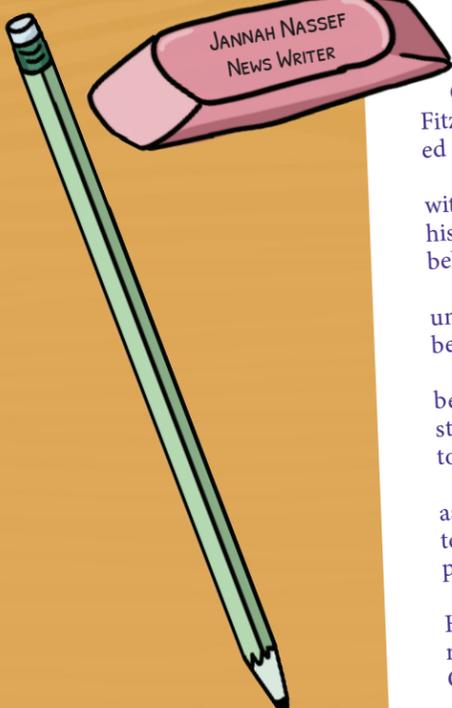


EVA LUDWIG



CDC CHANGES



On Aug. 28, Jim O'Neill, a Silicon Valley investor and top deputy undersecretary of Robert Fitzgerald Kennedy Jr., Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, was appointed as the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's new director.

The original nominee to be director of the CDC, Dave Weldon, a doctor from Florida, was withdrawn in Nov. due to not being expected to receive enough votes in the Senate to approve his position. Weldon was unpopular because of his belief in conspiracy theories about vaccines, beliefs that O'Neill shares.

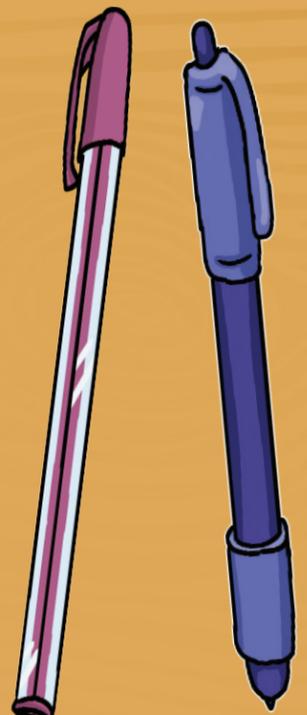
Following Weldon's withdrawal, the CDC operated without an official leader for months, until acting director Susan Monarez, a microbiologist and immunologist who has previously been the director of the Advanced Research Projects Agency for Health, was approved.

Less than a month after beginning her position, Monarez was fired, sparking a legal battle between Monarez and the White House. Lawyers for Monarez stated she refused "to rubber-stamp unscientific, reckless directives" during her time as director, leading the White House to respond, saying they fired her because she was "not aligned with the president's agenda."

O'Neill has history with Silicon Valley investments, the most prominent being his position as CEO at the Thiel foundation, where he cofounded the Thiel Fellowship, offering \$200,000 to entrepreneurs willing to stay out of school. The Thiel Foundation was founded by major Republican donor Peter Thiel.

During the George W. Bush administration, O'Neill wrote speeches for the Department of Health and Human Services, contributing to changes in food regulation services and emergency responses. However, he does not have any medical background, which some find concerning. CDC directors typically have a medical degree.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



CDC changes director

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

"[He's] somebody who has more of a political background, [who] is more invested [in] private sector perspectives and had positions in life that seemed more leaning towards profiting from health, as opposed to consistently being an advocate for public health," said Malak Elshafei, a medical student at the University of Michigan who discussed her personal opinions without

eases [and] make accessing these services even harder for people."

The Trump administration has cut funding for several public health institutions, causing many to worry about the future of medical research.

"I have a background in global health, and they shuttered funding for the United States Agency of Interna-

to be at "high risk" and over 65. Although the CDC listed "high risk" conditions, including pregnancy, on their website, Kennedy stated that pregnant women will not be recommended for the vaccine. On Oct. 6, the CDC removed recommendations that all Americans should receive the COVID-19 vaccine from their website.

"It is going to affect the disabled community negatively because a bunch of disabilities might not be on the list [that classifies someone as] high-risk," said junior Lia Alves. "Some people might be in greater danger [than others], but [COVID-19 vaccines] should still be accessible to everybody."

California implemented its own recommendations in addition to the CDC's, including calling for all children from 6 to 23 months, at risk from age 2 to 18 or who have never been vaccinated against COVID-19, all pregnant women and all children and adults who choose protection to receive the vaccine.

The guidance could have implications for the states.

"[The CDC's

guidance] scares me a lot," said senior Dahlia Anapolsky. "For example, [in] Massachusetts, people still aren't able to go to places like Walgreens or CVS, where they would normally be able to make an appointment, go for free [and] get their vaccination, it's not possible. [O'Neill's] overlooking a lot of scientific truths that scientists and researchers and people that are in that field have found for decades."

As O'Neill settles into his new position, changes in the CDC continue.



DAHLIA SELIG

New AI policies

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

In many classes, smaller assignments are being employed to prepare students for major exams.

"If you're cheating on the assignments [that aren't] worth that much of your grade, all you're doing is really cheating yourself out of the experience of learning," Johari said.

Teachers see these policies as a necessary step in preventing AI misuse, which is becoming an increasingly prevalent issue.

"A majority of my English colleagues reported at

least one incidence of plagiarism or AI use [in the past year]," said Victoria Daniel, Advanced Placement English Language and Composition teacher.

Aragon students have also noticed increased AI usage by their classmates. "Last year, I would sometimes see other students [misusing] AI," said junior Lam Le. "AI has many purposes with helping students study and doing small tasks, but there are also some misuses that might endanger their learning and capabilities."

This trend in AI usage by students is not limited to Aragon. Across the world, there has been a dramatic increase in students who are using AI to cheat. According

to an article by AIPRM, 53% of students in higher education used AI to generate material for graded work in 2024. This type of behavior contrib-

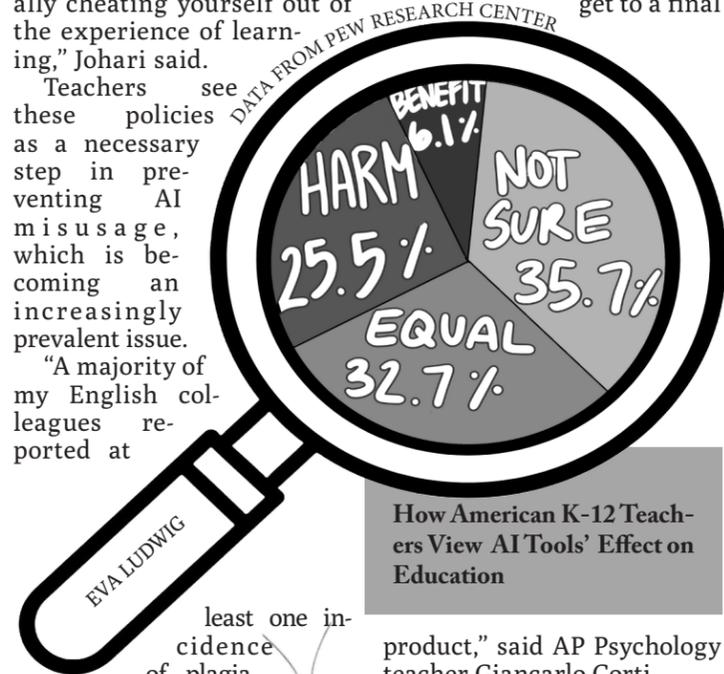
utes to the growing environment of academic dishonesty.

"Using generative AI to create work, to submit work, to enhance their work [and] to get answers to things [is] getting in the way of [students] doing the thinking that we want them to do to be able to get to a final

product," said AP Psychology teacher Giancarlo Corti. When students rely on AI to complete assignments, teachers are unable to reliably assess an individual student's understanding. According to a published research article on Science Direct, "in two experimental studies, ... novice and experienced teachers could not identify texts generated by ChatGPT among student-written texts." Without reliably being able to identify AI usage and therefore test for understanding, students may lose valuable learning opportunities.

"[AI gives] you answers [even when] you can use your own mind and [it] can take away your thinking," said sophomore Brianna Abernathy.

As the year continues, teachers may continue to adjust and change these policies to adapt to the quickly-changing educational landscape AI is creating.



How American K-12 Teachers View AI Tools' Effect on Education

them being affiliated with the institution. "[This] makes me [wonder] what [his] ultimate goals for the CDC [are] and how [he is] going to [answer] to the demands of the Trump administration or Kennedy."

O'Neill has promoted many conspiracy theories, like his statement that COVID-19's name was selected to hide the origin of the disease, on X. During the pandemic, he endorsed unbacked solutions to COVID-19, like vitamin D as a means of preventing the virus.

The recent months have consisted of sweeping changes in CDC, including Kennedy's decision to replace the 17-member Advisory Panel on Immunization Practices and mass layoffs.

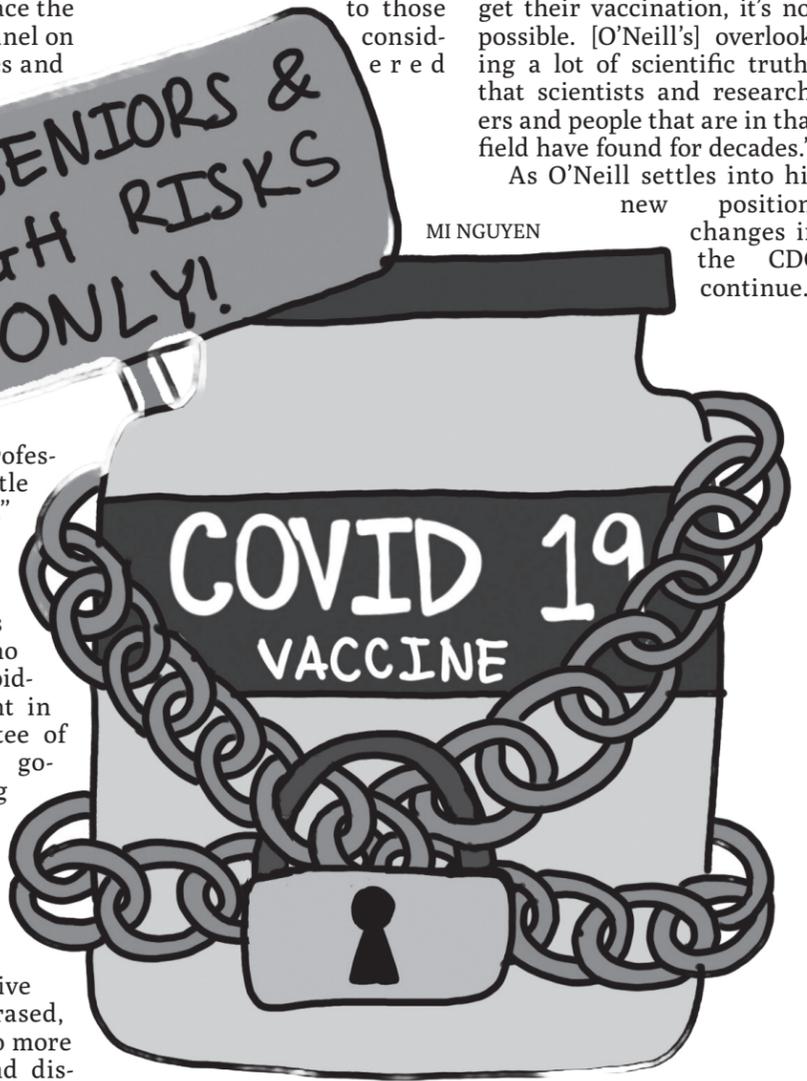
tional Development, [which] worked closely with the CDC ... to try and research infectious diseases that are going to pop up and become potentially the next [COVID-19]," Elshafei said. "Now [that] USAID has closed and [the] CDC has changed radically in leadership, I'm concerned they're not investing enough resources and exploring potential pandemics that are going to pop up."

Another major change is that the majority of COVID-19 vaccines are now lied to those consid- e r e d



MI NGUYEN

"[He's replacing professionals] with [his] little entourage of people," said senior Gerardo Padilla. "It's gonna cause a mass disruption because ... there's a new committee [who will] be doing his bidding ... You've brought in a whole new committee of people that are now going to be representing ideas [about] vaccines that haven't been backed by any sort of medical research [or] evidence. When you do that, the whole point of preventative care is going to be erased, and it's going to lead to more of these outbreaks and dis-



Room to let us roar: more bleachers

This editorial represents the opinions of 14 out of 14 Outlook editors

Cheering on the Aragon football team becomes incredibly difficult when one finds oneself squished amongst 50 other students

The problem is simple: Aragon needs more bleachers. There is rarely enough room at football games to house the Aragon students, staff members and family that want to support their school. While crowd minimization has been attempted in years past, large crowds and student attendance should not be limited.

Additional bleachers are not just a fix to student complaints. With increased seat availability comes increased attendance and a boost to the “vibrant community” Aragon prides itself on. A football game’s participation and energy comes from spectator presence in the bleachers. When students move to the track when the bleachers are full, they are separated from

their peers and sent behind the scoreboard with an obstructed view of the game

“I’ve been standing on the track since freshman year,” said senior Jordan Hosner. “There’s not enough bleacher space for anyone ... We do have spirit, but because of the lack of space, we can’t [show] as much spirit as we have.”

