having more things available will be good.”

The library continues to grow with new trends and changes to everyday life, and the new items being lent out are allowing many patrons to explore their passions or find new hobbies.



New materials offered at the San Mateo Public Library

COURTESY OF THE SMPL

Middle college sees a rise in popularity

Darren Lo
NEWS WRITER

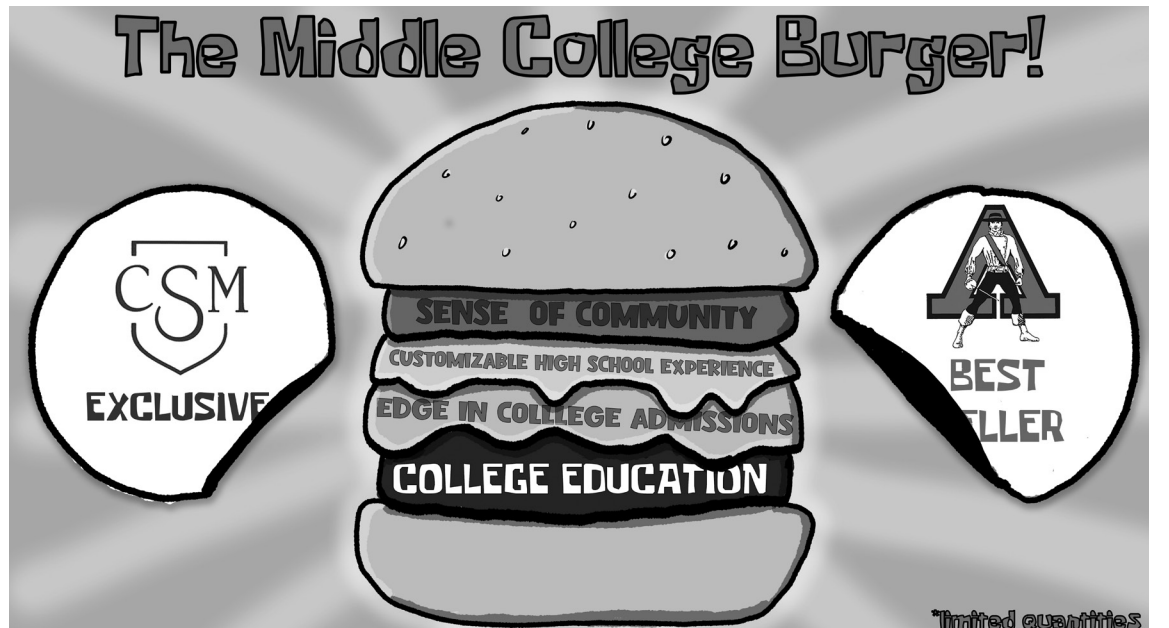
Over the past few months, Aragon students have been choosing and finalizing their courses for the next school year. However, some students have opted for a different high school experience by enrolling in the Middle College program. The number of applications this year has increased by roughly 152% compared to the previous year, causing students within the San Mateo Union High School District to vie for the limited spots.

Launched in August of 1998, Middle College is a free, alternative education pro-

gram to the 70-90 students in previous years, so a lottery was used to determine the applicants accepted.

“Our lottery prioritized under-resourced students,” said Middle College Principal Don Scatena. “Students who [qualify for] free or reduced lunch got two opportunities to get their lottery number selected. All the other students got one opportunity.”

The 58 who were not chosen have been added to the Middle College waitlist, although the chance of acceptance is not high due to Middle College’s popularity. Students can be moved up from the waitlist if students from the original 100 chosen



limited quantities
KYLE DELMO

“My interviewer mentioned that there were usually 80-90 kids applying, but this time around, there were [many] more,” said sophomore Adele Hsu. “Perhaps students were looking for a new environment or had heard about the college courses available and were interested in getting ahead. Because of the amount of students applying, I was a little worried that I wouldn’t get in.”

There are many reasons why students chose to attend Middle College rather than a more traditional, structured high school education system.

“I can take college courses that I am passionate about [but] are not offered at Aragon, and [get] the GPA bump in contrast to being stuck taking APs and advanced classes that I didn’t really want to take in the first place,” said sophomore Isabelle Ly. “I can get an education on my own terms.”

Additionally, Middle College has enacted some new systems carried over from distance learning in order to better accommodate the students attending. One system in particular is the frequent meeting between students and their adviser.

“[Smaller numbers] allow us to know [which] students need support [and

tracts students, as a reduced student body size fosters a sense of community and ensures that every individual’s needs are met.

“Students identify that it’s the smaller learning community, the smaller ratio of staff to students, that really supports them,” Scatena said. “It’s a lot more attention [and] a lot more focus on them as

“I can get an education on my own terms [in Middle College]”

gram in the SMUHS that allows high school students to earn college credit while meeting their graduation requirements. Students take integrated courses along with multiple college classes of their choice at the College of San Mateo.

In the past 10 years, Middle College was able to support 90 students. However, for the upcoming year, it will accommodate a record of 100 students. One hundred and fifty eight qualified students applied this year, compared

decline their positions.

In the past two years, Aragon has sent the largest number of students to Middle College compared to other schools in the District, averaging 35-40 students. This year, 29 Aragon students applied, while other schools have shown heightened interest, with Burlingame High School sending 33 students and San Mateo High School sending 31 students. Many students leave their home school in search of something greater or more suited to their needs.

“It’s a lot more attention [and] a lot more focus on them as individuals”

ensure they] feel supported throughout the process,” Scatena said. “Instead of waiting weeks to meet with their [home] school counselor, where the ratios are 400 or 500-to-one, [we have] a 30-to-1 ratio.”

This intimacy of the education environment is another key factor that at-

individuals, and it also allows for students to customize their high school experience.”

For various reasons, from students striving for something new or personal academic ambitions, many have chosen to enroll in the Middle College program for the next year, ushering in a new year of students.

SMUHSD enrollment is declining



YUE YU

Liza McGilpin
NEWS STAFFER

Since 2019, enrollment in the San Mateo Union High School District has begun showing a decrease. As of this school year, there are

face up to a 10% decrease in enrollment rates.

According to Student Services Director Don Scatena, COVID-19 has played a role in this decline.

"It's the first time we've seen a decrease in [our district's]

Mateo as of March 2020. This number increased to 6,275 by April of 2020, according to Data Commons. This increase in unemployment cut off income for many families in the area, causing some to move to more affordable locations. A report from the University of California indicated that between September of 2021 and March of 2021, the amount of people leaving the Bay Area increased by 21%.

A decline in enrollment can lead to many consequences. Most public schools in California rely heavily on state funding, which is partly distributed based on average daily attendance. With less state funding, programs may be cut, which can have damaging effects on students hoping to expand their academic horizons. Additionally, some students are in need of special help programs that may be cut if enrollment numbers decrease.

"There are certain schools that are falling into a number of enrollment that could be viewed as compromising to programs that they have existing now, meaning support programs, career technical programs and individual elective programs," Scatena said. "We have to pay close attention because we have to plan for potential programmatic shifts and shifts in enrollment."

Some students, such as sophomore Analyssa Ossio, have shown concern over this decrease in enrollment.

"Having a big community at our school is very important, especially with diversity," Ossio said. "Declining enrollment can lead to a less diverse campus, which can mean that there are going to be a lot more minorities who don't have a lot of support."

Aragon had 1,728 students

during the 2020 school year. Before COVID-19, the number of students enrolled in the school had been increasing, and for Aragon specifically, numbers are expected to remain similar in the coming years. Other schools in the District are facing steeper declines.

"Aragon is showing to be plateaued in their enrollment," Scatena said. "Schools in the north [of SMUHSD] like Cappuccino, Mills and even Burlingame will see a steeper decline than the schools in the south like Hillsdale, Aragon and San Mateo. It's based on K-8 enrollments."

COVID-19 and population numbers are not the only reason that SMUHSD-bound students might leave the District. During the transition from grades eight to nine, some students find that they would prefer to attend a private school or a school that tailors more to their individual needs.

drawn to the school because of the independence and college credit opportunities that it provides. Carter, however, has made the decision to switch back to the SMUHSD for her upcoming sophomore year.

"I'm excited for football games and those social activities that I don't get at my school," Carter said. "It's kind of difficult because you'll see all your friends having the best time at [these events], but you don't really have that opportunity, so I'm excited to have the normal high school experience."

Students choose their high schools for a variety of reasons. For some, a smaller school environment can be more beneficial, while others long for the ambiance created by large schools.

"I had a sibling who went to private school," Ossio said. "For me personally, it didn't feel like the right

"Aragon is showing to be plateaued in their enrollment"

Sophomore Jaden Lim currently attends Junipero Serra High School after being originally slated for Aragon. Lim opted out of Aragon to join the sports programs offered at Serra, preferring the environment there.

"I felt more confident going to Serra than Aragon," Lim said. "I knew kids at Serra and some coaches, so I already knew what I was gonna get. It's been a positive experience so far. I'm close with all of my teachers and a lot of my classmates."

Freshman Ella Carter currently attends Khan Lab School, a smaller sized private school. She was initially

choice. It's how you feel you fit in with the community, the campus and the opportunities that are given to you at [your] school."

Ultimately, personal preferences and the pandemic seem to have contributed to the decrease in SMUHSD enrollment. COVID-19 itself has caused many changes over the past couple of years, with the declining enrollment being just one consequence. The SMUHSD will continue to monitor these numbers in the coming years to maintain the programs and environment that are currently offered.

"It's been more difficult for families to stay in the area"

9,482 students in the District. By 2027, this number is expected to drop to 8,820. This decline may be influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic and can lead to varying issues among schools.

The 2022-23 school year is predicted to experience an enrollment decrease of 2.7%, or 261 students, according to the SMUHSD Department of Students Services. Over the next ten years, some schools may

enrollment in probably eight years," Scatena said. "There's either a gradual or a steep decrease for schools. That has been exacerbated by the pandemic and the economics in and around our community. It's been more difficult for families to stay in the area."

The rise of COVID-19 in 2020 led to a large number of people worldwide being let go from their jobs. More than 1,500 people were unemployed in San

Anti-LGBTQ+ bills pass in Texas and Florida

Frankie Mayor
NEWS STAFFER

In states such as Florida and Texas, bills against the LGTBQ+ community, specifically LGBTQ+ youth, are being discussed and passed. In Florida, bill HB 1557, or the "Don't Say Gay Bill," as critics are calling it, limits when and how school staff are able to talk about sexual orientation and gender in the classroom. In Texas, an order sent by Gov. Greg Abbott directed state health agencies to investigate the parents of transgender youths using gender-affirming medical treat-

ment as child abusers has been put into affect.

teacher Courtney Caldwell, the bill in Florida will lead to many negative consequences.

"The bills being passed in those states are really disheartening," Caldwell said. "I feel like they make people feel unwelcomed, unwanted and less than in a community where they should feel like they belong."

