

THE THUNDERBEAT

With mental health needs of students increasing, BPS set to bring licensed therapist to high schools

LEANNE BUGAY
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Bellevue West has four guidance counselors who are responsible for all students’ academic, career, and social-emotional learning. Lynne Henkel is the freshman counselor with Melissa Minahan, Molly Moore, and Susan Polk dividing the other three classes by alphabetical order. All four counselors work rigorously to provide students with tools and resources to help them navigate high school and plan for their futures. Their duties range from organizing AP tests and scheduling classes to offering college information and teaching coping skills. “I don’t think anyone knows behind the scenes how much

we’re doing besides meeting with students,” Moore said. “We’re trying to support students in all different areas.” A major area of need that has been steadily growing over the past decade is the social-emotional learning aspect. The counselors regularly place “response,” or taking care of students in immediate crisis, at the top of their priorities. When a student at school requires immediate response from a counselor, calming down the student, listening and understanding the situation, notifying the student’s parents, and providing them with outside resources can take up to a half day at times. This can leave the counselors with a line of students waiting, emails sitting unopened, missed phone calls, and daily tasks to be pushed off for later.

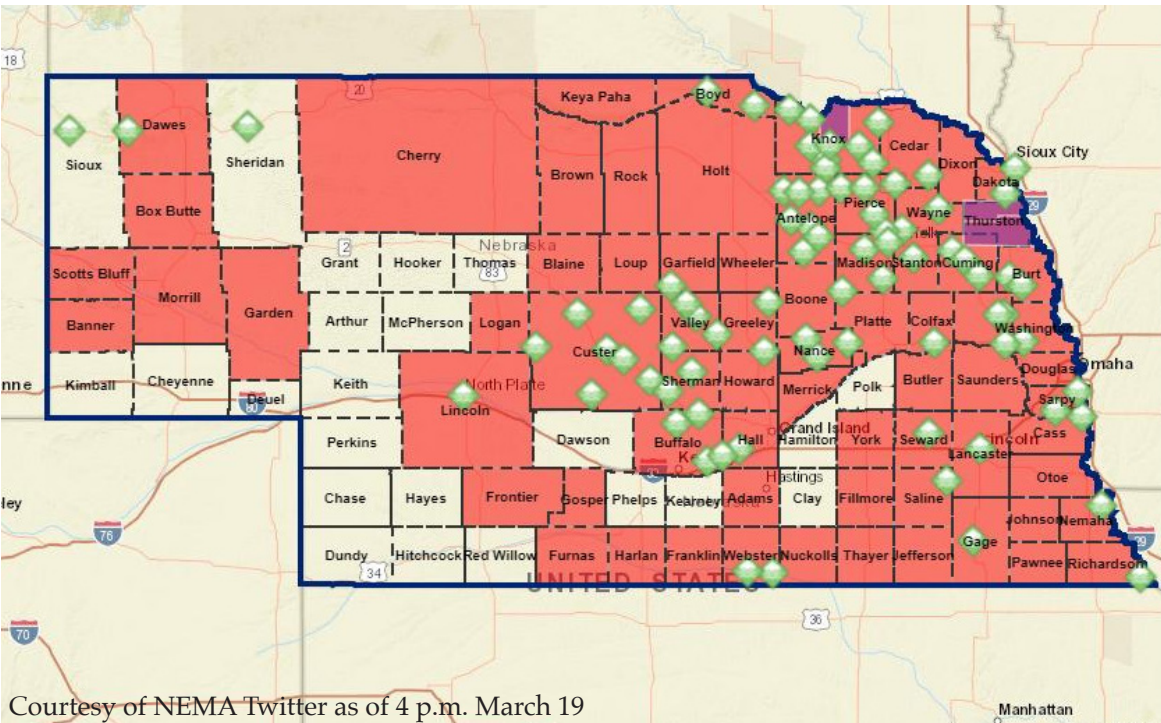
“It seems like we spend so much time now on mental health issues that we don’t get to check grades and check in with students as much as we would like to,” Polk said. Minahan said the counselors work all day and often through their lunch to try to keep up with everything on their plate. But the rise in students’ need for mental health support isn’t the only factor causing the counseling staff to struggle for time. According to school websites and data from the Nebraska Department of Education, West has the highest student to counselor ratio out of all 18 Omaha Metro Conference high schools, being about 417:1. The average in the conference is 308:1, with the second highest ratio being 363:1 at Papillion La-Vista

High School. The American School Counselor Association recommends a ratio of 250:1. “Based on our population and based off our recommendations by the people that study this stuff, we are not staffed adequately,” principal Kevin Rohlfs said. The counselors said that not being able to follow up with kids after an incident or problem can lead students to possibly “fall through the cracks” and that it’s harder to establish relationships with kids the less often they meet. “I almost think there needs to be a mental health person full time,” Moore said. “We aren’t therapists.” Bellevue Public Schools is currently in the process of implementing a fiscally responsible way to provide a step towards the much needed mental health support.