One of the biggest missed opportunities from our limited bleacher space is the loss of a pep band, a tradition that brings energy and spirit to games.

“[There were] pep bands and some cheerleaders I saw at San Mateo,” said senior Charlotte Graham. “They were integrated into the bleachers, and that really hyped up the student section.”

In the past, the pep band was placed behind the end zone — isolated and out of view. The only thing holding the band back from gaining more visibility was the bleachers’ capacity.

“We were told, ‘no, you can’t go on the bleachers unless you shrink the band down,’” said band director Kevin Gallagher. “And that was one thing I did not want to do, because I wanted to draw inclusivity to the pep band program, instead of exclusivity.”

In the end, Aragon’s pep band eventually faded

away, taking with it an opportunity for members of different bands to interact with one another. Bringing back the pep band would mean not only louder cheers and more energy at games, but also a stronger sense of community between hundreds of student musicians.

The process for approval may seem long — projects must be agreed upon by the school’s principal, interest holders and the district, and only then are they put on a list of priorities by the Board of Trustees. This is not, however, an impossible task.

Temporary bleachers provide for a cost-effective, flexible solution that fixes issues of seating and space whilst also avoiding the cons that come with installing a permanent set of bleachers. Before a football game begins, the temporary bleachers can be set up and wheeled over for students and families to sit on, which provides for a larger possible number of attendees.

Compared to standing at the end of the track, temporary bleachers located similarly to the permanent ones allow for onlookers to get the same view of the game itself. Instead of paying for the extensive construction of permanent bleachers, tempo-



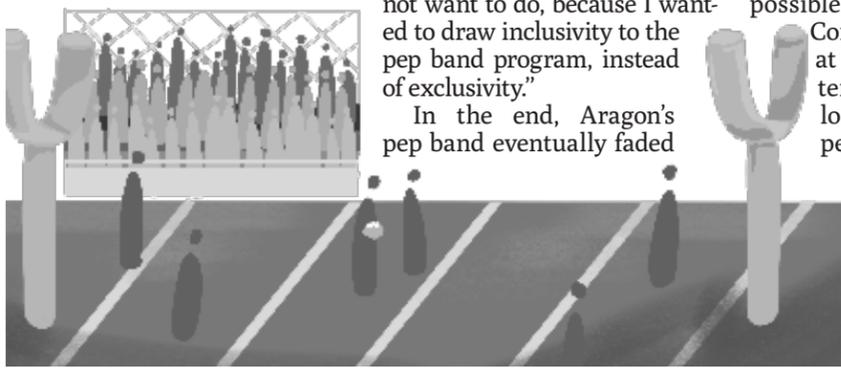
EVA LUDWIG

rary bleachers tend to cost approximately \$30,000, a much smaller bill than the millions spent on refurbishing the baseball field, and can be taken down and stored when that space is needed again.

More than anything, temporary bleachers help to solve a problem brought up year after year. Devoting money to the purchase of temporary bleachers is a worthwhile investment for the sake of students and the Aragon community’s school spirit as a whole.



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Prop 50: gerrymandering in California

Ellie Blakely
NEWS WRITER

On Nov. 4, Californians will vote on Proposition 50, deciding whether to adopt a new state congressional map that would gerrymander districts in favor of Democrats. California Governor Gavin Newsom introduced and signed this ballot measure in August in response to Texas gerrymandering in favor of Republicans.

Merriam-Webster defines gerrymandering as dividing election districts “in a way that gives one political party an unfair advantage.” While surveys show widespread disapproval of gerrymandering among Americans, it’s not illegal unless based on race.

Prop 50, the “Election Rigging Response Act,” would redraw California’s congressional districts so that the Democratic Party has a chance to gain five more seats in the House of Representatives in the 2026 midterm elections. Democrats currently hold 43 out of 52 of the state’s House seats.

In August, Texas redrew its congressional districts in a bill that President Donald Trump called for in July, giving Republicans a similar five-seat advantage in the 2026 midterms. Currently, the House is controlled by a historically narrow Republican majority of 219 to 214 seats, with two seats

that are vacant. This slim margin means that even flipping a small number of seats would have implications for which party controls the legislature.

Prop 50 would cancel out the effects of Texas’s redistricting by providing Democrats with the same number of House seats as Texas gives to Republicans. Supporters believe that Prop 50 is an effective counter to what they see as a threat to democracy.

“Right now, a lot of people feel powerless,” said San Mateo County supervisor Noelia Corzo. “Luckily, we live in a state [with] Democratic leadership [that is] willing to be bold and recognize the danger our country is in. This is about defending our democracy and not standing idly by while the future of this country [is] being lit on fire.”

A poll by University of California Berkeley found that 49% of likely voters support Prop 50 while 32% oppose it.

Some oppose gerrymandering in general, but are willing

to make an exception for Prop 50 because they view it as an impactful response to Texas.

“I disagree with gerrymandering as a whole; it’s undemocratic,” said senior Erin Finn. “[But] if your opponent [has] all these dirty tactics and you’re still [playing] a clean race ... you got the moral high ground, but you’re losing everything else ... I support [Prop 50 because] you can’t sit back and let things like this happen.”

Unlike Texas, California is one of eight states in the country with an independent redistricting commission. Typically, districts are drawn by the nonpartisan California Citizens Redistricting Commission every ten years, following a census. Because of this, California needs voter approval to pass a new map, while Texas was able to redistrict without it. If Prop 50 passes, the new congressional map would take effect from 2026 until it is redrawn in 2030.

Prop 50 opponents argue that it contradicts the purpose

of California’s independent redistricting commission.

“Californians created the gold standard for fair elections: independent citizen-led redistricting that ensures voters pick their representatives, not the other way around,” said the California Republican Party in a statement on their website. “Prop 50 would tear that down, even temporarily, and hand the power back to Sacramento politicians. That’s not progress, that’s going backwards.”

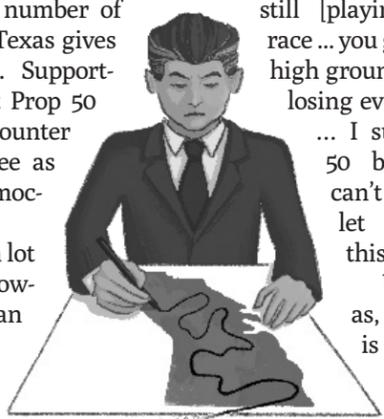
Others believe Prop 50 is actually democratic.

“[It’s okay since] people are voting on it,” said senior Sydney Miller. “There’s a reason [for redistricting] and it’s not like [the legislature is] completely taking the power [of Californians] away.”

The San Mateo County Board of Supervisors passed a resolution supporting Prop 50 on Sept. 9. This decision deviated from the Board’s nonpartisan norm, according to Supervisor Jackie Speier, who said she would not have ordinarily supported a political resolution but recognized that this was a unique situation.

“I don’t think it’s a time for anyone in this country to be standing by and just watching as our democracy gets torn apart,” Corzo said.

For more information about the Nov. 4 election, visit smcacre.gov/november-4-2025.



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Tri-M Honor Induction Ceremony

Renee Ren
NEWS WRITER

On Sept. 26, from 7-8:30 p.m., Aragon's Tri-M Music Honor Society Chapter, No. 3534, held its induction ceremony in the theater, formally inducting 14 new and 30 returning members into the program.

"Tri-M is an international music organization that runs all the way from middle school through college level," said band director and Tri-M adviser Kevin Gallagher. "It is the largest international music organization in the world and thousands of people are part of [it]."

At the beginning of the ceremony, Gallagher and fellow director John Chen welcomed the audience after which sopho-

more Jaydon Li performed "Heart of the Lake" on viola. Tri-M's senior officers then stepped up to the podium to formally accept their positions, followed by the junior officers.

Throughout the ceremony, students performed pieces as solos, duets and groups.

"[The] pieces [we performed are ones] that I like and [are by] jazz musicians that I am inspired by," said junior and pianist Charles Cho. "It's fun [when you are] playing it in a group. [It makes it] like a more real experience."

Between performances, students were inducted as members of the society, and each was presented a certificate while walking across the stage. Members also recited the Tri-M pledge to demonstrate their willingness to uphold the standards of Tri-M and serve their community.

"[The] school program [is] mainly

led by Mr. Chen and Mr. Gallagher," Li said. "[In Tri-M], you can really get [opportunities for] leadership because it's almost all run by students ... We have lots of opportuni-

ties to connect with the community [and] because we have lots of [these] concerts, we [gain] lots of performance experience."

Becoming a member requires one year of enrollment in the music program. Potential members are nominated by their music director or other Tri-M members, and are required to fill out an application and an induction letter.

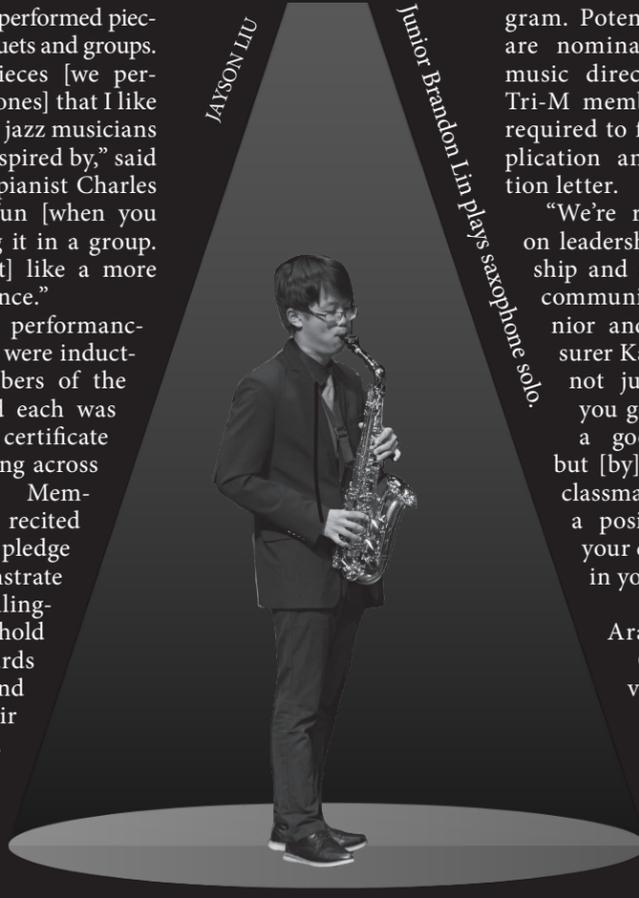
"We're really focused on leadership, musicianship and adding to the community," said senior and Tri-M treasurer Kate Sato. "[It's] not just something you get in by being a good musician, but [by] helping your classmates or being a positive force in your classroom and in your school."

Last year, Aragon's Tri-M Chapter was voted the State Chapter of California, recognizing them as one of the best Tri-M chapter in

the state. Still, they hope to continue to improve the chapter further.

"[One] of my main goals is to widen [our] scope of our communities," said senior and Tri-M president Midori Saito. "Sometimes Tri-M is lauded as this secret society but we don't want to be secret. [We want to reach] out to more organizations to try to make Tri-M more well-known. That's one of my main goals, to spread as much service as possible around the area."

Tri-M will be supporting the music department's next large event — the Potluck Concert — on Oct. 24 at 7 p.m. in the South Gym.



Waymo further expands to San Mateo County

Siddharth Gopinath
NEWS WRITER

Waymo expanded its autonomous taxi services in July to include Burlingame, Millbrae and San Bruno. The Google-owned company has been testing their vehicles in San Mateo since 2024.

The service uses artificial intelligence to operate without a human driver.

"[Waymos are] a great advancement in technology," said sophomore Aditya Rathore. "AI is going to improve, as we've seen in the last few years, and it's better than humans in many

things. And I believe the same [AI] improvements can also come to Waymo in the long term."

Some believe that Waymos provide other benefits over conventional taxis.

"I have dogs, and Waymo doesn't care if I bring my dogs in, whereas sometimes a Lyft or Uber driver doesn't want you to bring dogs in their car," said math teacher Craig Sipple. "I [also] like that Waymo doesn't talk."

However, there have been concerns over the safety of Waymos. But according to Timonhy B. Lee on Ars Technica, over the course of six months and 96 million miles driven, Waymo was involved in 45 crashes that were reported to the National Highway Traffic Safety Ad-

ministration. Of these, only four were due to the Waymo driver's error and 35 involved the Waymo being hit by another car. Over the same distance, an average human driven fleet would be involved in 78 accidents.

There have also been concerns that Waymo's safety statistics are not fully transparent. By law, Waymo is only required to report their severe accidents, so incidents and crashes that do not cause any injury or damage are unknown by the general public. This rule may artificially inflate Waymo's safety rate.

Nevertheless, some believe that Waymo's use of Light Detection and Ranging technology improves its safety significantly over competitors.

"Waymo has sensors that map out its environment through LiDAR, and Tesla's relying solely on the camera," Sipple said. "Tesla's relying on a computer watching a video feed to make decisions about how to drive, whereas Waymo has ... more sensors and technology on it. That's why Waymo's been self-driving before Tesla and getting cleared for expansion first."