The Texas orders from Abbott were prompted after Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton wrote an opinion that stated how medical treatments given to transgender teens, such as puberty blockers and hormone replacement therapy, should be investigated as child abuse un-

der current Texas law. Abbott then elaborated that the reporting requirements for this child abuse applied to all doctors, nurses and teachers in contact with children who are possibly contributing to said abuse.

Republican sponsors of the Florida "Don't Say Gay" bill claim its primary goal is to teach students about gender and sexuality at an appropriate

age and to keep parents up to date on what is being discussed within their child's classroom. This bill also allows parents to have access to their child's education and health records. Under an amendment to the bill, school employees would be forced to disclose students' gender identities and sexual orientations if informed of them, regardless of potentially dangerous situations. According to junior and Gender Sexuality Awareness Treasurer Angel Luz, these bills will have disturbing effects on the LGBTQ+ community.

"It's really horrible and it doesn't really make much sense," Luz said. "It's kind of crazy, honestly. It reminds me of the abortion bill in Texas, and it shouldn't be allowed to be made a law."

Senior and GSA president Parker Guban explains the importance of talking about gender, sexuality and all aspects of the LGBTQ+ community within the classroom.

"[Discussion helps] make the LGBTQ+ community feel safe," Guban said. "There's a lot of people who aren't out that would feel really bad about it. I feel bad and uncom-

fortable with the [bill] situation and hope that nothing goes through with it."

Both the Florida bills and Texas orders have caused outrage across the country. School walkouts, among other protests against the bills and orders, have commenced.

In regards to what he thinks the response to the passed bills will be, Guban remains positive.

"Everyone will feel disappointed, but that [doesn't]

mean everyone would let go of the topic," Guban said. "I think it's going to make them push for better rules and make laws to avoid that kind of thing. It is really dehumanizing to the community."

The club will wait to work to bring awareness to these issues for many reasons, including pending club officer elections and the difficulty of approaching discussion of these bills.

"It's really horrible. It shouldn't be allowed to be made a law"

ment as child abusers has been put into affect.

Many critics of the Florida and Texas bills are stating the bills harm young LGBTQ+ people who are already facing higher rates of bullying and a higher risk of suicide compared to heterosexual and cisgender peers.

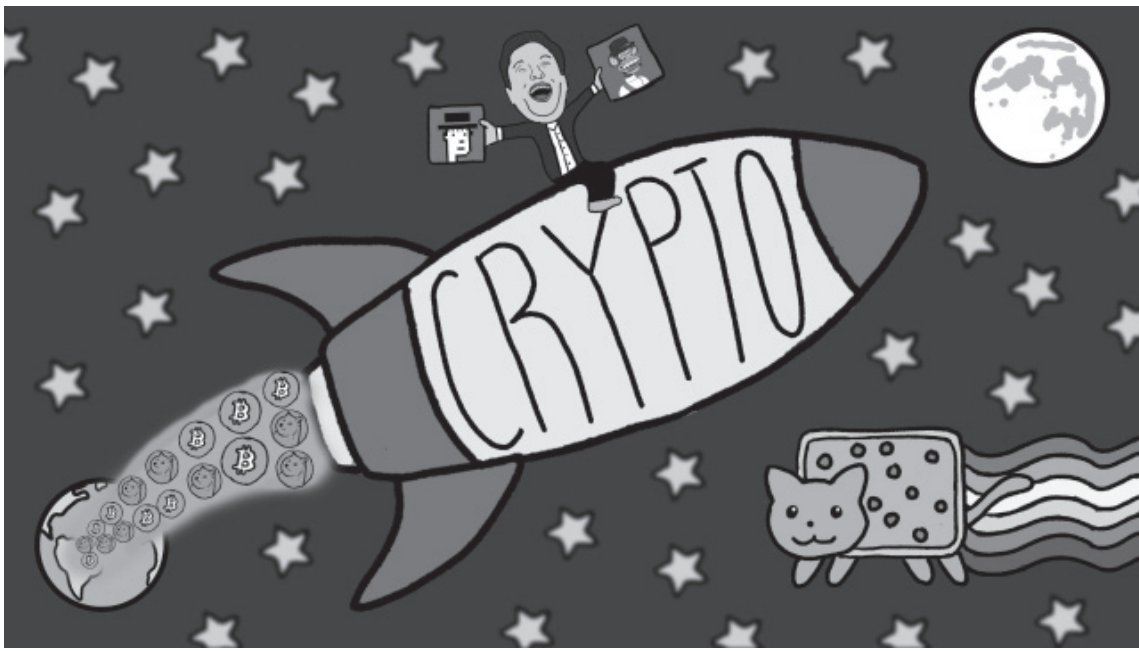
According to Link Crew, Ethnic Studies and Advancement Via Individual Determination

der current Texas law. Abbott then elaborated that the reporting requirements for this child abuse applied to all doctors, nurses and teachers in contact with children who are possibly contributing to said abuse.

Republican sponsors of the Florida "Don't Say Gay" bill claim its primary goal is to teach students about gender and sexuality at an appropriate



ALLYSON CHAN



KYLE DELMO

Cryptocurrency and NFTs

Ruhi Mudoi
FEATURES WRITER

These days, the going price for a meme can be \$580 thousand or more. The popular Nyan Cat GIF, an animation of a cat-Pop-Tart hybrid shooting through space on a rainbow trail, was sold for that price as an NFT, or non-fungible token. But it's difficult to cuddle a digital cat, so what exactly did half a million dollars buy? According to the seller, "charisma, luck, and happiness." But the true price was for ownership and personal use. While the price seems a tad ludicrous, Nyan Cat is a bargain compared to other NFTs on the market. With the highest reaching millions of dollars, NFTs are a flashy new trend.

NFTs and cryptocurrency are based on blockchain technology, which is an online, public and immutable record of transactions. NFTs are non-fungible, or unique, certificates of ownership for a one-of-a-kind product. On the other hand, cryptocurrencies are conversely fungible. Late last year, speculations regarding NFTs' value were made, including possible real-world, exclusivity-based value. Recently, however, oversaturation of the market has led to a loss of value. Notably, an NFT of Jack Dorsey's first ever tweet, bought for a price of \$2.9 billion, only received offers as

high as \$277 when it was put back onto the market.

high as \$277 when it was put back onto the market.

high as \$277 when it was put back onto the market.

high as \$277 when it was put back onto the market.

high as \$277 when it was put back onto the market.

high as \$277 when it was put back onto the market.

high as \$277 when it was put back onto the market.

high as \$277 when it was put back onto the market.

high as \$277 when it was put back onto the market.

high as \$277 when it was put back onto the market.

high as \$277 when it was put back onto the market.

high as \$277 when it was put back onto the market.

high as \$277 when it was put back onto the market.

high as \$277 when it was put back onto the market.

high as \$277 when it was put back onto the market.

high as \$277 when it was put back onto the market.

high as \$277 when it was put back onto the market.

high as \$277 when it was put back onto the market.

high as \$277 when it was put back onto the market.

high as \$277 when it was put back onto the market.

high as \$277 when it was put back onto the market.

high as \$277 when it was put back onto the market.

high as \$277 when it was put back onto the market.

high as \$277 when it was put back onto the market.

high as \$277 when it was put back onto the market.

high as \$277 when it was put back onto the market.

high as \$277 when it was put back onto the market.

high as \$277 when it was put back onto the market.

high as \$277 when it was put back onto the market.

The nuances of teaching current events

Aakanksha Sinha
FEATURES WRITER

In today's world, the news has been spreading at lightning speed, leaving trails of misinformation as it blends fact with fiction. In times such as these, how can students connect what they're learning in their social studies classrooms to the world outside?

All of Aragon's history classes discuss current events to some extent. Freshman Ethnic Studies classes keep up with current affairs by watching Floccabulary videos. Floccabulary discusses global current

Learning about current events in high school could lead to significant changes for the future of the country.

"I'd imagine at least a very small degree that votership ... or participation in any government would go up," said junior Asher Schalet. "If the population is up to date on more events, they're going to have more of an opinion and so they're [going to] be more likely to judge the government."

As seniors prepare to leave high school, understanding the workings of society becomes crucial.

"We're a very information-rich society today"

events through rap and visuals once weekly, allowing students to have brief conversations about current events.

However, current events are more commonly discussed in upperclassmen history classes.

"A good way to [teach current events] is [to] ramp it up a bit as the years go," said Modern World History teacher Jonathan Felder. "I'm a little wary about having [students] do too much of current events before [senior year], because I don't think they know enough, which is why I've been exposing [current affairs] to [sophomores] in small doses."

Due to varying degrees of "news media" accuracy among different sources, teachers have resorted to a different method of exposing students to current events.

"We're a very information-rich society today, especially with social media," said Advanced Placement U.S. History and Government and Economics teacher Heather Sadlon. "[There are] just so many aspects of news, and there's no possible way that we can

cover everything, but one thing we can teach students is how to be savvy consumers of information and how [to] know what information is reliable."

Discovering the importance of current events can increase students' interest and curiosity about the world around them. Being aware about current events also helps reinforce duties people have toward their communities, and by extension, the role they play in their country.

"[Learning about current events is] an important part of being a citizen [which is] to know what's happening around you," said freshman Taylor Wiedenmann.

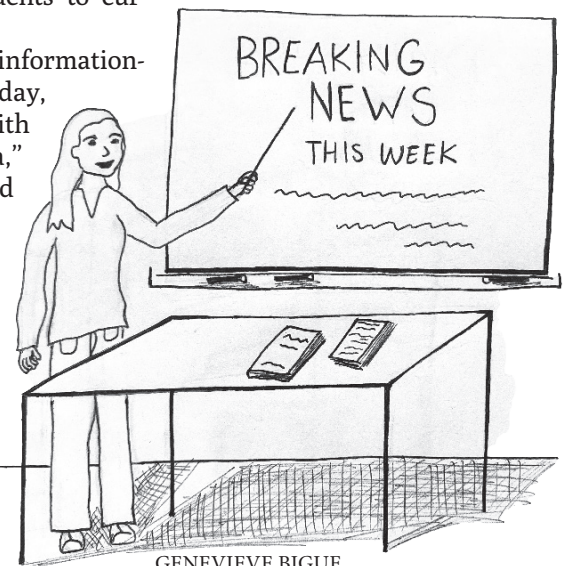
"Learning about current events as a student is very important," said senior Yossi Moff. "By the end of high school, we'll ... need to vote or participate in American democracy."

Learning about current affairs in history classes creates connections between the past and the present, allowing students to anticipate the possibilities of the near future and help them act accordingly as they slowly become adults.

"I would hate to see our country fall into [a situation] where people don't have the skills to be able to understand the information around them or where we have any kind of limitation on the free and fair

press presenting information and transparency in our government," Sadlon said. "It requires people to be the check on that kind of power and to really understand these policies so that we can all live in a world that we want to live in."

Today, news spreads from the click of a mere fingertip, making learning about current events more conflicting than ever. By implementing the study of finding accurate information among the various versions of news today and keeping up with current events, students may become educated and aware of real world problems and what role they themselves can have in society.