Director of Student Support Services Kevin Mills has been working on a grant with CRCC (formerly Children’s Respite Care Center) that would bring in one licensed mental health therapist to serve both Bellevue high schools. In the partnership, BPS will provide office space and CRCC will employ the therapist. CRCC is an Omaha-based non-profit that provides comprehensive care to children with a range of health/behavioral issues and their families. BPS will be involved in their School-Based Wellness Services, which started in Feb. 2018 at the three Millard Public high schools after CRCC noticed an increase in the need for mental health support for teenagers.

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Emergency
Declarations
82 Cities
70 Counties
4 Tribal Areas



2019 floods worst in state history

NATHAN HAWKINS
SPORTS/MANAGING EDITOR

As of March 19, 70 counties in Nebraska had declared a state of emergency due to flooding. That totals to 82 cities, including Bellevue. Even Offutt Air Force Base was affected, as they published a press release stating that water has reached roughly 30 buildings on the base. In efforts to prepare for

the massive rainfall, Nebraska Governor Pete Ricketts signed a proclamation on March 12 to allow the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency, or NEMA, to coordinate response and recovery activities. Ricketts said that the flooding in Nebraska is the worst in state history. He has been in contact with the Federal Emergency Management Agency, or FEMA, and on March 19, Vice

President Mike Pence came to Nebraska to see the damage. As of March 19, NEMA estimated that the floods will cost over \$640 million across the state. The floods reached record levels. According to NEMA, 17 locations reached their historic crest heights during flooding, including the Missouri River, which peaked at 47.5 feet. The focus now turns to relief efforts. The Bellevue Christian

Center has become a flood relief distribution center for the city. According to their Facebook page, they have received many donations so far, but are still in need of some items, such as shaving cream, non-perishable items, and towels. Visit Bellevue Christian Center on Facebook to find an updated list of items needed. They are open 8:30 a.m. to 7 p.m., Monday through Friday, and 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday.

Annual Gallup survey shows change in opinions of students on safety, futures

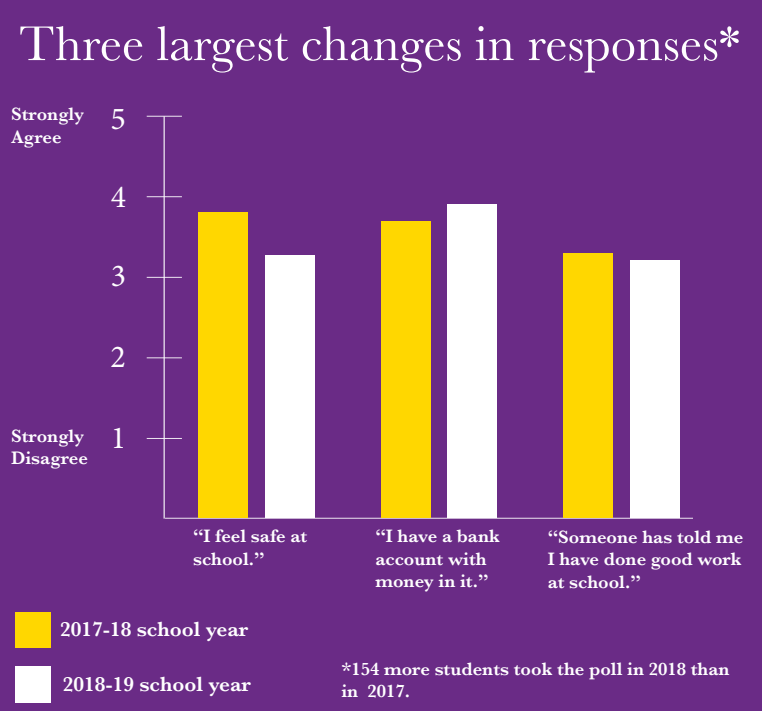
MOOSHOO TRAN
NEWS EDITOR

For the past three years, Bellevue West students have taken a poll sponsored by Gallup to track student engagement, hope for the future, financial literacy, and entrepreneurial aspirations. The poll tracks results by having students rate a series of statements on a scale from one to five, one being strongly disagree and five being strongly agree. “We give the survey the same time of year, every year, so we’re getting everybody in the same mood,” principal Kevin Rohlfs said. “We basically use the survey as a staff to try and determine what we need to do to make it better.” Two of the highest scoring statements this year were “I know I will graduate high school,” with a 4.75 rating and “I have a best friend at school,” which scored a 4.29. Overall, the results for this year’s survey were lower than in previous years with the biggest drop in “I feel safe in