Still, Waymo's lack of on-the-spot thinking has drawn the ire of some citizens. When reversing, for extra safety precaution, they give off high pitched beeps, even in the dead of night. A repeated issue has occurred where Waymos have stopped in the middle of the road for seemingly no reason, slowing down traffic significantly.

"If you're comparing [it] to a crash, [slowdowns] may not seem as bad, but in the long term, it's frustrating to deal with," Rathore said. "You expect to get into a taxi that's working, [so] you're disappointed by the delay."

When Waymos were initially introduced to San Mateo County

in 2024, David Canepa, a San Mateo County supervisor, said that Waymo tried to force the county to rush the decision to approve their expansion with a one-day deadline, while also presenting little data.

"When Waymo only gives our police and fire chiefs a single day to comprehend how to deal with robot cars navigating [our] streets, there's a problem," Canepa said to the Redwood City Pulse. "Little notification, little transparency and little outreach has been Waymo's strategy from the start. This is a sneaky company trying to monopolize a market that's not for sale."

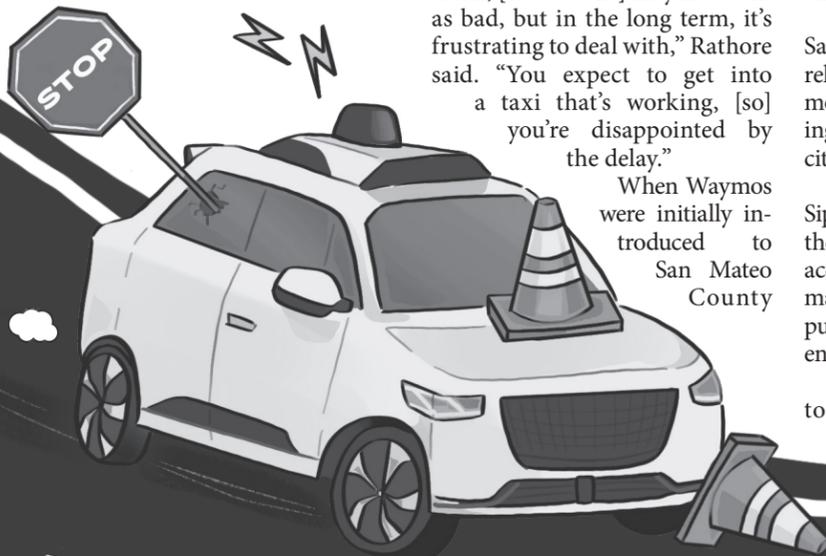
Proponents of the Waymo expansion into San Mateo County have cited the "Vision Zero" policy in Redwood City, designed to reduce traffic accident related deaths and major injuries to zero.

Despite this, according to the San Mateo Daily Journal, traffic related accidents in Redwood City more than doubled in 2024, ranking the city third worst among all cities in California.

"The future is self-driving cars," Sipple said. "I would compare it to the number of people that die in car accidents every year because of human error. Will there be some computer error? Sure, but I think in the end, it'll be less than human error."

In Jan. 2026, Waymo plans to expand its fleet to New York City and Nashville.

According to MKP Law Group, the average number of Waymo accidents is 174 crashes a year, which is about one every other day. Moreover, a study by Swiss Re found that Waymo vehicles have an 88% reduction in property damage claims and a 92% reduction in bodily injury claims.



SAN MATEO CHILD CARE CRISIS

Naomi Kotani
NEWS WRITER



Child care provider Angelica Lopez was one of two adults supervising a room of elementary school students at Brewer Island Elementary School in Foster City in an afterschool program during 2017 when she got called outside to help a kindergartener who was bleeding because he had tripped and cut his forehead.

"I had to leave my kids [inside], have [another] staff member [who was outside] put everyone into a room and then I ran out to give first aid," Lopez said. "It was really challenging to do everything and watch 60 kids and an injured child that needed emergency help."

In the years leading up to this incident, the child care program that Lopez worked for was forced to reduce student enrollment because it could not hire enough workers.

Staffing shortages like what Lopez's workplace dealt with are just one aspect of the child care crisis — this issue impacts parents as well. In California specifically, the average annual cost for child care of a four-year-old is \$13,020, and almost \$9,000 more for infants, according to the Economic Policy Institute. San Mateo County is the fifth most expensive county for child care in the nation, according to data compiled by the Wall Street Journal. And child care prices, like many other expenses, are rising. A Pew Research report found that between January 2020 and September 2024, the cost of daycare and preschool went up 22% nationally.

"[Child care] is infrastructure just like our roads and our bridges," Speier said. "We have an obligation to do more than we're doing."

Many parents highlight the necessity of improving the child care landscape with their experiences.

Chemistry teacher Max von Euw has an 8-year-old son who goes to an on-site child care program at his school in the mornings and afternoons. Von Euw said that the company recently raised tuition by 34% and removed a discount he got in previous years. While he knew prices were going to increase, he did not expect such drastic changes.

"It feels like you get blindsided," von Euw said. "You kind of

her contribution to tuition to a few hundred dollars each month, but it was still sometimes hard for her to bear the cost on top of other bills like the costs associated with moving houses.

"I had a lot of things to pay for. I would borrow from my friends sometimes or I would go to the Mom's Facebook group," Marinenkov said. "I've done everything. I've edited photos for invitations. Anything that I could do for money at the time, I was doing. I also had a side business where I was doing some wax seals for wedding invitations."

Some families avoid the high costs of child care by forgoing it altogether. 26% of parents across the country chose to quit their jobs and become stay-

this can have consequences on women's careers.

"Whether [women] take time off from work or go part time, they're losing income there," Colglazier said. "When they return, they're behind their male peers who started at the same level. Largely, females are losing out on promotions, sometimes raises, because of their

individual provider. This is intended to streamline the process of finding options for families and

increase visibility of care centers, Speier said in a presentation to the Board of Supervisors.

"It's a traumatizing experience for parents to have to try and locate child care and then be put on waiting lists and the like," Speier said.

Another potential solution is a program called Tri-Share, where the employer, employee and county each pay for one-third of the tuition. Michigan was the first state to implement Tri-Share in 2021 and cut families' child care costs by 10% on average. However, in Michigan's version of the program, the household income had to be within the range of 200-325% of the federal poverty level in order to be eligible, which put the maximum around \$130,000 for a family of four in 2025 dollars. The median household income in San Mateo County in 2023 was \$156,000, according to Data USA.

In order for the county to fund these programs, the supervisors want to get a half cent sales tax and vehicle rental tax on the ballot in Nov. 2026. For the former, half of a cent would be added as

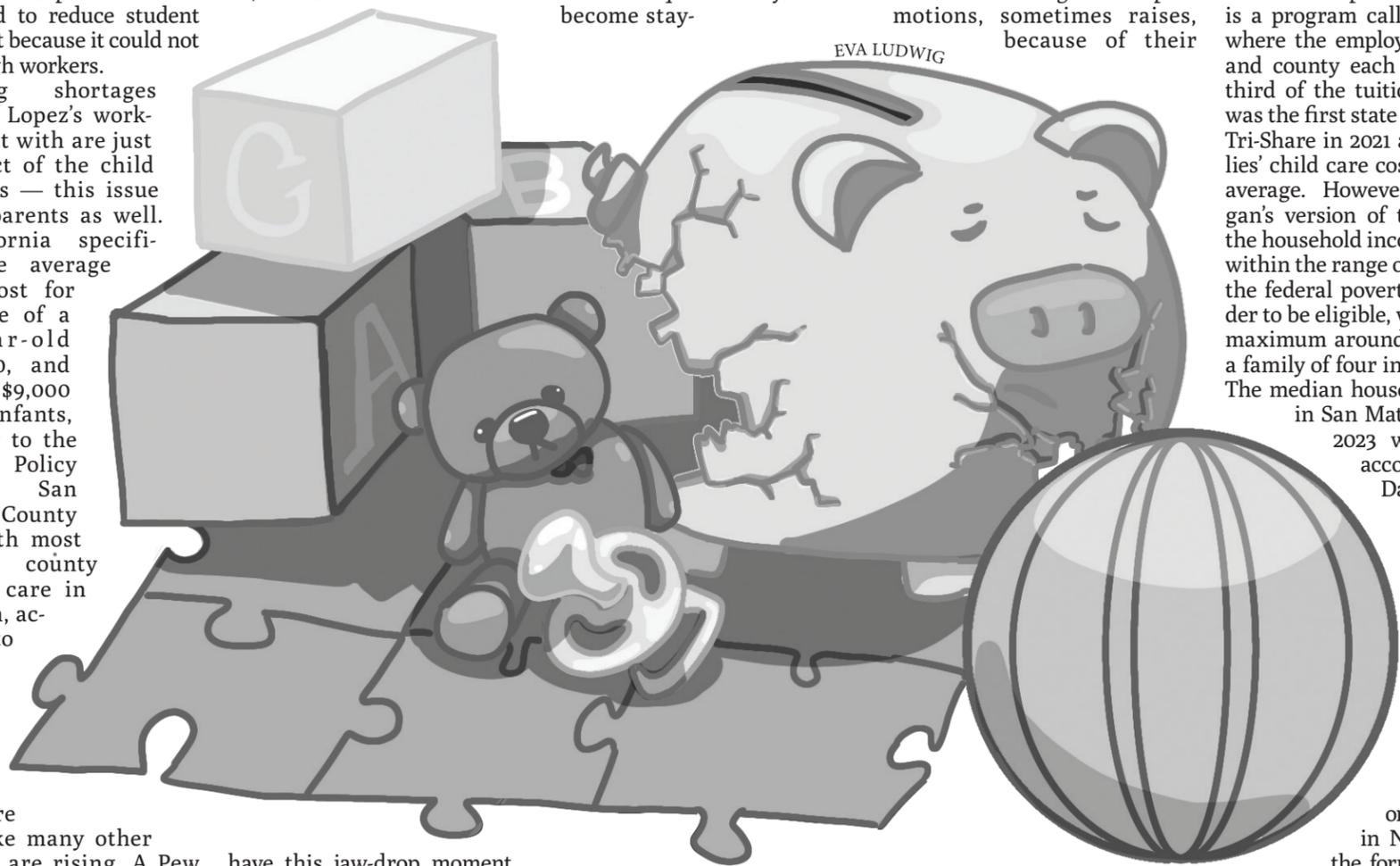
a tax for every dollar spent in the county. According to Speier, this could generate \$130 million a year. For the latter, a 15% tax would be charged on car rentals from San Francisco International Airport, and Speier said this could add \$75 million to the county's child care budget.

Lopez, who has had two kids in child care over the years, earned too much to qualify for low income subsidies but was unable to comfortably afford the cost.

"What we earn is just for our bills," Lopez said. "So if we'd have a little bit of help, [we could] save some money, have property, because [currently] all our money goes to paying childcare and rent and making ends meet."

If the proposed taxes are approved by voters next Nov., they would mark a significant step towards mitigating the child care crisis in the county.

SAN MATEO COUNTY RANKS AS THE 5TH MOST EXPENSIVE FOR CHILDCARE NATIONWIDE



EVA LUDWIG

have this jaw-drop moment... [and] you're in a scramble."

Machi Marinenkov, a student at the College of San Mateo, has an 8-year-old daughter, Robbin, to whom she used

at-home parents, per a 2023 report by ReadyNation.

The amount of young mothers who do not work is disproportionate to the

absence due to the need to raise kids due to childcare costs."

Overall, the effects of high child care prices cost the economy \$122 billion, according to ReadyNation.

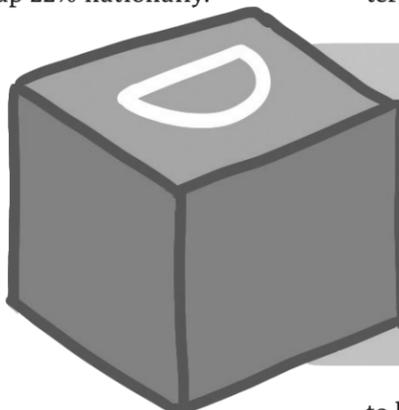
"[Unaffordable child care] is an early warning sign for all of us that we're going to lose our workforce, [which] we rely on, if we don't fix it," Speier said. "If you can't keep the employees in your business because they can't afford to live here, that's a big problem."

So far, Speier and Gauthier have a handful of solutions that they are planning to push to become legislation.

One of them is a county-run online portal that lists all of an area's child care providers and will allow parents to apply to multiple centers at once, rather than having to fill out different applications for each

to be a single mother. For several years, starting when Robbin was 3, Marinenkov said she worked nearly 120 hours a week to afford her financial responsibilities, including child care. She was able to get government assistance for single parents that reduced

amount of fathers. In 2019, 66.4% of mothers with kids under six years were in the workforce compared to 95% of fathers, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Will Colglazier, Advanced Placement United States History teacher, explained how



AVG ANNUAL CHILDCARE COST:
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These factors have led Jackie Speier and Lisa Gauthier, San Mateo County Supervisors, to hold town halls during this fall to hear about community members' experiences with child care and solutions they want to see.