GENEVIEVE BIGUE

Carissa Yang - Mixed Media

Junior Carissa Yang makes wire sculptures, jewelry and digital art. She discovered these hobbies in middle school, but her first exposure to different art mediums was in elementary school, when she took weekly art classes and experimented with clay, ceramics and sketching.

"When I do art, I get to ... focus on creating something that I think is pretty or meaningful," Yang said. "It's time I get to spend with myself. Art tends to be that escape where I don't think about [anything else]."

Yang uses simple, practical materials like malleable copper wires to shape her creations.

"[Jewelry is] expensive [and] I [felt] like I could figure out how to make it myself," Yang said. "I also see cool [room decorations] that I want but can't afford, so I figure out how to make them with junk or stuff I have lying around. I recreate things I see online or in stores with materials that I have."

The "junk" Yang refers to include items such as the metal part of a car tire, a broken lock, part of a car headlight, soda cans, cardboard and cereal boxes, some of which were picked up on walks. Over winter break, Yang made wire animal sculptures of an orca, a giraffe, a lizard, an elephant, an owl, a dolphin, a corgi and a goat as holiday gifts for her friends.

"What art means to me is connecting with other people and making other people's day by giving them something I know they'll appreciate," Yang said. "You can't personalize something store-bought to someone's taste [like you can with handmade gifts]."

Another one of Yang's projects was a gift set for her friend, inspired by the book series "Keeper of the Lost Cities."

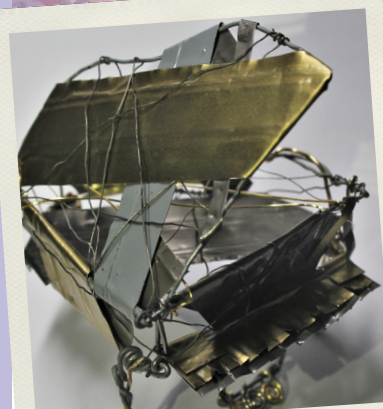
"It's our favorite book series and it's how we met," Yang said. "I went through the book and found every single item I thought was cool and that I could make. I searched their descriptions and made three necklaces, pins and several gadgets."

Yang has used her talent in digital art for school activities, like making graphic designs for Aragon's music programs and Jabberwocky's website. She also aspires to publish her own webcomics.

"I have a few ideas for full scale stories that I would publish on Webtoons, which has a wide audience and is more accessible [than physical comics]," Yang said. "I actually have a webcomic published. It's snippets of moments in life that I find beautiful and I wanted to capture those for people."



Carissa Yang - a baby goat constructed out of plated copper wire and pieces of scrap metal



Carissa Yang - a grand piano made from several different gauges of wire and scrap metal

Luke Childress - Trumpet

Junior Luke Childress uses music to express his creativity and has done so since he was young.

"I started playing piano when I was four," Childress said. "As a kid, I listened to a lot of music, and when fifth grade came around, I chose trumpet and stuck with it."

School musical ensembles have been a large part of Childress' experience as a musician. A member of both Aragon's wind ensemble class and zero period jazz band, Childress balances performing in Aragon's ensembles and ones outside of school, like Peninsula Youth Orchestra and the College of San Mateo's Symphonic Band.

"Playing music and practicing is fun for me," Childress said. "It's more of a hobby and a passion [than something academic]. I do it as homework [and] compartmentalize my time to say, 'Okay, I'm going to practice for an hour,' and set that time aside."

As a member of multiple musical ensembles, Childress builds friendships with his fellow musicians over time.

"There's a really great community around it," Childress said. "[I've made] most of my close friends through music. [The best part] is when something you've been working on for months comes together. [Hearing] all the layers [of instruments] and hearing all the parts together is really cool."



Michelle Jin - oil painting



Michelle Jin - oil painting

Michelle Jin - Oil Painting

Junior Michelle Jin first started creating art over 10 years ago when she enrolled in an art class at a young age. Ever since then, Jin has been exploring a variety of art mediums.

"My favorite medium is oil painting, but I [use] colored pencils ... [and do] sketching [and] acrylic paintings too," Jin said.

Taking art through middle school and now Advanced Art at Aragon, Jin has begun to refine her own artistic style.

"My oil paintings are kind of a merge between abstract and nonabstract," Jin said. "I think it leans more towards [the] nonabstract, but they're kind of like [art from the] impressionist era."

Jin enjoys oil painting for its versatility and visual effect.

"When I took art lessons, our teacher exposed us to many different mediums," Jin said. "Oil painting was just the one that I enjoy doing the most. The colors are very expressive and ... you can do so many things with the textures of the painting on a canvas."

The real world plays a large role in Jin's artwork. On a trip to Japan in eighth grade, she used the scenery and experience as inspiration for her paintings.

"I really like painting pictures of my family when we go on trips," Jin said. "I enjoy painting things from my own life [because it] gives me inspiration to paint things I enjoy, things that I'm passionate about. That really fuels my creativity."

While many may see artwork as the finished product, Jin highlights that it is ultimately the culmination of the work and effort that is put in.

"I think art doesn't have to be pretty, it doesn't have to be visually appealing, it's [more so] ... the feeling [art] gives you when you make it," Jin said. "The actual outcome, I think, is less important than the process."

Parker Guban - Dance

Dance Team co-captain and senior Parker Guban began taking dance lessons when he was five years old, although his passion for it emerged even earlier.

"As a child, I used to dance all the time in my house even when there was no music," Guban said.

After joining Aragon's dance class, Guban was introduced to other styles of dance like jazz, tap, modern and lyrical dance. Hip-hop and contemporary, which are his current focuses, remain his favorites.

"I get to show off a confident side of me that I don't normally get to show off," Guban said. "People usually view me as a shy person, but when I dance hip-hop, I'm more outgoing. Contemporary shows so much emotion that you can't put into words."

Guban also values the friendship dance brings him.

"The community [dance] brings together [is so] tight-knit," Guban said. "It makes me feel like I belong somewhere."

In addition to class hours, Guban dedicates two hours every Tuesday and Thursday after school to practice with the team.

"Dancing has never made me feel drained," Guban said. "[Rather], it's what I do when I feel drained about everything else. It's always fun. There's not a time when I'd complain about it."

For Guban, dance has helped him express himself and even learn important life lessons.

"A lot about dance is just being yourself and having fun," Guban said. "Dance taught me to live in the moment rather than in the past."



Parker Guban - courtesy of Brienne Martin



Parker Guban - courtesy of Brienne Martin

Artists of Aragon

Abbie Yin - Ceramics & Jewelry

Senior Abbie Yin creates many forms of art, utilizing her skills to express herself through bracelet making, ceramics, glass work and more.

"I've been making things since I was a kid," Yin said. "I got into making friendship bracelets."

In the past, Yin sold her bracelets, using her art as a source of income.

"Back when I was 15 and living in Oregon, I started a business on Instagram called Yin bracelets," Yin said. "These days I make them as a hobby for fun."

A student in Advanced Placement 3D Art, Yin also uses the mediums of clay and glass to express herself.

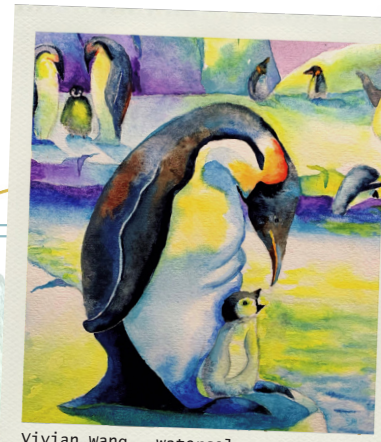
"I love experimenting with glass and clay," Yin said. "You never know how the piece will turn out."

Yin encourages other students who are interested in art to give it a try.

"If I can make stuff, you can too," Yin said. "The process is cool, and sometimes you'll surprise yourself with how things turn out."



Abbie Yin - glasswork



Vivian wang - watercolor



Vivian wang - watercolor



Ana Hussain - drawing

Vivian Wang - Watercolor

Although junior Vivian Wang has been doing art for a long time, she currently focuses on the art program at Aragon.

"I've taken a lot of art classes outside of school, and mostly watercolor classes, but right now, it's just art classes at school," Wang said.

While Wang has taken lessons on the utilization of watercolor, she has begun to explore, and enjoy, different mediums.

"I like doing digital art [because] I think it's more flexible," Wang said. "I started seeing some posts of other creators' digital art, and I thought it would be fun to try out."

Although Wang has the freedom to explore various mediums and styles of art at home, she has come to enjoy the structured nature of art at Aragon.

"I think I like both; it's kind of like a balance and that's cool," Wang said. "If there's a prompt, if I get stuck or something, there's something for me to go on. At home, if I'm just on my own, I don't always have inspiration."

Wang has continued to practice and work on art almost every day as a means to take a break from school, as well as have a period of enjoyment in between the rush.

"[Art] offers a way for me to express myself and it's also very therapeutic when I'm really stressed," Wang said. "I think art just helps me calm down and relax."

Although the learning curve may be difficult or feel tedious towards the beginning, Wang feels that it is inevitably worth it.

"When you first start, art might be a little bit boring since you always start with the sketching and the shading but I think once you get into it [and] get your basics, it's actually really fun," Wang said.

Sannie Wan - Ceramics & DIY

Junior Sannie Wan is Aragon's DIY Club President and an Advanced Placement 3D Art student.

"I've always been engaged in arts and crafts, and just making and fixing my own things," Wan said. "Later, I did a lot of colored pencil [drawings], and since freshman year, I've been [taking] ceramics."

Wan became DIY Club President after graduating senior officers last year encouraged her to run for the position. Since then, she has led multiple projects ranging from making friendship bracelets, wire rings and phone chains to designing personalized terrariums.

Wan's love for ceramics began when she worked on clay projects in middle school.

"I like the meticulous, detailed and technical aspect of this kind of art and the fact that it can be either decorative or functional," Wan said. "The process ... from inspiration to personalization to manifestation [is appealing]. I like how there's no such thing as 'wrong' with your art and even accidents can turn out looking decent, even if it wasn't exactly how you pictured."

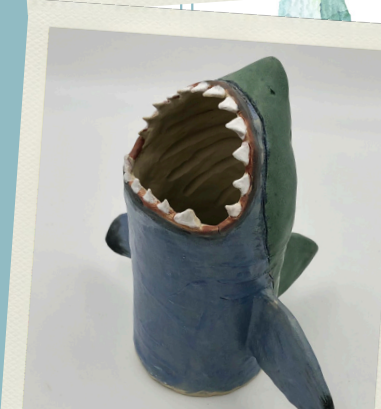
AP 3D Art students were assigned to do a project called a Sustained Investigation, in which they create 3D art with any material.

"The project has helped me develop my own style more and also taught me a lot about my topic when researching it," Wan said. "My topic has to do with wildlife and human impact on nature, and for inspiration for my projects, I've had to learn peripheral knowledge about human activity and its effects, such as climate change, and how this has impacted the planet's vital ecosystems and biodiversity that we coexist with and depend on."

Wan continues to explore her interest in art, both in school and through her extracurricular activities.