The politics of intelligence: college major elitism

Diya Poojary and Oliver Levitt
NEWS AND FEATURES WRITERS

Over the past decade, the number of associate's and bachelor's degrees earned in the United States have increased dramatically in the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics fields but have seen significant declines in humanities disciplines.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, bachelor's degrees conferred in the health professions increased by 62% from 2011 to 2021, and engineering and biological and biomedical sciences saw an increase of 51% and 37% respectively. Around that same decade, the number of humanities bachelor's degrees awarded dropped by about 24%. This is attributed to possible influences of elitism, stereotypes of certain degrees and concerns over finances, among other factors.

As Aragon students across the board begin to think about a post-high school path, the biases for and against certain majors can significantly influence which pathways students select.

"[People lean toward STEM majors] in [the Bay Area] because it's very tech oriented," said Modern World History teacher Jon Felder. "Aragon [is] known as a school with strong math and science programs, [and] I can see students wanting to focus more on STEM fields because they feel like that will open up more job opportunities for them."

The pressure to capitalize on such opportunities has influenced some students to prioritize their futures in a STEM major over creative passions.

"I grew up doing a lot of art," said junior Kaitlin Hsu. "I still do art now. I see art not really as something I could possibly pursue because of the pressure of feeling like I have to be more than that or have a well-paying job to fit society ... It's mainly [because of] how [art majors] get paid ... Because of that, I've been influenced [to believe] that doing something like art, for example, is not [considered] high education and wouldn't get me as far."

This same concern over achieving a stable career presents itself for junior Oliver Ackerman, leading him to lean towards the idea of architecture as a major.

"My dream would be to go into film or something more on the humanities side, but it doesn't feel realistic," Ackerman said. "In architecture, it's creative enough, but it's still an actual job."

With such a competitive Hollywood climate, the risks associated with the industry are a cause for concern.

"A lot of creative industries like the film industry are really hard to get into and it's mostly about knowing people and there's no safety," Ackerman said. "You're not guaranteed the job or a job that pays enough to live."

"[You] can see in college statistics that [art majors] tend to get paid less [than other majors]," Hsu said. "Especially with the rise of AI and everything, artists are losing jobs and it's not a very good place to be in right now."

However, AI is also creating some panic within STEM.

"One time I told a family friend that my major was going to be biochemistry," said Aragon alumna Victoria Santana. "And she looked at me funny and she went, 'Well, my son is in cognitive science and that won't be taken over by AI. You need to look into a job that won't be taken over by AI' ... Students right now are super fearful of whether or not their jobs are going to be [taken away] and right now, STEM majors are opening up their eyes to [the realization], 'I might not have a job after I graduate.'"

In order to push against the pressures to take majors considered as elite, some feel society must first provide students with more time to explore their passions.

"If [students] had the time to explore, they could find more about what they actually liked [to do]," Hsu said.

"A lot of people get [into their] major because they're told, 'This is [the]

major you're supposed to do.' I [feel] so much of that pressure myself, [about whether or not] I actually like STEM. I do, but I also feel like the main reason I'm taking STEM is because I've been told that it's good."

Though one's future financial potential is partially dependent on one's major, Saidova views all majors as serviceable, as long as one sees some future there.

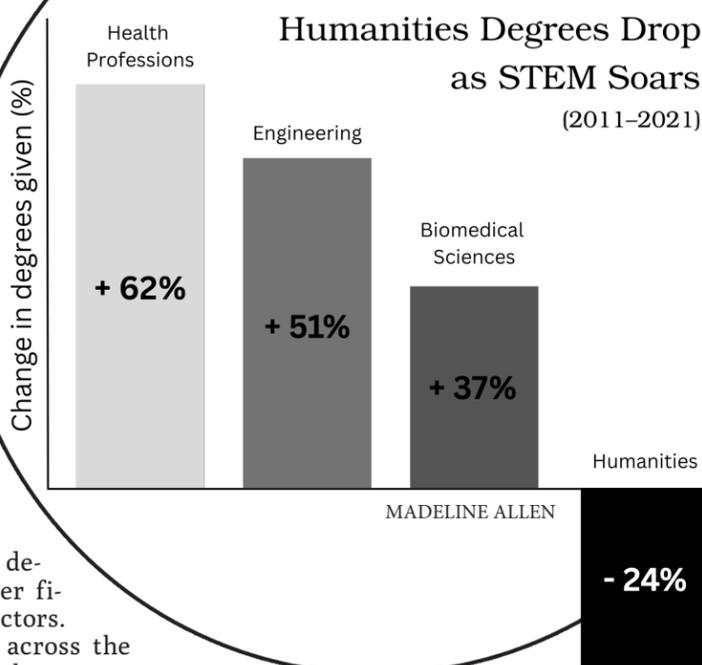
"There are no useless majors," Saidova said. "There are majors people take because they want a certain career and that certain career is just less profitable than others. It's not useless for them, but in the eyes of people who are trying to get rich, trying to make money, it could [seem] useless. [Someone] studying history because they want to be a history teacher [has] to study that, so that major is useful."

Even at the most prestigious schools for STEM majors, like Massachusetts Institute of Technology, there are still requirements to take humanities classes, as one's understanding of history and humanity is often vital for the scientists.

"It is important to be well rounded, obviously," Felder said. "Even if your focus is in STEM, you want to still have critical thinking skills. You want to still have historical context. You want to be able to analyze a piece of literature ... so that if you're developing programs or doing scientific research, you can think more broadly about and [consider], 'What's the impact of it?' [It's] an extreme example, but someone like Oppenheimer, who was involved in developing the atomic bomb: whatever work you're doing, can you think bigger picture about the overall impact of it and how it might be used and what the purpose of it is? Even if you have the scientific or mathematical skills to do something, the ethical and moral implications of whatever work you're involved in [matter]."

But at the end of the day, regardless of one's major, a college degree is an accomplishment in and of itself.

"You are still getting an education at the end of the day," Santana said. "University is hard. Usually, you are only taking two classes per semester or quarter that are related to your major. [For] the other two, at least for the first two years in your time at university, [you have] general education, where you have to take humanities and STEM, regardless of whatever your major is. And so generally people are getting the same education ... I commend anyone going to college."



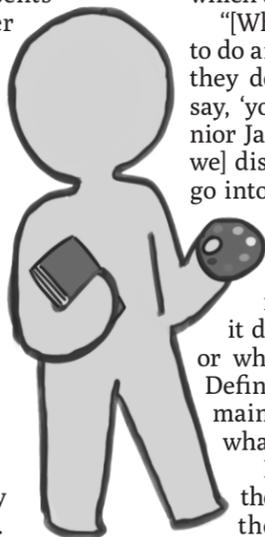
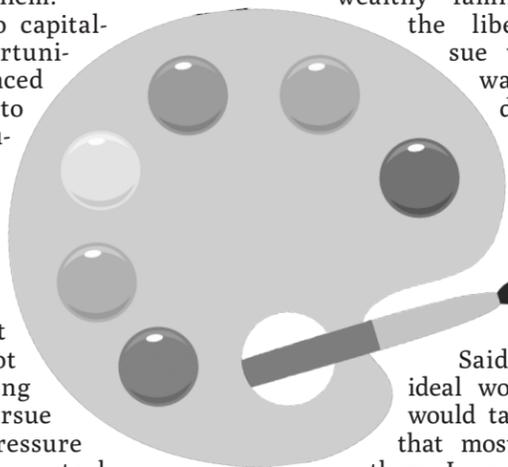
Before even choosing a major or profession, however, one's financial status can sway how comfortable students are stepping into majors that are less pre-professional. With many of the jobs that pay an average of \$70 thousand to \$100 thousand being in computer science, engineering, finance and business fields, the risks of stepping into other industries can be far more feasible for higher income applicants.

"If you already come from a wealthy family, you have the liberty to pursue whatever you want [and] you don't have any financial restrictions, [so] you should definitely do whatever you want," said senior Sevara Saidova. "In an ideal world, everyone would take the major that most appeals to them. I would be a theater major [because] I love that stuff. [But] it's all about the money and [it] goes back to the [issue of the] economy. [If] you're trying to get a stable job, most people take a more practical major."

Even once students settle on a general type of path, like pursuing education, there are still concerns over which areas are most profitable.

"[When I] discuss what I want to do after college with my family, they don't really pressure me or say, 'you should do this,'" said junior Jaelyn Ruttenberg. "But [when we] discuss [how] I want to go into education, they also would say, 'You have to make sure you teach in a good area that you can get a lot of money in.' It made me realize it does matter where I would teach or what kind of job I'm looking for. Definitely the salary has been like the main thing we look at if we look at what I want to do after college."

For many different professions, the future of AI poses a concern for the future job market.



VANESSA CHAN

Pals across the Pacific: sister city program

Ethan Fei
FEATURES WRITER

Imagine a city in the United States, uniting with another city halfway across the globe. That is the idea behind sister cities — a relationship that encourages cultural exchange and diplomatic involvement.

The sister cities program began after World War II, when President Dwight D. Eisenhower had the idea of having people in the U.S. interact with those from different countries, in an effort to increase mutual understanding and prevent future conflicts. Such programs include Foster City's partnership with Inagi, Japan, which formally began during the pandemic.

"You want to align with cities that have principles the same as yours," said David Saito, president of Foster City Sister City Association. "Between Foster City and Inagi City, there was a very big focus not only on youth activities and sports, but [also] on things like sustainability and building sustainable communities."

Thus, most of Foster City's exchange programs with Inagi City focus on youth interaction. Such events include a youth soccer and baseball exchange that

occurred in the summers of 2023 and 2024, a pen pal program and a homestay program in August.

San Mateo also embraced the idea of sister cities early on, forming a relationship with Toyonaka, Japan in 1963. An exchange between Borel Middle School and Dai-Kyu Junior High School in Toyonaka began in 2012 with video chats and transitioned to a pen pal program. Helen Grotans, the orchestra director at Borel Middle School, has led this program for over seven years. She receives up to 100 handwritten letters each year, matches students by

music was incorporated into the program. In 2015, students from Borel travelled to Toyonaka and performed music together, and the schools continue to share their orchestra performances online today.

"We weren't very good at Japanese ... but when we played music together, we could communicate," Grotans said.

The Foster City Sister City Association is also starting talks with the Bay Area Youth Choir and Orchestra about having a music exchange program.

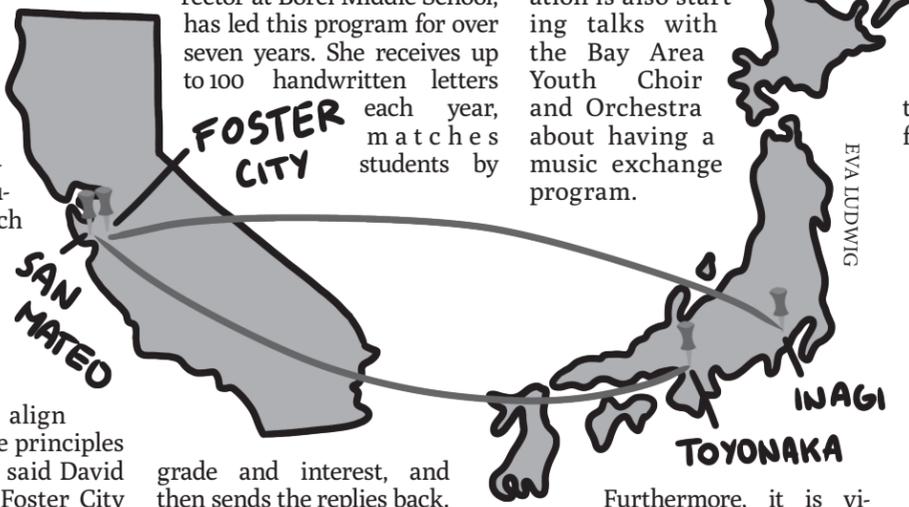
than ever, Grotans believes that communicating online was still more difficult due to the differing time zones.

"We used to do a Zoom ... [but] we would have to wait until 4 p.m. after school [so] that it would be 8 a.m. on Friday in Japan, and so students would have to stay late," Grotans said. "In letter writing you have more time to think [of] your questions and your responses ... it's just a more relaxed, old fashioned form of communication."

Additionally, Saito believes that real understanding comes from face-to-face interactions.

"Nothing really replaces the ability to do an in-person exchange," Saito said. "I think it opened [the kids'] eyes to just what these programs can help do ... even if it's just a bunch of kids playing soccer."

Whether it's a new partnership like that of Foster City and Inagi's, or a long-standing one like between San Mateo and Toyonaka, sister cities are a reminder that diplomacy can also happen with ordinary students and citizens. Sometimes, writing a letter or having a soccer match is the best way to connect with people halfway across the world.



grade and interest, and then sends the replies back.

"One of the best things is the gift-giving culture," Grotans said. "Every time we get a package, there's some cool gifts inside [like] Japanese candy or stationary or stickers ... and then we try to send back some special things from California."

Yet in real life interactions, the most apparent challenge is the language barrier. In an attempt to overcome this hurdle,

Furthermore, it is vital to have a close-working relationship with the local city governments, as the governments provide both financial and logistical support when hosting events. Differing time zones, school calendars and Japan's system of rotating teachers each year present challenges for the program. And although technology has made international communication easier

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Supernatural creatures have fascinated humans for centuries, blurring the line between reality and fantasy. They often serve to explain the unknown; for instance, El Chupacabra — a Latin American legend said to attack and drink the blood of livestock — was blamed for mysterious animal deaths before disease was understood. Though some still claim sightings, it is generally considered an urban legend. Yet for some, such creatures may not purely be fantasy.