Sannie wan - a handled mug with an alcove containing a silver dolphin



Sannie wan - a cylindrical shark container with an open mouth (made with slab cylinder technique)



College visits help students narrow down selections



UCLA campus

Carole Darve
FEATURES WRITER

College. The word strikes fear into the hearts of many rising juniors and seniors who have yet to delve into the process of college applications. What does it mean to go to college? Where should they start? Where should they apply? To alleviate this initial fear of the college application process, some students choose to visit college campuses.

Campus visits can prove useful when students are building a list of colleges to potentially research and apply to.

"It was that realization in my mind as I'm searching up all these colleges, and as we're driving [for more than] four hours, that [I was] about to be a senior," said senior Christos Makropoulos. "[I

critical to her perspective and overall experience.

"If the tour guide explained the college, I felt more inclined to like the college," Cisneros said. "If the college doesn't strike me as welcoming [and] I don't feel connected to that college, [then] I'm not going to apply to it, even if it's prestigious."

For some students, college visits were essential not only to learn more about what the college offered, but also to get a sense of its atmosphere.

"If you want to apply to a college, you should go see it first in person," Cisneros said. "Seeing it [in] photos is different than seeing it [onsite]. For example, in pictures, Fresno State looks really nice. But [when] visiting, it didn't strike me as good as UCLA or Loyola Marymount. The design felt too plain. [The campus] felt closed in."

When visiting college campuses, many students pay attention to whether the campus feels inclusive.

"I was excited to apply for Chapman's film program," Makropoulos said. "The one thing I wasn't psyched about was the whole Catholic vibe of it. It is a Catholic private school with a lot of money. The deciding factor was, I looked at the campus, and it didn't feel right. It completely shifted my view on how [much] I actually wanted to go. I would probably prefer a more open college, with a surrounding city, but Chapman was secluded."

The surrounding of a college can impact the experience for some. While Chapman's isolation deterred Makropoulos, the surrounding town of Cal Poly SLO attracted his sister when

they visited California Polytechnic University, San Luis Obispo. An experience with a current student at San Luis Obispo shaped their perspective on the campus.

"She told us everything we needed to know about San Luis Obispo," Makropoulos said. "It was very exciting for me that, not only was this a college experience for me, but my sister, who was a freshman back then, was already like 'San Luis Obispo is kind of cool!'"

However, college visits may not necessarily be determinative of a college's appeal to some students.

"In the future application process, the visit might serve in giving more clarity and perspective to how the campuses looked and felt," said junior Sannie Wan. "[But] in the end, there are many aspects of a school to consider when applying, not only the campus. For example, one of the colleges I like the most is Harvey Mudd, and it's actually 'one of the ugliest campuses in

America' and its mascot is unofficially a concrete block."

As a potential first step into the process of applying to college, campus visits can provide more insight on what it means to go to college and students' potential choices.

"There's a lot of choices of colleges, especially in Southern California," Wan said. "Along the way, I researched the colleges more. It got me more interested in the college process and exploring what I find attractive in colleges. Not only in appearances, but in the emphasis they place on different areas of study. I did a bit more research after that trip because I got a chance to see all the different colleges."

The college application process can be overwhelming for students. For some, visiting college campuses can help ease anxiety and allow them to feel excited about applying to college. For others, college visits are just one factor of considering which institutions to apply to and potentially attend.

COURTESY OF SANNIE WAN
was] about to be applying [to] colleges."

During his junior year, Makropoulos visited more than 20 colleges across California.

"[I realized that] I'm about to [leave]," Makropoulos said. "[Visiting colleges] was much more beneficial to get a breakthrough, an icebreaker of sorts, when it came to college."

The experience of a college visit can be different for everyone. For some, it means attending a tour, where a guide points out key features of the campus. This was the case for junior Evelyn Cisneros, who visited the University of California Merced, Fresno State University, UCLA and Loyola Marymount University with her Advancement Via Individual Determination class.

For Cisneros, the campus and tour guide's impressions were



Cal Poly SLO campus

COURTESY OF CHRISTOS MAKROPOULOS

Aragon students remain in touch with family overseas

Lian Sterling Cualoping
FEATURES WRITER

Aragon is a diverse school, and many students have extended family members in different countries all over the world. Modern technology,

time zones into account is difficult, as one part of the family may be asleep while the other is awake.

"For me, it's a 10-hour time difference, so when my mom is contacting them in the morning, she has to make sure that

[something to them] but I don't actually mean it because I don't know what the right words are to actually express ... what I'm trying to communicate."

Since mealtimes and school start and end times are different around the world, scheduling calls can often be difficult.

"You go to school at different times," Shilon said. "The vacations are different. It's like a cultural difference. It makes it a bit difficult to know when others will be free or what they're doing with their life."

Talking over the phone is very different from talking in real life because people aren't face-to-face.

"Sometimes, if my dad is on business, we'll FaceTime him just to check in for five minutes during family dinner," Yuan said. "I remember we put my phone with him on it to the side of the table so he would see us while we were eating. The presence of a person is [very] different [from] the online presence and it's just not the same."

Additionally, technical problems may arise that can greatly hinder communications. Issues from slow Wi-Fi to older relatives not understanding technology are inevitable, making talking to extended family much harder.

"There was ... a certain point where ... my text messages wouldn't go through and I didn't know what was going on," Yuan said. "I just felt very disconnected from [my dad]. Also, my grandma is not very good at using WeChat, so ... she still doesn't know how to add me back on there and it's been a really weird process. Sometimes I just feel like ... it's going to be tough because if I don't text them in a while or something doesn't go through, ... eventu-

ally I'd just never see them again and I'd lose contact with them."

However, despite many problems, modern technology has revolutionized long-distance family gatherings, making it possible for people on opposite sides of the world to talk to each other in real time. Family members who are across the world from each other can see each other's faces and hear each other's voices, sharing joy and enjoying being together while thousands of miles apart.

"The language barrier is pretty difficult because sometimes I just don't know what to say to them"

including the internet, cell-phones and computers, allow people to contact family almost anywhere in the world at a moment's notice.

"I don't ever see [my extended family] and it's just good to keep up with them," said sophomore Jasper Gan, whose extended family is in Australia.

People often contact family members during holidays, whether to simply wish them a happy birthday or new year, or to plan physical get-togethers. Some people contact their families more than others, but holidays are always a popular time to communicate with loved ones, especially after not talking with them for a long time.

However, contacting family abroad comes with many challenges. Having to take

my sister and I get up early enough, or if it's in the evening, it has to be early enough or late enough," said sophomore Amit Shilon, whose extended family is in Israel.

On top of problems due to time differences, language barriers can also make it hard to enjoy time with family members abroad. As a result, students may be unable to convey their ideas, and this can make for bland conversations or even misunderstandings.

"The language barrier is pretty difficult because sometimes I just don't know what to say to them, [especially in Chinese], and I oftentimes say the wrong thing because my Chinese is pretty limited," said sophomore Enya Yuan, whose extended family is in China. "I'll say



ZELDA REIF

Into the work of the school office

Lipika Goel & Carolyn Mish
FEATURES WRITER & FEATURES EDITOR

Students are very familiar with what happens in classrooms, on the fields and in Center Court. However, something that the student body is less in tune to is what happens inside the office.

"[An] administrator runs ... the parts of school that you don't think about as a student, because when you're a student, you're thinking about your learning and being in the classroom," said Assistant Principal Nicole Elenz-Martin. "I want the teachers to be able to be teaching their students and not having to worry about all of the other external stuff."

"[An] administrator runs ... the parts of school that you don't think about as a student"

Currently, one of Elenz-Martin's biggest responsibilities is course scheduling for the 2022-23 school year.

"[I'm] making sure all students are getting in their schedule requests," Elenz-Martin said. "I'm the main person to help students with the guest passes or with scholarships or with our big carnival that we're going to have in a few weeks, making sure that that's going to run through the facility."

Many other staff members are involved in managing aspects of the school day that students may not consider at first glance. Carolina Patino is Aragon's attendance clerk. Patino coordinates student attendance, absences and early dismissal, as well as student lockers. She also works with Staff Secretary Dounia Kardosh and Health Aid Lesley Franco in the Student Services office.

"The nice thing about being in this office is that we will work as a team," Patino said. "We always tell each other, 'We're all a team.' So if Ms. Franco has to run to get an emergency, I cover for her. If I have to go out for my lunch or whatever, she covers for me. With Ms. Kardosh, [it's the] same thing. She's constantly helping us out."

A normal day for Patino consists of writing late and early dismissal passes, as well as managing excusals for athletic events. Patino also helps manage general and COVID-19-related absences.

"The big thing now is that I am constantly checking in with Ms. Franco to make sure [I'm telling her about] positive cases," Patino said. "It's also kind of impacted how [absences] get handled. It just takes a little longer because we have to be able to track everything."

Kardosh, who also works in the student services office, coordinates with counselors to provide schedule changes, replaces ID cards, helps with field trips and club activities, organizes shadowing for pro-

spective students and, at the end of the year, helps plan the graduation ceremony.

"In June, you kind of clean up, get a breather, get your energy back and then start tackling what's coming [up for] implementation for next year," Kardosh said. "That's usually the cycle, and that's what I like about my job. It's a little bit of everything."

Elenz-Martin believes one of the highlights of her job is the ability to interact with students. However, busy schedules and unexpected issues limit this interaction time.

"What I would like to start the day doing is by being out and welcoming students as they're coming to school, ... but mostly the day always starts with some sort of unexpected issue that I have to help solve," Elenz-Martin said.

Although work in the office can be unpredictable, passion is what keeps the staff going.

"People are here because they want to be here," Kardosh said. "There's passion, there's care and we truly go beyond what's required."

Administrators and staff work to keep Aragon running smoothly throughout the school year.



Zoe Neil taking care of their goats, Aspen and Petal, in their farm a few years ago COUTESY OF ZOE NEIL

Zoe Neil: Raising goats in a farm

Amelia Butler
FEATURES WRITER

In sixth grade, junior Zoe Neil attended an educational farming camp where the resident goats captured their attention. Neil's interest would have likely ended after the camp, though, had they not coincidentally spotted a magazine entitled "A Guide to Raising Your Own Goats" at a grocery store on the way home.

"I begged my mom for that magazine," Neil said. "I was

ing animals are required to go to the farm at least once a day in order to provide proper care.

"You feed them, you take them on a walk, brush them," Neil said. "Anything else in particular that day you might need to do [like] giving them a bath and then [putting] them inside their pen [is important]."

Additionally, there are specific duties that depend on what day it is.

"Somebody feeds all the animals before school," Neil said. "You'd have one day out of the

antibiotics in the feed and so that is used as the preventative so animals don't get sick, which sounds great, but it's pretty much an over-medication."

Neil takes a different approach instead.

"In my practice of farming, I want to get [the goat's] life as close to what it would have been if they hadn't been domesticated," Neil said.

Neil holds no illusions about the reality of the animal farming industry.

"If you want to be a farmer, you ... have to accept that there is going to be some animal suffering involved and that animals probably will die and can get injured and ... get sick," Neil said. "But I also don't think that means we can't treat them with respect and responsibility."

Neil has found their 4-H club to be a welcoming and tight-knit community that has given them life-changing opportunities, such as getting involved with the animals and even being the goat team leader, a role which provided teaching and leadership experiences. Neil encourages anyone with an interest in animal farming to consider checking out the club.

"With spring coming up, this is ... the best time to join because you get to ... experience

"So there's a selflessness that comes with that ... recognition [that] you have to go [take care of the goat]"

like, 'Mom, I need this magazine. I just learned about goats. I need to get it.'"

Neil did, and it cemented their desire to join the small but devoted community of Bay Area youth farmers and take care of their own goats, a life-changing responsibility for them.

"You now have an organism that is reliant on you for their life and their safety," Neil said. "There's a selflessness that comes with that ... recognition [that] you have to go [take care of it], because otherwise, your goat's gonna die. You can't just ... take a day off."

As the first person in their family to explore farming, Neil turned to their local 4-H club, a national youth organization, to find the resources and structure they would need to pursue this interest. As Neil gained access to more information, their connection to goats grew.

"[Goats are] really intelligent, [and] they'll also work with you," Neil said. "You can use them for meat, milk and fiber so they're the most versatile out of any ... farm animals that I know of."

Over the years, Neil has raised two goats at the Crystal Springs 4-H farm. Taking care of the animals is not a small time commitment, as it involves spending roughly 15 hours a week at the farm. Because of this, Neil chose not to raise a goat this year, as their school workload increased. Those rais-

ing week getting up at 5 [a.m.] to go do that."

There is also work to be done in the afternoons.

"Once a week, you also have to clean out the pen, which is three hours of work," Neil said. "You have to knock out the entire stall ... and you put wood shavings and bedding [down]."

The experience has helped Neil develop useful skills and has made farming a permanent fixture in their life.

"I ... love to do so many different things that I think my

"I want to get [the goat's] life as close to what it would have been if they hadn't been domesticated"

interests continually ping around," Neil said. "But once I found goats, I was absolutely sure that I wanted to start a goat farm and whatever job or other thing I do in the future is going to revolve around that."

Most members raising goats work with "market goats," or goats meant to be slaughtered, but Neil chose to take a different path, seeking out a dairy goat instead. This created a slight divide in terms of the varying methodologies adopted by the respective members in terms of raising the animals.

"People will give the [market goats] medicated feed," Neil said. "Which ... means there's

and interact with all of the animals," Neil said

Neil aspires to one day own their own farm in which they would provide other youths interested in animal farming with similar educational opportunities to those which inspired them. Neil's desire to create this comes from their love of teaching and sharing their passions with others.

"Always be willing to try new stuff you never thought you would like," Neil said. "Having [farming] in my life gives my life so much purpose and so much direction and I really want everyone else to be able to have that too."



Becky Foster doing her work in the office

ANNA HE



Morbius: As bad as it's made out to be?

the Marvel Cinematic Universe. Dr. Morbius, played by Jared Leto, was born with a rare blood disease and does everything in his power to save others from the same fate — even if that means participating in unethical experiments. In an attempt to save himself and others, he fused his DNA with a bat's. This not only cured him of his disease but also gave him super speed, super strength and echolocation abilities. But his newfound powers came with a downfall: an unquenchable appetite for blood.

Many suspenseful and enjoyable scenes result from excellent cinematography and editing. Unlike most Marvel movies, the mood of "Morbius" is dark and grim, conveying a harsh tone and tragic theme.

A controversy has arisen over Leto's method acting. Method acting is a technique of acting that encourages actors to perform more realistically by understanding and experiencing the character's emotions and motivations. Some people said his acting came off as self-centered and boring, but his acting truly captures the character. Morbius himself is ridden with flaws and pride. For example, in one of the first few scenes, Morbius rejects the Nobel Prize he has just won. Morbius grew up

knowing that he was different and would someday die. Leto's acting captures the character so well that viewers could forget he was acting.

Still, audiences can become disoriented and confused amid the many unintegrated scenes. For a movie that lasted one hour and 44 minutes, its ambitious plot wound up achieving very little. The story did not allow the audience to develop an emotional attachment with the characters; when characters died, the story simply moved on.



Despite these structural flaws, the overall concept, setting and characters propelled the movie wonderfully. It's not often that viewers find themselves rooting for a character who does so many bad things. Yet, throughout the movie, Morbius' motives are clear. Even if his ways of getting what he wants aren't exactly ethical, the reasons were always understandable.

Antiheroes are protagonists who don't have the traditional hero qualities such as courage, morality or idealism. Some famous examples of antiheroes

are Severus Snape, Loki and the Suicide Squad. In recent media, antihero popularity has taken off. Although viewers don't always agree with the antihero's method of doing things or support their values and beliefs, they can be enticed by the antihero's charisma, sense of humor, intelligence or just their style and expression. Another reason for the rise of antiheroes is how different they are from normal heroes. There are so many different types of unique and interesting antiheroes, each with their own charm that pulls viewers in and makes them want to support them, even if their actions aren't always right. Dr. Morbius is a perfect example of an antihero. He walks the line between a hero and a villain, being neither yet both at the same time.

In short, "Morbius" is a lot better of a movie than critics give it credit for. There are flaws in the movie, and the movie lacks an emotional aspect that many audiences look out for. Despite that, the main character is fascinating and not similar to what most people would expect. The concept of the character and movie are both interesting, and it's exciting to see where Dr. Morbius goes and how he fits into the Marvel Cinematic Universe in the future.

Ellen Li
FEATURES WRITER

"Morbius" received the second-lowest CinemaScore for any Marvel movie made. Many critics think the movie is clichéd, generic and lacks

emotional impact. Fans think the movie is action-packed and full of suspense, featuring an in-depth main character.

"Morbius" tells the tragic story of one of the most conflicted yet compelling antiheroes in

The best boba tea shops of downtown San Mateo

Charlotte Gregory
FEATURES WRITER

While there are many fantastic boba shops in San Mateo, there are a select few that really stand out. One of these shops is Urban Ritual, located in the heart of downtown San Mateo.

In terms of quality, it doesn't get much better than Urban Ritual. Although its menu is much smaller than those of other local boba shops, it makes up for that with high-quality, all-natural ingredients. The tapi-

oca pearls made at Urban Ritual are fresh and perfectly chewy with a sweet but not overwhelming brown-sugar taste. For fans of traditional boba tea flavors, matcha, honey oolong and jasmine green tea are all great options. If customers are looking to try something new, the crème brûlée milk tea is a delicious

spin on the classic dessert that won't be found at other boba shops. It has a house milk tea base, topped with honey boba, pieces of crème brûlée pudding and torched raw sugar.

Next up, Cup of Blooms is a beautifully decorated hidden gem on the corner of South B Street. It has a quiet seat-

"For fans of traditional boba flavors, matcha, honey oolong and jasmine green tea are all great options"



Workers under the Urban Ritual Menu

CHARLOTTE GREGORY

ing area with calm, relaxing background music, making it a perfect place to study and complete work.

The boba tea is fresh, authentic and above all else, delicious. Each tea is freshly brewed to order, and a variety of flavors are offered, such as traditional teas like matcha, lavender and taro, plus a wide variety of fruit teas as well as coffee drinks. Sweet and savory toasts are also offered, like avocado toast, made with fresh sourdough bread and hearty avocado spread, topped with spices and an optional egg. To satisfy anyone with a sweet tooth, there's the Nutella toast. Rich, creamy chocolate-hazelnut spread is set on a thick, fluffy slice of white bread, topped with sweet, bright red strawberries.



Cup of Blooms register in San Mateo

CHARLOTTE GREGORY

Meet Fresh stands out among other boba shops by creating an immersive experience out of getting boba. Another unique aspect of Meet Fresh is that it doesn't just serve boba; it also offers a range of other desserts, such as shaved ice, mochi, waffles, ice cream and more. The mango milk shaved ice is a delicious combination of sweet, fluffy shaved ice topped with fresh mango pieces and creamy mango-flavored ice cream.

Finally, one last spot to visit is Sweet Moment. Much like Meet Fresh, Sweet Moment is popular for both its delicious boba drinks and its many other unique desserts. The menu is huge, so customers won't run out of options. The boba tea menu alone consists of a vast variety of beverages:

slushies, smoothies, milk teas, fruit teas and more. Beyond boba tea, there is a plethora of other handmade sweets to try, including Sweet Moment's much-loved "snowflake" cups. For example, the strawberry snowflake cup has a delicious shaved ice base and is topped with strawberry ice cream and strawberry pieces.

With so many boba shops to choose from within San Mateo, it can be a challenge to pin down the best ones. Urban Ritual, Cup of Blooms, Meet Fresh and Sweet Moment are all excellent places to start, whether a customer is new to boba or has been a long-time lover of the drink. With expansive menus, top-tier ingredients and unique qualities, each of these places offers a great boba-drinking experience.



ALEXANDER LO

Anti-LGBTQ+ bills should be condemned



Mikaela George
FEATURES WRITER

On March 8, Florida lawmakers passed the “Parental Rights In Education” bill. The bill moves to limit education and discussion surrounding gender and sexuality, while also restricting student access to counseling in schools without parental consent. The bill declares that all classroom instruction concerning gender and sexuality cannot occur in grades kindergarten through third. Topics that do not abide by state regulations and what the Florida government deems “appropriate” cannot be discussed. The bill also hinders the provision of free, confidential counseling for students. Schools would be required to inform parents if their student is utilizing any health services and parents would be allowed to withdraw their child from counseling without the consent of the student. It is set to go into

effect on July 1, numbering the days that the students in Florida and Texas will be able to explore their identities and seek help without consequence.

“This is one of the most openly oppressive bills of the 21st century”

The “Don’t Say Gay” Bill, as it is referred to by critics, is an oppressive policy that targets discussion surrounding gender and sexuality. Republican lawmakers, such as Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis and Texas Gov. Greg Abbott, are unfortunately intent on seeing this policy through. Abbott even referred to gender-affirming education as “child abuse” in a directive. That phrase in itself demonstrates disregard for the adolescents whose lives this bill would destroy. Claiming that educating children about identities they may associate themselves with is abuse is prejudice toward the LGBTQ+ community. It’s an appalling accusation, shamefully

ignorant and rooted in bigotry, having the capacity to greatly harm the very people DeSantis claims he wants to protect. Democrats have established that this bill will endanger the safety of LGBTQ+ students and will result in the forced outing of adolescents to an unsupportive parent if enforced. President Joe Biden has described this piece of legislation as hateful in a recent tweet, an accurate summary considering that the bill does nothing to aid students, but makes it more difficult for children to explore their identities without judgment. The bill is one continuous kick in the gut to every closeted child in these states and needs to be rejected.

Ultimately, the bill in itself is completely useless. Limiting education on gender and sexual identity in schools will do nothing to stop children from learning about it through the internet or other means. Gender and sexuality are not learnt; they’re fundamental and based solely on the person’s own feelings and identity. They cannot just be developed by someone illuminating the topic for someone else.