"It's always a possibility that [these creatures] may have [existed] in the past," said sophomore Austen Ying. "The idea lingers in my mind: where are they now? What happened to them?"

Classic literature, mythology and the evolution of Halloween have all helped keep supernatural phenomena central in our otherwise science-driven culture.

"I [started] reading *The Odyssey*, and [one] of the big things that [has] been circling my mind is the Cyclopes," Ying said. "It's really interesting how ... [each] monster has a [purpose] and they're all very different."

From classics like "Frankenstein" to modern series like "Twilight," mythical creatures continue to shape popular culture. Vampires remain iconic, while others fade. For example, the Baba Yaga from Slavic mythology remains a popular icon, but creatures like the Bukavac — a many-legged, draconic monster — are largely forgotten.

Edward has sucked the color out of certain objects on this page!

Color the blank entities to help Elpha-ba!

MYSTICAL AND MAGICAL

"Double, double, toil and trouble; fire burn and cauldron bubble," chant Shakespeare's witches as they concoct Macbeth's demise. For centuries, stories of witches hunched over tattered spellbooks or riding charmed brooms have spread worldwide, from nursery rhymes and dances to myths and religious texts.

Legend or not, the real-life implications of witches are tangible. Published in 1486 amid intense religious fervor, "Malleus Maleficarum" ("The Hammer of Witches") sparked Europe's witch hunt craze, leading to the execution of countless vulnerable or independent women, especially widows and midwives. Crises common to the time like plague or failed harvests were chalked up to the machinations of the Devil and his disciples: the witches.

"People want things to make sense. That's just human nature ... magic or gods, anything that isn't realistic, but is reasonable enough, they'll believe it," said sophomore Joshua Wu. "People [didn't] know why [diseases] exist because they didn't know about bacteria. So they had this Pandora's box story where [she] opened the box and [let out] all the diseases."

Tarot originated in 15th century Italy as a card game and became associated with fortune telling in 18th-century France. Over time, the practice spread to many different cultures and countries.

"My grandmother taught me, her mother before her and her mother before her [taught her]," said English teacher Kelsey Gamble. "Tarot is incredibly important to the Romani people; it's tied to that nomadic background we have. It's very difficult to keep track of your heritage when it is something that's so incredibly nomadic and unfortunately, very poorly documented. But she really wanted us to have some sort of connection to that spirituality."

Tarot has 78 cards — 22 "major arcana" for major life events and 56 "minor arcana" for daily matters. Each may be interpreted in relation to the client's intention, allowing for introspection and insight. The specific steps of tarot reading vary based on the spread and the reader.

"A lot of times, I'll do a single card reading," Gamble said. "Then you divvy up the cards, they pick one, and you read that one. If I want to do something more in depth, I usually stick with the three cards: past, present and future reading because it's pretty standard."



Games like *Dungeons and Dragons* help revive these otherwise forgotten creatures. "A lot of [D&D characters] come from folklore and mythology [from] different places," said sophomore and D&D club president Gabriella Pate. "Sometimes [people] create their own monsters [too]."

Palm reading, emerging from Ancient China and India, interprets destiny and character. Practitioners observe the palm's creases, shapes, and fleshy areas; for example, a long heart line suggests emotional sensitivity, and Earth hands (short fingers, square palms) convey a practical nature. Nowadays, palmistry often appears in media as a symbol of a character's search for answers.

Foretell with numerology: add up the digits of your 2025 birthday together repeatedly to find your key takeaway of the year!

On Sept. 4, Principal Mike Jones performed palm readings on the students during lunch.

"Lots of students wanted to know if they were going to pass their class, if they were going to get an A," Jones said. "Someone wanted to know if they would be asked out to Homecoming ... [It's] another opportunity for me to get to know our students in a different light. Most people have never had [a palm reading]."

| | |
|---|--|
| 9 | Enjoy your fruits of labor and reflect |
| 8 | Become your powerful self |
| 7 | Focus on personal growth |
| 6 | Make new friends and connections |
| 5 | A new direction approaches |
| 4 | Build a foundation with effort |
| 3 | Exchange ideas and communicate |
| 2 | Learn how to work with others |
| 1 | Fresh start! Focus on yourself |

Ex See

1/1/25: 1+1+2+2+5 = 11, 1+1=2

bit.ly/oct25numerology for more

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Viva la "Vie": Doja Cat's New Album

Addie Rose
FEATURES WRITER

On Sept. 26, Doja Cat released her fifth studio album, "Vie". Vie, French for "life", is a word that emulates her newest album. Often remarked as "Queen of Pop-Rap," this record heavily lays into retro-pop textures and deliberate production choices. With her 15-song album, she gives a new sound and style with songs about love and limerence. Across her four previous albums, Doja has continued to shift personas, from the internet-famous meme song "Mooo!" to the festival-ready pop-rap of "Hot Pink" and the glamour of "Planet Her." Vie shifts into a new gear: an album Doja herself described as a return of what she loves rather than compromising to get hits.

"I actually like it more than I expected," said sophomore Mena Lamberti. "[It] shows off more of the pop, chill, and at times 'cute' feel."

The album has a very shiny pop sound, thanks to producer Jack Antonoff, known for work-

ing with artists like Taylor Swift, Sabrina Carpenter and Kendrick Lamar. The first tracks start with upbeat songs featuring high energy hooks that feel like they would be blasted from a car stereo. For example, "Jealous Type" focuses more on a funky, 80's inspired beat, with a bouncy bassline, bright claps and crisp drums that keep the beat moving. Even with the lyrics about jealousy and insecurity, the groove feels playful, not heavy, thanks to the increasing tempo. Similarly, "Take me Dancing" featuring SZA, is another danceable disco-pop song. SZA's harmonies and confidence bring the song to life.

In contrast, later songs slow it down a bit, showing a gentle, personal side with ballad-style bridges. In "All Mine" Doja reflects and slows down the tempo with gentle snaps and bass pulses instead of crisp hi-hats or kicks.

The production is warmer and more comforting. Additionally, her vocals sound softer and breathier, while her phrasing slows down the song even more. The sounds move effortlessly

ly hits, "Vie" still has that commercial appeal but with a twist. Instead of that previous wild energy in her music, this album focuses on smooth, romantic energy with a retro vibe. Compared to her previous album, "Scarlet", the contrast is even clearer. Scarlet was bold, edgy and even abrasive at times, but Vie is soft and sentimental. It is less about trolling and shock value and more about introspection.

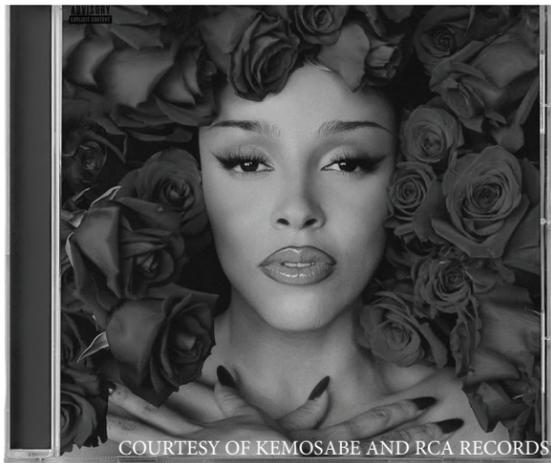
With "Vie," Doja shows off her eye for production. The songs transition smoothly from one to the next, creating a unified and well planned project overall. The album represents concepts like trust, growth and healing — all of which are recurring themes in the songs as she navigates feelings and self-improvement.

"I think it's really good and I definitely prefer it compared to her last album," said sophomore Lia Finn. "It has hints of her older music which I love and it portrays more of her personality."

A lot of the tracks are catchy enough to get stuck in one's head and sound like singles. But because this album goes for this sleek type of aesthetic, sometimes it misses out on the surprise that made her previous songs so unique.

Ultimately, Vie is a slick, pop-leaning album where Doja chooses finesse over the wild, anything-goes spirit that she used to depend on, exciting old fans from years ago. It is what she produced — sharp and a great string about life and love — that runs through the tracks, earning "Vie" a score of three and a half out of five stars.

OUR OUTLOOK



between a dance floor bop to a slower song that sounds more emotive and relatable.

As opposed to previous albums, which highlighted Doja's fusion of multiple genres and gave listeners big, radio-friend-

SFMOMA Museum Review: Bay Area Walls

Ashley Tsui
FEATURES WRITER

Poised on an everyday basketball court, the expansive green hills and vibrant pink and blue trees behind the basket beckon the viewer into a beautiful world of nature and wonder. This image, depicted on a 42-foot wall in the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, was painted by David Huffman, an Oakland based artist who, in his youth, found sanctuary in basketball. His piece is one of three in the museum's "Bay Area Walls" collection, each done by local artists to honor the unique culture of the San Francisco area.

The piece, with simplistic and calming visuals, brings emphasis to the magic that can be found in everyday events and beautifully represents the impact the sport has on Huffman.

"This piece is [about] exploring basketball as an element of African American identity and culture," Huffman said in an interview with SF MOMA. "Growing up in Berkeley, most of us African American kids were playing basketball in parks until lights out... I started thinking about the court as a portal to another place. It's not about playing the game; it's a leaping-off point with the backboard as your step into nature."

Its art style resembles an adolescent's, bringing further attention to the imaginative nature of the piece. This blend of normal life experiences with fiction honors the piece's name, "Portals," providing the viewer with the perspective of a passionate child who finds joy and wonder in basketball.

The next piece was done by Jenifer K. Wofford, a contemporary artist based in San Francisco. In her

piece, "VMD," she honors the first Asian American Olympic gold medalist, Victoria "Vicki" Manalo Draves: a Filipina American diver raised in San Francisco who trained to become a professional athlete despite navigating segregated pools.

This story resonates with viewers, bringing awareness to achievements that have been forgotten. Its simplicity and expansive layout encapsulates a sense of peace before a storm, dynamically illustrating the moments before history was made.

"[Drave was] the first Asian [American] woman to have won the gold and then a silver in another competition, which ... highlight[s] [this] contribution from the Asian community," said visitor Meredith Baker. "I didn't know this happened in 1948, so it's a good reminder of

[our] community [from] more than 50 years ago."

Additionally, the inclusion of this piece helps bolster the representation of female artists in mainstream museums and collections.

"I'm seeing this woman, this artist, who's displayed the most prominently in this museum [and] it's the thing that struck me the most," Baker said. "[I grew] up taking some art classes in college, [and it was a common belief that] women weren't in the arts until the 80s, and it's obviously not true. There's been a great representation of women artists here that I otherwise would never have known."

The final installment of this collection exemplifies the cultural effect and importance basketball has in our hometown. "Bay Area

Hoops," created by cartoonist Gene Luen Yang, portrays three famous Bay Area basketballers: Stephen Curry, Jeremy Lin and Fran Belibi. Yang uses his classic comic book art style, connecting these athletes with three concepts unique to basketball: the three pointer, the pick and roll and the slam dunk.

Even those who don't have a direct connection to basketball can find meaning and admire this piece for its nostalgic feel.

"I don't know much about basketball and the history of [it] in the Bay Area ... [so the style] definitely makes it more like you want to read it," said visitor Ruben Weitzman. "It's pretty novel to have a comic as an art piece, I've never seen it before."

JENIFER K WOFFORD, VMD, 2024;
PHOTO COURTESY OF DON ROSS

The collection is a lovely representation of Bay Area culture, specifically in the athletic sense. It would've been nice to see other aspects shown as well — like cultural food, monuments and specific places — but as the exhibit changes what pieces and artists they feature, it's likely different artworks will be created, which may achieve this goal.

Given the exhibit's attention to cultural details, relatability and simplistic yet creative pieces, this exhibit is deserving of five stars out of five stars. If one is near the SF MOMA, there's no harm in stopping by to explore our local culture on a deeper level.

OUR OUTLOOK



DUELING OPINIONS: MODERN ART

PRO

Cayleigh Wilson
FEATURES WRITER

This is art. Really. To the casual observer, it may look like nonsense. In 2019, “Comedian” was exhibited at Art Basel Miami Beach. It immediately drew attention online, becoming a meme and, subsequently, a massive joke. While the piece may be unrecognizable by title, many have probably heard about the modern artwork that was, quite simply, a banana duct-taped to a wall.

After news spread that it sold for \$120,000, it sparked outrage, particularly among skeptical parents who claimed their children could produce better art. But the thing is, they probably can’t. “Comedian” is an exceptional exam-

ple of the underestimation of modern art. At its core, “Comedian” is a satirical statement about the absurdity of the art market, with its selling price serving as the perfect punchline. And while many called it the “death of real art,” it successfully provoked emotion and conversation, which is exactly what art is meant to do.

Modern art emerges when an artist begins to create things that hold symbolic meaning, rather than just painting objects or scenes they see in real life, and often lean into the abstract. It blatantly rejects realism and instead favors the artist’s point of view. Instead of faithfully copying what one sees, modern artists interpret experience. They convert memories, emotions and identity into visual form. This allows abstract shapes, bold colors and unexpected materials to carry significance, instead of being mere decoration.