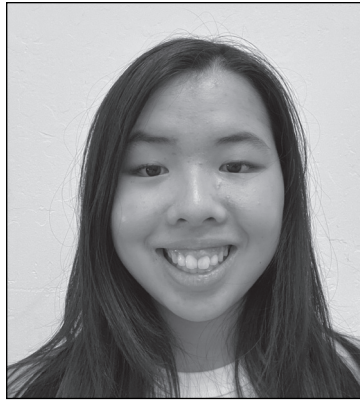
This bill is one of the most openly oppressive pieces of legislation of the 21st century. Not only does it make it so much harder for America’s youth to explore identity, but it makes it much more difficult to find

someone to confide in about such topics. If a child can’t talk about their struggles with a counselor without their parents finding out and having the ability to remove them from this counseling, then what other outlets do they have? The impact this would have on students in intolerant or abusive home environments would be catastrophic. The only foreseeable result would be increased depression and anxiety in teens and perhaps even a higher suicide rate in adolescents.

If the goal of this bill is to help keep children safe, then the “safest” action to be taken is to burn it to the ground. Legislation must combat these bills and make sure they don’t advance any further than it already has and causes any permanent damage to America more than it already has.

*More information on page 6

Teachers should record more class lectures



Sophia Zhou
FEATURES WRITER

When students test positive for COVID-19, they are required to stay at home until they test negative. While their world may be halted, the rest of the world continues to go on, and at school, teachers continue introducing new material in class. The only tool that students use to keep up in their courses is Canvas, which allows them access to slideshow presentations, worksheets, pictures of notes and resources of this nature. However, they are robbed of perhaps the most instrumental aspect to learning: being in the classroom environment and listening to an instructor give a lecture in live time. This

and process content at the same rate as the rest of the class, even amid an extended period of absence, in order to be successful with the demands of tests, projects, assignments and more, which cannot be done when they do not have the ability to follow along. Teachers and students alike have busy schedules, and with lunch and Flex being relatively short, each around half-an-hour long, the structure of the school day

wait until they have a class to ask their teacher.

Recorded lectures can be used for long-term review as students have the opportunity to gradually re-learn material and familiarize themselves before they move on to using other methods of review based on understanding, such as Quizlet, Kahoot or Quizizz, which can enrich and fill in gaps in the studying process.

In math based courses, seeing a teacher run through

“Students can receive clarification and review ... without needing to wait until they have a class”

provides few opportunities to meet with instructors. An hour-and-a-half of instruction during block day periods cannot be compressed into effectively a third of that duration. Recorded lectures would be highly beneficial as they would eliminate the pressing stress of catching up with class content upon return to school and make the lives of both teachers and students significantly easier.

All students would be able to find immense positives

a complicated problem or formula step-by-step with thorough explanation does wonders for understanding and applying such concepts when called upon. In heavy content based courses such as history, an instructor’s analysis and clarification can make a world of difference. Students in every single academic class would only benefit from recorded lectures used to aid their individual learning processes.

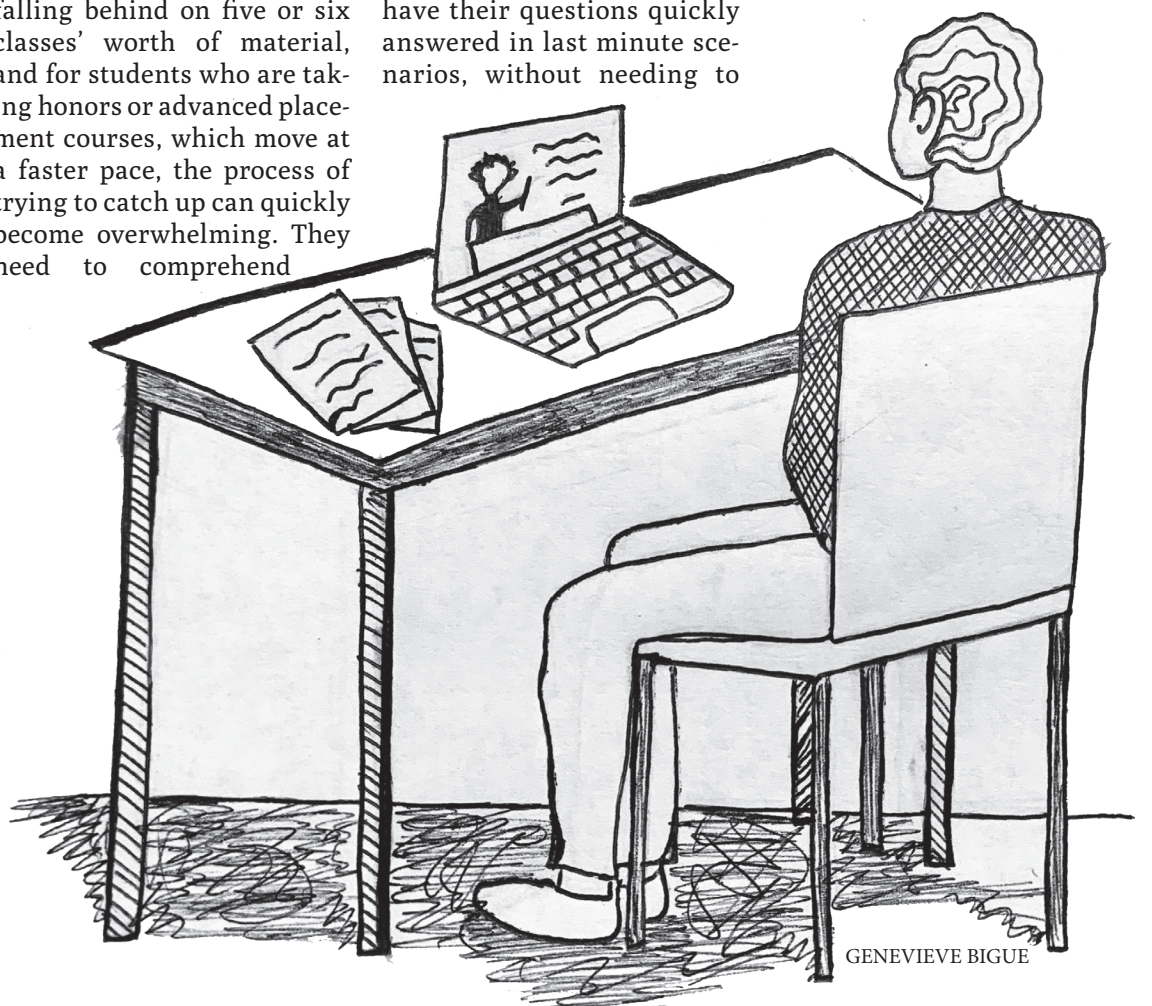
The pandemic and transition to at-home learning led many colleges and universities around the country to begin recording lectures for students, so it makes sense that high schools should follow such procedures as well in order to maximize the efficiency of learning. COVID-19 has dramatically changed the way in which education is taught, and a positive to come out is the various ways in which technology can be used to extend learning beyond just the classroom setting.

“An hour-and-a-half of instruction during blocks can’t be compressed into effectively a third of that”

experience can be brought into students’ homes while they recover through recorded lectures, which a student can utilize at their convenience and in the future for review and reference.

In high school, being out sick for even a day can mean falling behind on five or six classes’ worth of material, and for students who are taking honors or advanced placement courses, which move at a faster pace, the process of trying to catch up can quickly become overwhelming. They need to comprehend

from the usage of recorded lectures, as they would provide an effective and simplified way to review content as needed. Students can receive clarification and review concepts that they forgot or need brushing up on leading up to an exam, and have their questions quickly answered in last minute scenarios, without needing to



GENEVIEVE BIGUE



ZELDA REIF

Fencing: Is it too dangerous, or just misunderstood?



Chin-yi Kong
SPORTS WRITER

Fencing is generally associated with the swashbuckling scenes of movies like “Star Wars” and “The Three Musketeers.” The gleaming pointed swords and shouts of “en garde” leave many viewers eager to see who will be the victor.

When I tell people that I fence, the most common response is: “Do you stab people with swords?” Although the answer is yes, it is not exactly what people have in mind. Nowadays, while fencing still involves stabbing people with swords, it no longer involves declarations of honor and violence. Although the duels to the death portrayed in movies may be historically accurate, modern-day fencing is quite different.

There are three weapons in fencing with different techniques and compositions: foil, épée and saber. The goal of fencing is to reach either five or 15 points in an allotted time before your opponent does. Although the targets vary from weapon to weapon, none pose more of a threat than another. All three apparatuses have evolved from their sharp, deadly origins to blunted tips. While it is common for me to come home from prac-

tice or a tournament covered in bruises, in my eight years of fencing, I have never been severely injured.

Since fencing stemmed from war and duels of death, it is natural for people to assume there is danger involved. However, in the 121 years of modern Olympic-style fencing, there have only been eight instances of death, the most notable of which was Soviet fencer Vladimir Viktorovich Smirnov.

On July 19, 1982, Smirnov fenced German fencer Matthias Behr in the World Championships. In an unfortunate accident, Behr’s blade broke, pierced the mesh of Smirnov’s mask and entered Smirnov’s brain through his eye. Nine days later, Smirnov was pronounced dead.

in the 2008 Summer and 2010 Winter Olympics. It concluded that fencing has an injury rate of approximately 3%, much lower than mainstream sports like soccer and basketball, with injury rates of 32% and 13%, respectively.

Some people may be surprised at those statistics because of fencing’s long history of death duels. In contrast to the brute force used in the old days of fencing, the sport is now more about strategy. This is especially evident in women’s foil, the event I compete in, which focuses more on technique and strategy instead of the physical strength in the men’s events. These controlled movements not only reduce the occurrence of physical clashes, but also the likelihood of in-

“I am more worried about pulling a muscle rather than being skewered by my opponent’s blade”

This scary incident only made fencing a safer sport. Smirnov’s death prompted several changes to the fencing uniform, improving the safety of the sport overall. Now, blades are made of a stronger material, uniforms are made with Kevlar or other ballistic nylons and masks are two to three times stronger. In addition, fencers wear several layers of protection: a hard chest protector, an underarm, long-sleeved jacket, knickers (or pants), masks and, depending on the weapon, another electric layer.

Today, fencing is incredibly safe. A vast majority of injuries are pulled muscles and minor sprains, not including a multitude of harmless bruises. A study by the University of Oslo examined the percentage of athletes injured

juries, such as concussions. Going into any tournament, I am more worried about pulling a muscle rather than being skewered by my opponent’s blade. My mind is so focused on the fencing itself that being injured is the last thing on my mind.

Although modern-day fencing is relatively safe, some still mistakenly believe that fencing teaches aggression. There is always a chance of injury when playing sports. However, proper training and significantly upgraded protection have made fencing a safe sport. The rigorous 15-hours-a-week training and intense competitions have allowed me to grow stronger both mentally and physically. People should give fencing a chance. It’s a sport like none other and offers incomparable life experiences.

Beyond the bell: teachers who coach

Gary Green
SPORTS WRITER

Athletics are a large part of the high school experience for many students at Aragon, but teachers play a huge role in them as well. In addition to teaching, many teachers coach sports at Aragon.

P.E. teacher Annette Gennaro-Trimble has coached volleyball for almost 30 years and currently coaches the girls varsity team. As a P.E. teacher, she has always

I have a fabulous husband that helps me out, ... but during [the] season, ... it’s hard because [it takes] a lot of hours. [Volleyball has] Saturday tournaments [that] ... go from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. at night. You do it because you love to do it.”

Linda Brown, P.E. teacher and badminton coach, has coached many sports at Aragon in addition to badminton, such as softball, basketball, tennis and volleyball. Coaching allows teachers to connect with students on a more personal level.

“You can have a much deeper interaction with your students because you see them every day for a couple of hours on end,” Brown said. “You go to your away games on a bus [and] you’re just able to have deeper connections than you would [normally have] with students. [A] team [is] smaller than our classes so you’re just able to spend more time and you’re doing something that [you] love that [the students] love. So it allows you to ... improve your relationships.”

To Abrams, coaching allows him to be less strict than he is during his classes.

“[Coaching] enables me ... to get to know students on a personal level ... because I get to



Coaches Gennaro and Brown
loved sports and has been coaching since her first year as a teacher.

“Way back when ... if you [were] a P.E. teacher, you were required to coach,” Gennaro-Trimble said. “All of us that ... go into physical education love to coach. That’s one of the reasons we ... go into it: because we all played sports growing up and we all probably coached along the way ... before we even became teacher[s].”

It is a constant struggle for teachers to balance their free time with both their teaching and coaching responsibilities.

P.E. teacher John Abrams has been playing and coaching sports his entire life. At Aragon, he is an assistant coach for track and field and cross country as well as the head coach of the girls junior varsity soccer team. Growing up, Abrams played basketball, soccer, baseball and football and continued to play football in college. Abrams coached for about 10 years at his previous school and the Jewish Community Center of San Francisco.

“I don’t [balance my time],” Abrams said. “It’s work, coach, eat, sleep, repeat. That’s what my life is. I’m coaching year-round, so it’s the whole year.”

Gennaro-Trimble has had a similar experience coaching at Aragon.

“During the season, it’s really, really tough,” Gennaro-Trimble said. “I coached all the way through having four kids.



Coach John Abrams works

one-on-one,” Abrams said. “I work with them in smaller numbers than [in a] class of 40. You get to see them outside the light of being structured within the four walls of a classroom and see them get goofy, so it creates a ... different dynamic. They can also see me and my personality outside of trying to manage 40 [students]. I loosen up a bit [and am] a little more goofy ... and just don’t take things as serious.”

Aragon teachers expend time and effort to coach students in athletics and gain valuable personal relationships with student-athletes through the process.

Boys lacrosse defeats Saratoga in a 9-8 victory

Pratham Valluri
SPORTS WRITER

The Aragon varsity boys lacrosse team (8-3 overall, 8-3 Santa Clara Valley Athletic League - El Camino)* defeated Saratoga (9-3 overall, 8-3 SCVAL - El Camino)* 9-8 on April 12 in a competitive back-and-forth match.

A bitter 9-8 defeat to Saratoga on March 10 energized the Dons and gave them an added sense of competitiveness.

"The team came out with a little bit of a chip on our shoulder because this was a close game the first time we

played," said head coach Evan Scott King. "I thought with this win, [we] had something to prove."

Both teams got a strong start earlier on, culminating in a 1-1 tie at the end of the first quarter. In the second quarter, Aragon started playing more aggressively. Senior attack Nick Ragone made a fast break that gave the Dons a 4-3 advantage heading into halftime.

Although the team did not convert all of their shots offensively, they got good looks at the goal, a positive sign that carried on for the rest of the match. Despite some missed

opportunities, the Dons stayed in the game with their defense, which was extremely physical. The team stick-checked the opposition relentlessly and held their place on the field.

"The more physical you are, the better chance you have of possessing the ball the majority of the game," said junior midfielder Dylan Esqueda.

Additionally, the Dons' experience and cohesion between their top players allowed them to be in sync on critical plays, including a goal by senior attack Luke Quanbeck late in the third quarter when Aragon was a man up.

"I think a lot of the older players are very close and they have a good feel for one another, which helps us a lot on offense," Esqueda said.

While the defense held strong for most of the game, sophomore goalie Matteo De Santis was also successful in his first match starting, having numerous clutch stops down the stretch when Saratoga players seemingly had clear shots at a goal.

"Frankly, [De Santis was] the surprise of the evening," King said. "I thought he did absolutely fantastic. He just exceeded all expectations."

The tough defense led to increased offensive opportunities as the Dons' midfielders often took a loose ball and went on a fast break in order to generate some quick offense.

"They really seem to thrive as a group on that transition aspect of the game," King said.

The Dons scored goals on numerous transitions, including goals by junior midfielder Xavier McKenzie and senior attack Ian Kunkel in the fourth quarter, to increase the lead.

After Saratoga came back from a two-goal deficit late in the fourth quarter, Quanbeck scored the eventual game-winning goal with just over a minute left in the game, continuing the Dons' pattern of winning close matches this season.

"I think some of our guys just know how to keep their cool under pressure and stay calm in close games," Quanbeck said.

With this win pushing the team to third place in the SCVAL - El Camino division,

the Dons are poised to have one of their best seasons in recent memory.

"We knew that we could beat this team," Quanbeck said. "But I think we just needed to show who we are and show that we're a good team by [beating them]."

Immediately after the win, the entire team stormed onto the field and celebrated.

"I think we're finally seeing the results now of the work

spent trying to refine that team chemistry," King said. "When you have a group of guys like this that have worked together for so long, they just know how each other plays. We're finally at that point, having kind of a resurgent season, [and] we're able to see some of it pay off."

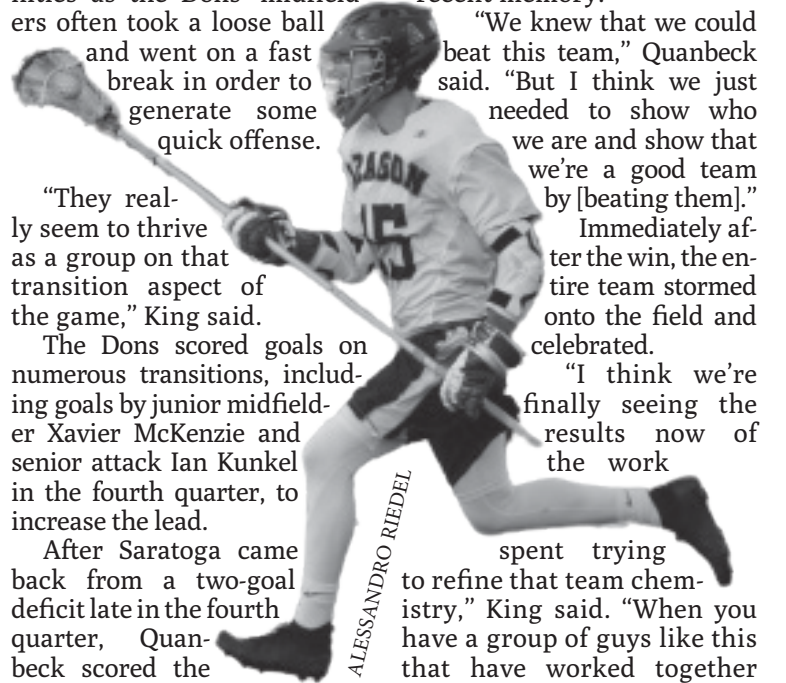
The boys lacrosse team will next take on Woodside Priory (7-3 overall, 7-3 SCVAL - El Camino)* in a home game on April 25 at 7 p.m.

*Stats as of April 18



A Don prepares to pass to a teammate.

ALESSANDRO RIEDEL



Aragon varsity badminton sweeps Capuchino in a 30-0 win

Emma Quanbeck & Amanda Hao
SPORTS WRITER & SPORTS EDITOR

On April 12, Aragon's varsity badminton team (9-3 overall, 9-3 Peninsula Athletic League - Bay Division)* won 30-0 against Capuchino (2-10 overall, 2-10 PAL)*. After a rocky past two years due to COVID-19, this is the team's first normal season since 2019. The team is currently third place in its league and has found much success this season.

"I think a strong mentality helped us win the game," said senior mixed doubles player Amber Yeh. "Especially for the singles players, the players can be evenly matched, so as long as we stay focused the entire game, it gives us the upper edge."

The Dons previously played against Capuchino on March 10, winning 27-3.

"Our skill and teamwork between our teams really shone through this game," said senior girls doubles player Nayeon Koo. "This season especially, since we've had a lot more time to practice throughout the season, I think we're much better

than we were at our first game against them. We were much more experienced and more used to playing badminton with our current partners, so I think that really helped a lot."

The team attributes its success to good team dynamics and chemistry.

"This year, we've been placed with people that we were the best with," Koo said. "We're practicing really hard and we're cheering each other on a lot more than other years. I think it's a much more effective strategy in regards to utilizing our different skills because ... some people are better at certain things like ... smashing [or] drops so I feel like [when you] pair those types of people together, you get a stronger team which I think has been happening a lot more this year."

Because of low morale from Capuchino and the skill difference between the teams, the win was expected for Aragon.

"Today, it went as it was supposed to be," said head coach Linda Brown. "We're a little bit better than Capuchi-

no skillwise. So score-wise, it was what I expected."

Looking toward the rest of the season, Brown hopes that the team keeps on getting its practice in and working on singles and doubles techniques.

"We just got to come every day and just got to get court time," Brown said. "It depends on what you're playing. If you're playing singles,

"We're practicing really hard and we're cheering each other on a lot more than other years"

you just have to get the conditioning down. If you're playing doubles, you have to work with your partner to make sure you understand rotation and everything."

There are five events in badminton: girls singles, boys singles, girls doubles, boys doubles and mixed doubles. Each event consists of three teams, ranked first, second and third, that earn three, two

and one points, respectively, for a win. Through constant practices and scrimmages between their top teams, the Dons are consistently improving and changing up their ladder for the best results.

"This year, I think our strategy has changed a lot and, compared to previous years, it's a lot more vigorous," Koo said. "We compete against

crushed so hopefully we have improved since then."

Yeh and Neve, who play first mixed doubles together, hope to move up in the doubles rankings and be able to compete more with skilled teams like top seed Mills (12-0 overall, 12-0 PAL)*.