Take, for example, Yayoi Kusama’s polka dots. Internationally, people view Kusama’s dots as iconic, even though

they are straightforward. They are widely interpreted as having hypnotic and immersive qualities, symbolizing infinity or obsession.

Despite their success and praise, Kusama’s dots still receive criticism for being examples of “concept over craft.” And it’s true: Kusama’s work is highly conceptual.

But the common criticism that modern art lacks real skill overlooks the fact that true artistry extends beyond traditional technique. Creativity itself is an artistic skill — and a defining theme of modern art.

Furthermore, the absence of objective standards in modern art is often seen as a weakness. But in reality, it’s a strength. It allows art to become subjective, inviting many interpretations rather than enforcing one.

“No matter who the receiver is, I want people to understand my

art from their own personal experiences,” said junior and artist Baron Zhang. “Everyone should be seeing different things. Some [art] I do for competitions or assignments, but others I just do for myself.”

Like many artists, some of Zhang’s work is not made for the viewer — it’s a product of his own internal drive.

Unlike traditional art that often focuses on standards of beauty which have been admired by many, modern art

exists as an authentic creation, indicating that the artist’s own preferences are at

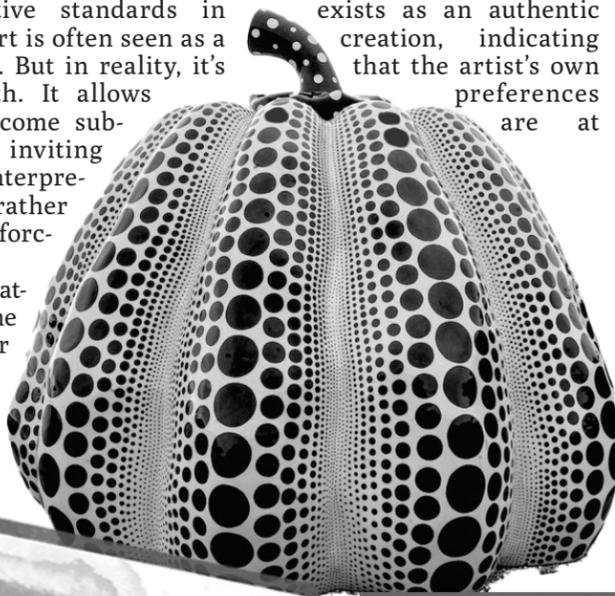


play rather than striving to gain audience approval. This creates artwork that has been untouched by external influences. It doesn’t need validation

to be a legitimate form of art.

“To me, anyone can be an artist,” said freshman Juanita Gonzalez. “People hate modern art because they don’t get it, but that’s the whole point. You’re not supposed to ‘get it’ right away.”

While it may differ from more classical styles, modern art merely takes a different form. Real art doesn’t need to resemble a Renaissance painting to be considered authentic. Even as it faces hate and speculation, modern art reflects a bright future, not just an imitation of the past.



AUDREY WANG

NEG

Nathaniel Wilson
FEATURES WRITER

What if I told you anybody could make millions right now — just by sticking fruit to a wall? Because that’s exactly what modern “art” has become.

Modern art can best be exemplified by the recently viral “Comedian,” a banana duct taped to a wall.

Oxford University defines art as “the expression or application of human creative skill and imagination ... producing works to be appreciated primarily for their beauty or emotional power.”

This definition makes it easy to see that what many consider “modern art,” the contemporary trend of conceptual stunts, is, in fact, not art, but something else entirely — artistically shallow.

“Comedian” was created in 2019 by Maurizio Cattelan. Despite its simple nature and homemade feel, it has been sold a total of four times. The first three in 2019 for \$120,000, \$120,000 and \$150,000, respectively, and finally in 2024 for — wait for it — \$6.24 million. That included a certificate of authenticity and instructions for installation. It’s duct tape and a banana, how hard could it be? Still, it clearly has some appeal. After all, with such a high sticker price, it must be important to someone, right?

According to Claims Journal, “Comedian” is “a work of conceptual art, and the value is in the concept rather than the physical manifestation of the assembled objects.” Imagine duct-taping a banana to a wall and trying to sell it in 2019 — even though it’s the same concept — would someone have paid \$120k, or even anything at all? Probably not.

“It doesn’t take that much skill to just tape a banana onto the wall,” said junior and artist Nico Navarro. “I don’t feel any emotions from a banana.”

This leaves us with the question: why did “Comedian” sell for so much? In 2019, Maurizio Cattelan was already an established artist, whose pieces “La Nona Ora” (The Ninth Hour) and “L.O.V.E.” had earned him international acclaim in the past. The only reason Maurizio Cattelan can get away with something as artistically skillless as “Comedian” is because he tells people it has meaning. Not directly, but as an established “artist,” when he displays something, he is telling his audience that there is a deeper meaning and that they should look and listen. And they do — because of his authority in the art world.

“Because it’s popular, people started to [buy the piece],” Navarro said. “[They are buying] the status.”

It’s easy to argue that “Comedian” is satirical, and the emotions it evokes — mostly outrage — are the point; “Comedian” is profound because of its mundane materials. But this is weak. It overlooks the fact that when Cattelan was coming up with this piece, he could have taped anything to that wall, and it wouldn’t have made a differ-

ence. He was using the absurdity of how it wasn’t art to define it as art, which is self-defeating and has nothing to do with the piece itself. The “artistry” isn’t coming from the art, but something else. If Kevin Hart performs a comedy show, do we credit him or the stage he was standing on? In this case, the stunt is what matters, so why are we glorifying the piece it’s done on?

Conceptualists might argue that the idea is the art — but if the idea can be replicated by anyone, and the only difference is the fame of the artist, then the “artistry” isn’t art at all.

And it’s not just “Comedian.” “Girl With Balloon” — a traditional art piece by the anonymous artist Banksy, another art phenom — was automatically shredded upon resale as part of an “unexpected piece of performance art,” says Artsy. This demonstration is called “Love is in the Bin,” after it became worth almost 20 times its original price. The irony? Banksy shredding his work was meant to push back against the commodification

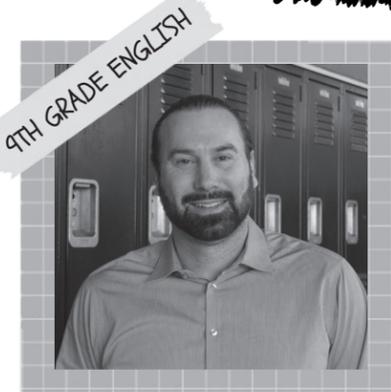
of high art. Instead, because of the glorification of stunts like this, “Love is in the Bin” has only added to the problem, disrespecting Banksy’s original intention. It’s a perfect example of the out-of-touch elite glamorizing a stunt and even disregarding the meaning the artist meant for it to have. When meaning becomes secondary to spectacle, art stops being about expression and starts being about attention — and that’s not meaningful at all.

These fall short of satire because they are not making a specific comment, just exploiting shock value. When the art is in the stunt, not the work, art stops being art. These conceptual contemporary pieces are just artists making drama by trolling the art world.

If we consider pieces made by established artists meant to game the art world, we go against the creativity and skill that signify real art and turn the art world into a joke. Pieces like “Comedian” gain the most attention because of the obvious absurdity, and having this be what identifies the art world in the minds of everyday people destroys the meaning of art. So let’s stop glorifying lazy artistry and save the term ‘art’ for pieces that actually deserve it.

NEW TEACHERS JOIN THE ARAGON COMMUNITY

REPORTING BY FEATURES WRITERS MADELINE SAH AND REBECCA CHEN
PHOTOS BY MADELINE ALLEN, BRANDON HO AND DARRA MCINTOCK



9TH GRADE ENGLISH

Jared Bosnich

Why did you decide to become an English teacher?

"I love languages, stories [and] just everything that English includes in the teaching and learning experience. It was my favorite subject when I was in school. [English] gives a really amazing opportunity to have great discussions and [to be] engaged with really fantastic literature. [English] invites listening and speaking."

Who is a role model in your life?

"Dr. Frederick Gaines is the chair of the ethnic studies department of College of San Mateo, and he was my mentor for several years. [He is] somebody that I trust and look to for guidance and wisdom."



AP LIT & ENGLISH 2AS

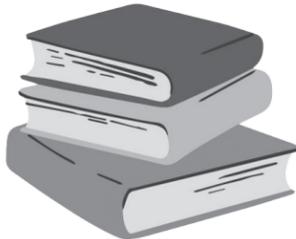
Kelsey Gamble

What advice would you give to your students?

"To always try and ask for help. A lot of times students are too nervous to mess something up. [They] can stop [themselves] from trying something new. I always encourage [them] to try a new skill, try to do something in a new way and if it doesn't work, ask me for help."

Who is a role model in your life?

"My mentor teacher, Ryan Donakos ... taught me all through high school. When I did my student teaching, I taught students for his classes. He's definitely my role model. He'd probably cringe at me for saying that."



CHINESE 3

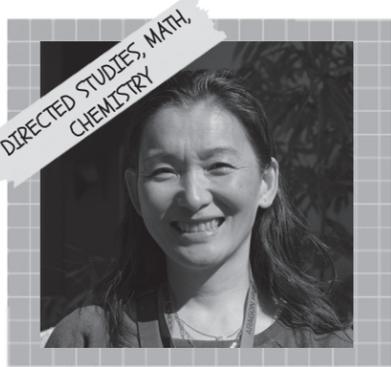
Huishu Liu

Where did you teach before coming to Aragon?

"I taught in North Carolina before for about three years. I also did online teaching with my students in North Carolina. In terms of working with high school students, this is my fourth year. Before that, I worked with preschoolers [in] a program that supports kids with special needs or language development delay, which really supports my teaching for this position."

Why did you decide to become a teacher?

"My mom is a retired teacher. [Most of] my family members ... are teachers: my auntie, my uncles, my mom-in-law. And I had great teachers along the way to my graduation. So they set a good example for me. I wanted to be a teacher like them."



DIRECTED STUDIES, MATH, CHEMISTRY

Naoko Shin Williams

Did you want to be a teacher?

"No. I didn't have a good experience as a student. I'm a third-generation Korean as well as a first-generation college graduate, born and raised in Japan ... My parents didn't speak English, so school was very difficult. I didn't feel a sense of safety or belonging for most of my K-12 years. Sports was my saving grace. I was an excellent volleyball and basketball player, but teachers saw me only as an athlete and labeled me as average or below average. I internalized that."

What changed your path?

"A teacher in 10th grade really transformed how I saw myself as a student. For the first time, I felt fully seen and valued. That teacher encouraged me through the International Baccalaureate program, which I didn't think I could do. Some people even told me not to bother taking the exam. That lit a fire, I wanted to prove them wrong. I completed the program, passed the exams and earned college credit. That one teacher changed my trajectory."



CHINESE 1 & 2

Kali Chong

What drew you to teaching?

"I thought I was better suited [to be] an office lady. I liked that kind of structured lifestyle - going to work at 9 a.m. and leaving at 5 or 6 p.m. But after a year, I got bored, so I found a teaching job in Hong Kong at a vocational school ... And then I thought, 'teaching students is actually really interesting. You're also able

to communicate with students and discover that different generations have different quirks."

* Translated from Mandarin.



10TH GRADE ENGLISH

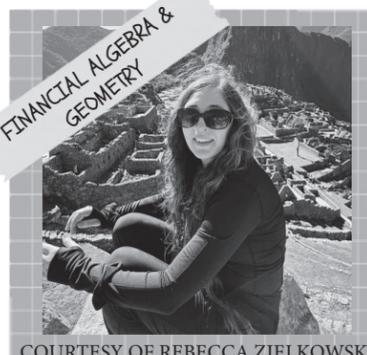
Talia Clement

What is some background information about yourself?

"I went to George Washington University, and that was where I found an organization called Teach for America, which brought me into my passion for teaching. Teach for America [pairs] you with a region and then a school where you'll be for two years, and they help you get your teaching credential. They paired me with a school up in Richmond. I was happy to be coming back to the Bay Area."

Why did you become a teacher?

"I have always wanted to be a teacher, even in elementary school. I would joke that I wanted to be a kindergarten teacher and also the President of the United States. I certainly gave up on one of those dreams. What I love about teaching is watching students build confidence in themselves over time, not just in growing in their abilities in English, but also in who they are as people."



FINANCIAL ALGEBRA & GEOMETRY

Rebecca Zielkowski

Was teaching always your dream?

"Yes, I've always wanted to be a teacher. I love math, I know a lot of people don't, but for me it's problem solving, which is one of my favorite things. [For example] in my free time, I love escape rooms, riddles and board games, anything that makes me figure things out. Math just makes sense to me."



Do you have a favorite memory related to teaching so far?

"One of my favorites was when I held 'Dundie Awards' in my class, like from 'The Office.' I gave out silly personalized awards to a student who always answered with extra decimals, or another who would make me solve a problem instead of just giving the answer. The kids dressed up, we all laughed [and] some even cried. At the end, one student surprised me with my own award [being] 'Best Dundies Host.' It was very special to me. I'm almost tearing up thinking about it right now."



ENGLISH 1 & SPANISH 2

Henna Lopez Rahimi

What led you to decide to teach?