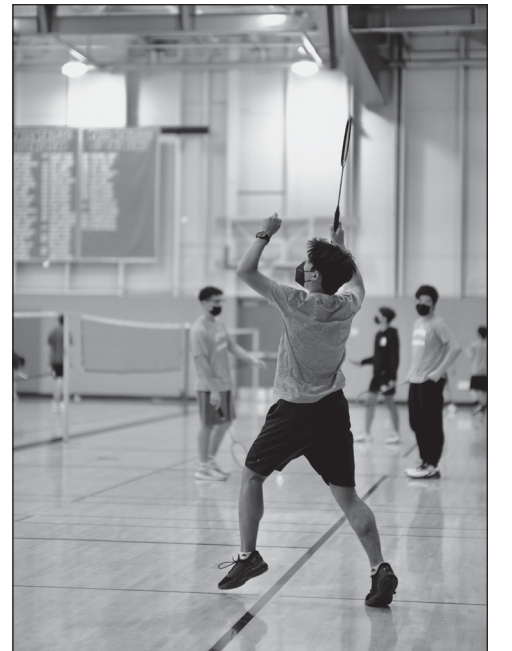
"As the season is coming to an end, our goal is to end the season off strong," Yeh said. "It would be great if we could beat Mills, ... but we'll see. We practice on strategy and observe how other schools play to play at our best."

The team has big goals for the next few weeks with the PAL Bay Division playoffs scheduled for April 27 and 28 at home.

"We still have things that we have to work on," Brown said. "We have playoffs coming up. When [our opponents] step onto the court, they may be better than our team, [so] we need to be working on our short game."

Aragon's next game is an away game on April 21 against Burlingame (5-7 overall, 5-7 PAL)* at 4:30 p.m.

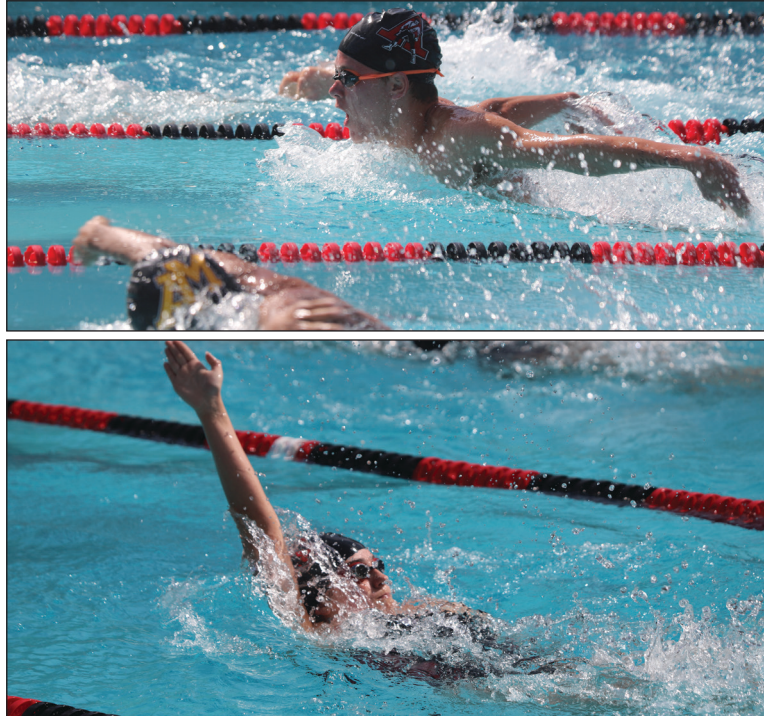
*Stats as of April 18



From left to right: freshmen doubles players Felix Ma and Theon Gardiner, senior mixed doubles player Amber Yeh and junior singles player Sebastien Ludwig

ANNA HE

Aragon swimming faces Menlo-Atherton



The Aragon swim team competed against Menlo-Atherton in a meet on April 8.

PURVI SINGHANIA

Veda Yama
SPORTS WRITER

On April 8, the Aragon girls swim team (0-5 overall)* and boys team (5-0 overall)* faced the Menlo-Atherton girls

Hoping to build on earlier successes of the season, the team was excited for the competition from Menlo-Atherton.

"I think we went into it just like every other meet," said junior Marc Andre Lam. "We believe in ourselves, we know

"This is probably one of the best teams we've had in a long time"

swim team (4-2 overall)* and boys team (4-2 overall)* in a home meet. Girls varsity lost 98-70 while boys varsity won 99-71.

we're good, and know we have a lot of great swimmers. [Menlo-Atherton is] good too, but I think we have strength in numbers."

After 46 races, the team had 23 first-place finishes across all four divisions.

"Our varsity boys went in undefeated and came out undefeated," said head coach Carly DeMarchena. "That [was] our goal ... and we reached [it]."

Lam was satisfied with his performance during the meet.

"[I had] close to my best time ... on my 100 fly ... and I thought the atmosphere was really good," Lam said. "Especially on the relays, there was a lot of energy."

The swim team is co-ed and mixed-level. Though meet

events are separated into varsity and junior varsity races, and girls and boys races, the teams practice together.

The team is divided into three levels: red team, black team and Don team. The red and black teams include junior varsity swimmers, and the Don team includes varsity swimmers. The practice schedule for each group is different, but there are team practices daily. Usually the day before a meet, the swimmers conserve their energy by having an easier practice that focuses on turns, diving and finishes.

This year's swim season has been different, marked by a return to in-person competition rather than virtual meets where schools would record and send the results to one another.

"I feel that competition is a lot better because now we're swimming against other schools in person," said sophomore Seth Smith. "We're able to push ourselves to go a lot faster than if we were just swimming by ourselves and with each other."

This season, the Dons have achieved seven Central Coast Section qualifications.

"This is probably one of the best teams we've had in a long time," DeMarchena said. "We've had a couple [of] relay [teams] and ... individuals qualify already, and they qualified even in the first and second meet, which is very impressive."

As the season comes to a close, the team is focusing on pushing toward the Peninsula Athletic League competitions.

"[The] goal is just to stay undefeated because we've had a really good season going," Lam said. "[We] cap it off with PALs, so we just [have to] finish strong."

Both the girls and boys varsity teams will face PAL trials at Menlo-Atherton. The girls will have theirs on April 27 at 2 p.m. while the boys team will have theirs on April 28 at 2 p.m.

*Records as of April 18

Girls lacrosse rebounds with 7-4 win against Presentation

Stephanie Lin
SPORTS WRITER

Aragon girls lacrosse (2-7 overall, 1-7 West Bay Athletic League-Skyline)* bounced back with a 7-4 win against Presentation (0-9 overall, 0-8 WBAL-Skyline) on April 13 after six losses.

The Presentation Panthers started off in the lead with a strong offense, keeping the ball near the Dons' goal. Saves were made by senior defender Stephanie Camacho Sibrian and senior co-captain and midfielder Lilly Loghmani, but Presentation managed to lead with a score of 2-0.

There were intense struggles near the goal as the Panthers' defense blocked the Dons from receiving. The Panthers forced the Dons' ball

attackers behind the goal as they searched for an opening to pass or take a shot.

With 20 minutes left in the first half, Loghmani scored the first goal for the Dons after sprinting to the crease. Presentation scored another two goals before senior midfielder Lauren Mok scored another goal with an assist by Loghmani in the last 15 minutes of the first half. After a drawn out struggle by the goal, Loghmani slid in a goal with an assist from junior attacker Amy Hagerman 31.8 seconds before the half ended.

Coach Ashley Parham is the team's temporary coach after Kayln Olson's retirement while they continue searching for a more experienced instructor.

"We've got off to a slow start," Parham said. "We beat

this team pretty soundly the first time we played them, so I think we came in a little overconfident.

[Then] we finally ... took control of the game and played pretty well. There [were] a couple of good assists. Usually, most of our goals are just kind of one-on-one battles, but it's good to see when someone gets a pass right in front of the net."

Aragon broke through Presentation's defense with swifter passes, long clearances and well-aimed assists.

"At halftime, we [adjusted] our strategy because in the beginning of the game, we had had a slower start," Mok said.

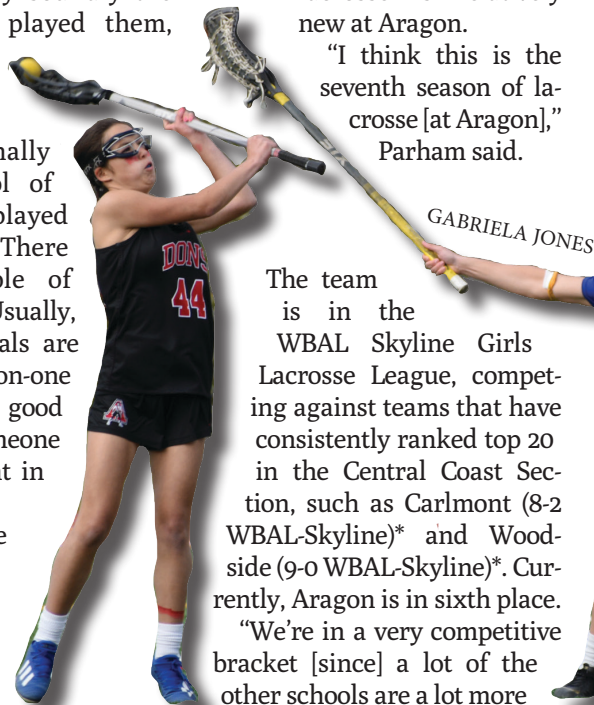
In the second half, Aragon played more aggressively. Mok gained control of the ball during most faceoffs, giving Aragon the upper hand.

Junior goalie Deirdre Doyle was effective at blocking shots and transitioning the team to offense throughout the game.

With 14 minutes left, Loghmani scored again with an assist from Mok. After more goals from Loghmani, Mok and Hagerman, the Dons finished the game with a 7-4 victory.

Lacrosse is relatively new at Aragon.

"I think this is the seventh season of lacrosse [at Aragon]," Parham said.



GABRIELA JONES

The team is in the WBAL Skyline Girls Lacrosse League, competing against teams that have consistently ranked top 20 in the Central Coast Section, such as Carlmont (8-2 WBAL-Skyline)* and Woodside (9-0 WBAL-Skyline)*. Currently, Aragon is in sixth place.

"We're in a very competitive bracket [since] a lot of the other schools are a lot more experienced than our team is," Loghmani said. "I think we are making a big effort, [especially since] we have a lot of newer girls and a newer coach."

During this period of improvement, the team's supportive culture is a strength.

"I think everyone ... [pushes] everyone else to get better," Loghmani said. "[At] the beginning of the draw, you always hear people cheering for whoever's

taking it. I think we have a very friendly dynamic, so everyone is really comfortable talking to each other."

Parham's coaching and his football background has also been a significant help.

"[It's] been awesome for him to apply the skills that he learned in football [to] lacrosse,"

"We're in a very competitive bracket [where] ... the other schools are ... more experienced than [ours]"

Last year, COVID-19 resulted in a rough season with fewer players than usual.

"This year, now that we are trying to come back to full speed, we've had to adjust," Loghmani said.

Mok said. "[We learned to be] ... aggressive on defense and [work] as a unit."

The next home game is against Carlmont on April 22 at 5:30 p.m.

*Records as of April 18



A Don scoops and takes possession of the ball before the Panthers. GABRIELA JONES