"I always knew that I wanted to work with language but I didn't know that I wanted to be a teacher at first. I used to have a lot of teachers in my family, so I knew what a demanding career it is, and I wasn't sure I was up for the challenge. But I tried a bunch of other jobs out of college that were writing jobs and publishing jobs and other kinds of language-related jobs that just were not as fun ... I was searching for a challenge that would keep me engaged and ended up trying an internship. [I] fell in love with teaching and decided to get my credential."

ACROSS:

- The news segment of the network that suspended, then reinstated, Jimmy Kimmel Live!
- Don't Stop _____
- Capable of producing your own food, in biological terms
- Without moisture
- Out of money
- Abbreviation for though
- A 37D could be considered a teacher's _____
- Suffix with duct- or ster-
- Roth _____, a retirement savings plan
- Poor Richard's _____
- Unfit to eat
- Yanny or?
- Tiny amount
- Topic of pages 8-9, or Benson Boone's 2025 hit
- To observe

DOWN:

- Australia's Eastern time zone
- A shapeless mass
- Acid that coats Sour Patch or Super Sour Scandinavian Swimmers
- Alcohol found in lemon-grass oil
- Brings about a feeling of _____
- Hope you're doing this after the bathroom!
- Scottish National Heritage, abbreviated
- To purchase
- Hub for a 37D
- SFMOMA, for example
- San Mateo is undergoing a _____ crisis (see page 5)
- Behind schedule
- Herb commonly found in Mediterranean, Italian and Mexican cooking
- The part of your hand that gets read (see pages 8-9)

DOWN:

- She sings "Hello, it's me"
- Found in 10D
- You, in Cantonese
- Abbreviation for alcohol
- Message intended to raise public awareness, for short
- Signifies shock, in text
- Roman numeral 3
- Onomatopoeia to represent sudden impact
- Pro _____ law
- National language of Pakistan
- Bookworm, I'm studious // From my cerebral cortex to my gluteus
- A ballet movement — a bend & straightening of the knees
- I'm leaving you, in text
- A quick thrust
- "Gimme _____" (start of Rutgers cheer)
- Masculine singular article in Spanish

SOLUTIONS

Opinion: fame over function?

Roy Kong
FEATURES WRITER

After seeing a product endorsed by an influencer while doomscrolling, many suddenly have the urge to run to their nearest store and purchase it. But when they arrive, there's a dilemma: buy the product made by the influencer with flashy packaging for the first time, or buy their every day, high-quality name brand item. The enticing marketing of the product is meant to suck the consumer in, despite the dangers of the product's quality and the hefty price, just because of the celebrity's face on the packaging. To prevent consumer exploitation, celebrities should stop creating brands.

Brands these days are learning to use the media to their advantage and puppet viewers. From high production television ads, to pop-ups personalized to one's liking, finding something to fuel one's shopping addiction is as easy as it gets, especially when social media apps like Instagram and TikTok have gained an insurmountable number of users over recent years. This has created a lot of incentive for celebrities and influencers to camouflage expensive, basic and unoriginal products by using their fame.

"I've actually seen videos that were leaked of Mr. Beast

"Lunchly can be good [but there's some flavors and different box variations that can be bad," said freshman Felix Gosse- lin. "But overall, it's not the best quality of food and product."

According to Consumer Reports, Lunchly products tested positive for containing harmful metals and lead in their food. In response, the company claimed that heavy metals are "naturally occurring and are often in a variety of foods." But this is not true, as the U.S. Food and Drug Administration states that "by law, food manufacturers have a responsibility to significantly minimize or prevent chemical hazards when needed." Lunchly continues to not take accountability for their food containing harmful metals, using its image of being owned by celebrities to gain attraction despite lacking in actual quality.

While most celebrity brands consist of the same negative traits, some have managed to become successful because of their high quality products. However, celebrity brands overcharge compared to similar products on the market. SKIMS, a women's clothing brand by reality TV star, Kim Kardashian, was founded in 2019 and became a four billion dollar business as of 2023. It also became a

direct competitor with brands like Lululemon and other yoga



trying to [get people to] review [the product], and [when] they didn't give a satisfactory review, he deleted those videos," said freshman Arya Karimi. "It's all just campaigning only positive stuff, [and] not showing anything negative ... [Similarly,] the reason people wanted to drink [Prime, a brand owned by Logan Paul and KSI, was] not because it was good ... it's because there are certain people campaigning for it, which makes it really interesting for people our age."

Moreover, products made from celebrity-owned brands are commonly poor quality, relying on the celebrity's image to sell. Within the packaged meal industry, Lunchly, a brand owned by influencers Logan Paul and KSI, is inconsistent with its products' quality. Targeted towards pre-teen and teen audiences, Lunchly emphasizes how it has more electrolytes and potassium than its competitor in the industry, Lunchables. However, Lunchly lacks food that provides actual nutrition to teenagers.

and sportswear brands for women. However, the prices of SKIMS are far higher than Lululemon's prices. For example, the price of the "High-waisted leggings" from Skims is still about 30 more dollars than the "Align no line high rise pant" from Lululemon, with the only difference being a material called viscose.

"If it were the same product, but manufactured or designed by somebody without as much fame, I don't think most of them would be very popular," said freshman Joel Levitt. "The reputation of the celebrities often is the primary driver of their product sales because most of these celebrity products are minor innovations on things that already exist ... [This] is unfair to small businesses who don't have the means of getting in there with lack of financial support."

Consumers should be able to depend on the product itself, not an assortment of ads or paid reviews. From exploiting consumers' hard-earned money in exchange for the brand's low-quality products and immense cost, celebrities should stop creating brands.

Girls volleyball shuts out Hillsdale

Max Feng
SPORTS WRITER

On Oct. 2, the Aragon varsity girls volleyball team (6-2 overall) overwhelmed Hillsdale High (3-5 overall) in three straight sets — 25-20, 25-21, 25-19 — during their annual Dig Pink game, held to bring awareness for breast cancer.

“Our record is actually better this year at the start than last year,” said head coach Annette Gennaro.

With strong performances early in the season, Gennaro hopes to make another playoff run, finish top of the league and potentially win finals.

“One of [our] accomplishments this season was probably beating Burlingame,” said senior and libero Sosefina Tatola. “They’ve always been a good offensive team, so that was definitely... a confidence booster for us.”

The team’s success has been fueled by key players like senior and setter Gabby Xiao and sophomores and outside hitters Poppy McKenzie and Emilia Kunkel. Many players are returning members, which has strengthened their chemistry and coordination both offensively and defensively.

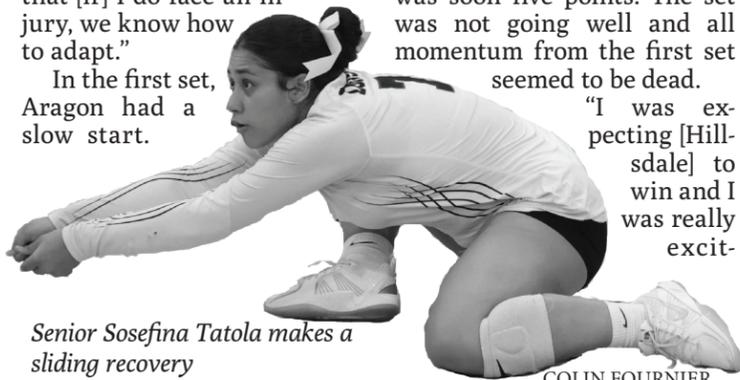
“Emi and Poppy as my hitters hit extremely hard,” Gennaro said. “And they’re smart hitters.”

Gennaro also appreciates the experience the juniors and seniors bring to the table.

The team tends to run a lot of quicker balls, like one’s in the middle and go’s on the outside. On average, Gennaro says that practices are half drills and half gameplay.

“We try to [practice] position-wise as well as [as a] whole [team],” Gennaro said. “I like [my hitters] to hit not only on the outside but also on the middle and right side ... so that [if] I do face an injury, we know how to adapt.”

In the first set, Aragon had a slow start.



Senior Sosefina Tatola makes a sliding recovery

COLIN FOURNIER

Going down 2-7 straightaway, confidence and energy seemed low.

“[When] we were down, it was just mostly [because of] our passing and we were just a little nervous or unfocused,” said junior and setter Devyn Lee.

After a key hit by Kunkel, Hillsdale’s early run came to an end. Aragon responded with four straight points, narrowing the gap to 6-7. The teams traded points until Aragon pulled ahead 9-9, followed with six unanswered points. The first set ended 25-20, giv-

ing Aragon the momentum going into the second set.

The second set started out with two aces in Hillsdale’s favor. The pace of the game seemed to slow as the score stayed around even until 8-9. Aragon lost three points in a row until McKenzie scored on a set by Lee, bringing the score to 9-12. The score stayed steady until 11-13 and Hillsdale’s lead was soon five points. The set was not going well and all momentum from the first set seemed to be dead.

“I was expecting [Hillsdale] to win and I was really excit-

ed for [them],” said spectator Manny Dasilva.

Aragon continued fighting at a deficit until 17-20, where they scored five break points, coming back and bringing the score to 22-20. Hillsdale only ended up scoring one more point, and the set ended with a score of 25-21.

The third set started out well for Aragon as Hillsdale watched the ball fall between two of their players. This set the tone for the rest of the set; after Hillsdale went up 3-1, they lost their lead and never got it back. After Aragon went up

20-16 late, Hillsdale called a time out. Their attempt at regrouping was unsuccessful and they called their second time-out at 23-19. In the end, Hillsdale simply was not able to save the ball and lost two points in a row.

“I was slightly disappointed [in Hillsdale] because I know that they could have done a lot better,” Dasilva said.

Spectator Anna Tatola shared the energy she felt during the game.

“I was feeling very ecstatic and just pumped up,” Tatola said. “I’m just here to support [my niece].”

After the game, some players reflected on their victory and the overall atmosphere of the night.

“[This game] was my favorite game out of all of them so far because everyone was so loud,” Lee said. “It was just like the spirit of the game, the dig pink.”

Now with a 6-2 record, the Dons continue to aim for a season for the books.

Girls water polo defeated 9-7 by Woodside

Sabina Gulati
SPORTS WRITER

On Oct. 1, the Aragon (6-4 overall) girls water polo team played Woodside (4-3 overall) in an exciting and tight away game ending in a 9-7 loss. Given that Woodside had been undefeated in the league, the team was facing a difficult fight.

“We’re at [Woodside’s] level,” said senior Charlotte Graham. “[But] it’s definitely going to be a close game and one of our tougher games this season.”

Moreover, Aragon had a slight disadvantage going into the match since they had several sick and injured players absent from their lineup.

Woodside has long been a major rival for the team, making this game very important.

“[They are] one of the top teams,” said head coach Rachel Downall. “They were second in their league last year, and we were one behind them. So we’re looking to potentially ... overtake [them].”

The match began steadily for Aragon, with the team gaining an early lead 3-2 by the end of the first quarter. However, near the end of the second quarter, Woodside scored two back-to-back goals to take the lead and set back Aragon’s previous progress.

Then, sophomore and co-captain Akira Snyder managed

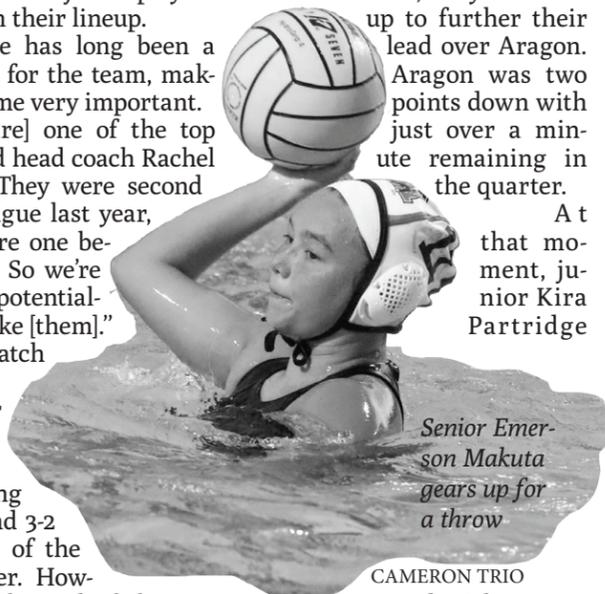
to score an impressive half-court shot seconds before the clock hit zero. This brightened the horizon for Aragon, and they entered the third quarter newly energized. The score was now tied, 4-4.

“[We] started to rely on each other more, which definitely benefited us,” Snyder said.

The third quarter was just as tense. Two separate shots from Woodside skimmed the post and a goal from Aragon was discounted by the referee.

Then, with three and a half minutes left, Woodside took advantage of a foul called on Aragon to make the score 5-4. A minute later, they followed up to further their lead over Aragon. Aragon was two points down with just over a minute remaining in the quarter.

At that moment, junior Kira Partridge



Senior Emerson Makuta gears up for a throw

CAMERON TRIO

scored with 45 seconds left, cutting Woodside’s two point lead down to one. When the clock signaled the end of the third quarter, the score was 6-5, with Woodside up.

“[We] met a lot of ... strong adversity from the other team,” said senior and co-captain Emerson Makuta. “They were very determined, and so are we. So it was a lot of back and forth.”

After the two-minute interval gave resting and planning time for the teams, the fourth and final quarter began.

Aragon’s late goal during the third quarter boosted their momentum going into the fourth quarter. Barely a minute in, Aragon scored again, tying up the score to 6-6.

Then, with five minutes left in the game, sophomore Amara Garcia shot and scored, taking back the lead for Aragon, 7-6. To defend their advantage, the team changed tactics and rallied to support their defense.

Still, Woodside was relentless. After many saves by Aragon, they finally got one through with four minutes to go. The score was tied again 7-7.

Woodside now had the momentum. With three minutes left in the fourth quarter, they found the net once more to pull ahead of Aragon, 8-7.

Aragon still had a chance with two minutes left on the clock. In formation, they moved up the field with the ball. Nevertheless, Woodside’s goalkeeper managed to save Aragon’s shot. In the last 15 seconds of the match, Woodside sealed the game with a final goal to make it 9-7.

Still, the match was not an overwhelming loss for Aragon.

“I want the team to know that even though we lost, we learned more, and this was a

GAMES THIS WEEK

10/8
Flag Football
vs Mills
14-7 Loss

10/8
Girls Golf
vs Menlo-
Atherton
305-223 Loss

step in the right direction,” Makuta said. “This was a huge improvement overall, and I am almost 100% sure we can beat them next time.”

Makuta herself had an impressive game, managing to score three goals for a hat-trick against Woodside.

Overall, the game was extremely tight, the result unclear until the last few seconds.

“[I’m] very proud of the team. They’ve played really well today,” Downall said. “[We’re] looking to just continue the momentum that we had today ... this season.”

As the team rolls into the second half of the season, they will have the chance for a rematch against Woodside. This time, Aragon will have the home-court advantage.

The team now looks ahead to Oct. 21 for their next match, a home game against Carlmont.

Cross country competes at Ram

Alex Choy
SPORTS WRITER

On Sept. 27, Aragon's cross country team competed in the Ram Invitational at Westmoor High School in Daly City. "The Westmoor meet is a really fun meet because it has everything you want in a cross country meet," said assistant coach Denise Fournier. "It has multiple terrains, the course is a nice temperature and everything about it is just really fun." 65 high schools competed, and Aragon's participating teams were boys freshman, girls freshman/sophomore, boys sophomore, boys JV, girls varsity and boys varsity. Heading into the race, both coaches and runners were optimistic about the season ahead and the team's potential in the future. "The season in general has been going really well," said assistant coach John Abrams. "We've had a lot of newly established personal records. We've

had a lot of athletes earn medals. We've had teams earn plaques. The future looks good." Sophomore Alex Yoshino expressed his excitement about the team's great potential, especially the sophomore boys. Yoshino ran first place at the PAL #1 meet on Sept. 17 and achieved a personal record by 28 seconds. "We have a good chance of doing ... well the next two years," Yoshino said. The freshman boys placed eighth out of 13 teams with a score of 188. The team had positive feedback about the race, with some runners emphasizing how everyone gave it their best effort. "We pushed at the end, just trying to put in all the work, just keeping a good mindset the whole way through," said freshman Gus Jabri. At this meet, many freshman runners, although inexperienced with this course, were satisfied with their performance. "I've never done this course before, so I'm really proud of myself and how we

did," said freshman Cameron Patterson. The freshman and sophomore girls finished sixth of nine teams with a score of 128. Moving forward, they aim to qualify for the PAL Championships and continue improving. "We've done a really good job controlling our speed in the middle of the race," said freshman Piper Goldstein. Coming off an exceptional first place finish at the PAL #1 on Sept. 17, the sophomore boys placed sixth of 10 teams with a score of 149. While the result was still solid, several runners felt that the team could have done better. "[W]e did pretty [poorly]," said sophomore Liam Persson. "But at least everyone pushed through." The junior varsity boys placed fourth of 13 teams with a score of 144, boosted by strong performances on the hills. "Recently we've been doing a lot of hill workouts," said junior Chase Rokala. "That's really helped us improve ... On the hills every time, we sprinted all the way up and passed a lot of people."



Senior Colin Fournier

DARRA MCLINTOCK

Football wins against Gunn 42-0

Entering into their fifth game of the season, the Dons held a record of 2-2, aiming for a win to break the even split. Sophomore and running back Jaxson Sullivan spoke about his thoughts on the season so far. "It's gone up and down," Sullivan said. "But overall, we're doing pretty strong right now." The quarter started with sophomore and defensive back and receiver Kymani Nabung getting an interception, resulting in the Dons' possession of the ball. "When I got an interception, I turned around and the ball just came straight to me," Nabung said. After the early turnover, Aragon dominated the field, scoring their first touchdown to take control of the game. As the tensions began to rise, the crowd began cheering harder. Junior and cheer member Aubrey Leao recalled the atmosphere of the game. "Since they were doing well at the start, they had the crowd hyped up, and then the crowd reciprocated that and hyped up the team better," Leao said. Heading into the second quarter, the Dons extended their lead, scoring two touchdowns, one of them scored by Sullivan. He

credited his touchdown to the team's communication. "I feel like it went great," Sullivan said. "We were bonding really well, and we were working overall as a team." Parham emphasized the importance of the timing of those touchdowns, referring to the "middle eight", the final four minutes of the second quarter and the first four of the third. "It really changed the dynamic of the game pretty quickly and abruptly," Parham said. "It was good to take advantage of certain situations." The defense also fought relentlessly against the Titans to keep them from

scoring any touchdowns. While the Titans were able to move the ball across the field, the Dons prevented them from scoring. This continued through the rest of the game as the Dons continued to gain more points while the Titans struggled to keep up. The Dons' performance highlighted both team progress and individual milestones. Junior and quarterback Isaiah Johnson tied the school record of five passing touchdowns, a mark also held by athletic director Steve Sell and several alumni. With the victory, the Dons were able to improve their record to 3-2 and looked ahead to key upcoming matchups. "[I'm looking forward to] Sequoia, Woodside and Hillsdale because Sequoia and Hillsdale are more nearby games so it's more of a rivalry," said sophomore and center Bryan Sandoval. For Sandoval, the game was also a reminder of what makes football special. "I like playing in the Friday Night Lights," Sandoval said. "I like the energy, all the intensity, all the fans, all the cheering." After their strong performance against Gunn, the Dons will next face Half Moon Bay High School on Oct. 23.



AIDEN KASTEN

Sophomore Jaxson Sullivan runs with the ball

- 10/14
Boys Water Polo
vs Half Moon Bay
15-3 Win
- 10/14
Girls Tennis
vs Menlo-Atherton
7-0 Win
- 10/11
Girls Volleyball
Aragon Tournament
First Place Win

Erena Irokawa
SPORTS WRITER

On Sept. 26, the Aragon varsity football team faced the Gunn Titans in what was more than just a football game for the Dons. This game served as a memorial game in honor of Coach B, a

former coach at Palo Alto High School who passed away from cancer. For Aragon, the game was a chance to honor his legacy and secure a win, which they did, with a final score of 42-0. Head coach Ash Parham thought back on this game's significance. "Gunn was [Palo Alto's] rival for many years so it was fitting to play them in a game where we remember [Coach B]," Parham said. "It was nice to have a good performance in the game that we're honoring him."

Luke Trimble
Sports Writer

Aragon Hall of Fame Induction

On Saturday, Sept. 27, Aragon held its annual Athletic Hall of Fame induction event, adding five athletes alongside the entire 2012 Boys Cross Country team. The ceremony was held in Center Court, featuring speeches about the athletes' decorated Aragon careers.

DEREK FOSTER, class of '90



LUKE TRIMBLE

Derek Foster played basketball at Aragon. His senior year, his team won both the PAL and CCS championships, reaching the NorCal Final Four. The Dons had never won a CCS championship until that season. Foster played for Lewis & Clark College where he won 1994 Northwest

Conference Player of the Year and was a First-Team-All American. "It means a lot to me to be an Aragon Don," Foster said. "My most memorable times were here at Aragon, [and] my most fun times playing basketball were here playing for Aragon with all my friends and teammates."

KIMBERLY TRIPPLETT, class of '94



LUKE TRIMBLE

Kimberly Tripplett was inducted for her contributions to the Track and Field, soccer, basketball and cross country teams, winning Aragon Athlete of the Year as a senior. Tripplett won the Triple Jump at the CCS championship with an Aragon record 37 foot, three inch leap.

"I'm appreciative of high school," Tripplett said. "I met a lot of great people I'm still in touch with over 30 years later. I want to thank Aragon High School and the athletic department for believing in me and giving me the opportunity to compete here and excel."

STEPHANIE DERE TEJO, class of '06



LUKE TRIMBLE

Stephanie Dere Tejo won both the San Mateo County Times and Aragon Athlete of the Year twice. Tejo played badminton, volleyball and basketball and was named First-Team All-League in each sport. She later attended Foothill College where she continued her basketball career.

"At that point in my life, I just wanted to excel and learn. [I was] trying to do my best, listening to my coaches and trying to grow my skills," Tejo said. "It's really cool to be back at Aragon ... It's really nice to see the campus and [be] part of this whole ceremony. It's such an honor."

MATANGI TONGA, class of '06



LUKE TRIMBLE

Matangi Tonga excelled in track and field, basketball and most of all, football. With Tonga as a running back and defensive lineman, the football team won three Bay division titles. As a senior, Tonga won the PAL shot put championship. He went on to play

football in college for Brigham Young University and University of Houston. "Not everyone can be inducted into the Hall of Fame, so [being] in the class with the elite athletes is an honor," Tonga said. "I love everything about this school."

SAM MANU, class of '83



LUKE TRIMBLE

Sam Manu played for Aragon as a basketball player before returning as a coach in 2011 to lead the boys and girls basketball team. Under Manu, the boys team made the playoffs in four of their five seasons, and won the championship in 2013. He began coaching the girls basketball team in

2016, and led them to the CCS championship in 2018 and 2022. "Basketball is my sweet spot," Manu said. "I always ask people, what's your sweet spot? What gifts do you have? And how are they all intersecting? That's when you'll feel the love of life."

2012 BOYS CROSS COUNTRY

The 2012 boys cross country team reached the California State Cross Country Championships, the farthest an Aragon team has ever advanced in the sport. Seven athletes and two coaches were inducted as members of the team.

"We all came together at the right time," said Ryan McAuliffe, a runner for the 2012 team. "[In] the race [that allowed us to qualify], everyone was hitting their stride and did what they needed to do."



LUKE TRIMBLE

Fake it 'til you make it: grass versus turf

Olivia Mukherjee
SPORTS WRITER

Grass or turf? It might seem like a simple choice, but the debate over which is better has schools and athletes taking sides. In fact, as schools across the district debate field upgrades, athletes especially are weighing the pros and cons of these two field material choices.

For student athletes at Aragon, the choice between turf and grass isn't just about what looks better from the bleachers. It can affect how they play, how they move and whether they walk off the field injured or not.

Though grass may appear to be more of a natural and risk-free option, it comes at a cost.

"I stepped in a pothole one time and that messed up my

knee really badly," said freshman and soccer player Yash Gandhi.

Turf fields, which are installed at many high schools across the district, tend to be more even and less affected by rain or overuse.

"On grass, it's just more difficult to play because depending on the weather, it would be harder to run, but on turf it's simpler and feels better on your feet," Gandhi said.

Freshman and flag football player Sarina Jain has also experienced the difficulties of playing on grass fields in the rain.

"When it rains, turf is way better," Jain said. "Grass gets super muddy and slippery,

and you can't cut or pivot well. On turf, it might be slick at first, but at least it's still playable."

Beyond comfort and stability, athletes also consider how surface affects speed and safety.

"Grass is definitely softer and feels better when you fall," Jain said. "But turf just feels faster and cleaner — you don't have to worry about tripping over bumps or soft spots on grass."

Still, not everyone agrees that turf is the better surface. Some athletes say that grass feels more comfortable underfoot and doesn't cause the same heat buildup on hot days. Others prefer how it plays for specific moves or moments in their sport.

"Turf on a sunny day is absolute torture — it gets really hot," said softball player Elizabeth Magness. "I'd say dirt and grass are better for overall comfort when you play."

While grass requires constant care and can become uneven or unsafe if it's not regularly managed, well-maintained grass can offer a cooler, softer surface. It also may be easier on joints during practices and games.

Aside from injuries, many players have to adapt their playing style and strategy depending on the type of field they are playing on. An instance of this is on the softball field, where rain directly impacts player execution on the field.

"You definitely slide farther on turf, so you have to start your slide earlier than you would on dirt," Magness said.

While both field types have their advantages, the sheer lack of maintenance costs certainly makes turf fields appealing for schools trying to cut down. However, concerns about the

initial cost support arguments against moving towards turf.

"I'd want [the school] to think about the cons of going with turf, because in my opinion the cost of replacing the grass field wouldn't be worth it," Magness said.

Her perspective reflects a broader debate among athletes and staff about balancing cost, safety and playability when deciding between surfaces.

As Aragon looks ahead to future field upgrades, the conversation around grass versus turf is still growing. For the students who train and compete on those fields every week, the surface they play on isn't just a background detail, but an integral part of the game.



EVA LUDWIG



EVA LUDWIG