school,” going from 3.81 to 3.27. “The safety question dropped quite a bit, and that’s understandable,” Rohlfs said. More students this year responded to the poll than any other year. While the increase in responses could give a broader picture of how the student body feels about hope and engagement, some students believe that the results aren’t accurate. “I know there are tons of kids out there who would never feel comfortable opening up about how they feel inside,” junior Izzy Beckner said. Administrators use the results to highlight specific problem areas of the school and try to prevent new ones. However, if students aren’t taking the survey truthfully, the results could be unreliable for administrative decisions. “[It] depends on the students’ perspective, of course,” math teacher Karie Lauterbach said. “If they don’t feel it’s worth their time, they’re going to answer a different way than if they feel like what

they say would make a change.” Students are encouraged to speak up about issues they have at school, and to spark change within the student body. “I would like the students to

look at those questions and really think about some of those questions as to ‘what role do I play?’” Rohlfs said. “One of the things was school safety; every student has a role in that.”



Graphic by Mooshoo Tran

Thunder Threads, Key Club offer free prom services

MEGAN NORMAN
REPORTER

With prom season just around the corner, Thunder Threads has decided to provide free hair, makeup, and nail services for anyone attending this year’s prom. These services will be held Saturday, April 6 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Students are welcome to come in at anytime during that period. All junior and senior girls have received an email where they can register for any of the available services. The registrations are due Wednesday, April 3 and a confirmation email will be sent out that day for those who signed up. Students are asked to bring their own makeup, but all other hair and nail supplies will be provided by the volunteers, who are all either professional stylists or qualified in one of the services offered. Thunder Threads sponsor Brenna Dacey sparked the idea for a free prom salon when she realized how expensive preparing for prom can be. “It kind of stemmed from the prom boutique that Mrs. Sedlacek does with Key Club, and then just the Thunder Thread closets that we have, as well as thinking about how expensive prom is and if there is anything else we can do to help students feel confident and ready on prom night,” Dacey said. Key Club is hosting their free dress boutique again this year. Students can come to room 221 before and after school to look at the formal wear that is available. The main goal is to make everybody feel their best on prom night, without having to spend a fortune on everything that comes with preparing for the event. “I think it can go hand in hand because you know everyone wants to look beautiful for prom so we have the dresses available and they have the hair and makeup this year,” Key Club sponsor Jennifer Sedlacek said. “So I think everything can just fall together and be put in place.”

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The “no-go” days: students, teachers feel effects of winter weather and snow days

TAEGAN JACOBS
FEATURES EDITOR

Nebraska residents are no strangers to snow, but this year’s winter weather has caused more damage than recent years. Not only has it left physical evidence with the aftermath of melting snow revealing dozens of potholes and contributing to flooding on Nebraska’s roads and neighborhoods, but in school’s as well. According to Bellevue Public Schools superintendent Dr. Jeff Rippe, BPS has 10 “allowed” snow days. So far, the school district has had seven.

Rippe, currently in his third year as superintendent, is the one who decides whether BPS has a snow day or a “go day”. “The safety of the students and staff members are the top priority,” Rippe said in an email. “If the conditions or the forecast indicate it may not be safe, school will be canceled.”

To help with the decision, Rippe said he talks to anyone who may have information regarding the upcoming weather. This includes the National Weather Service, Offutt Air Force Base, BPS’s transportation director, and other local superintendents.

“If the decision is made early morning, I will drive around town to see the conditions of the roads,” Rippe said.

One of the ways students, staff, and parents are alerted of a snow day is through social media. Twitter is one of the most popular apps to do so.

Not only has Twitter been used to announce snow days, but it allows students and staff



Photo by Bryce Wetzler

A basketball hoop in front of a Bellevue resident’s home stands unused and covered in snow in the freezing temperatures. Bellevue Public Schools called seven snow days this winter.

to interact with Rippe and hype up potential snow days. Students and teachers alike don’t hesitate to alert superintendents when snow is in the forecast.

“I feel bad for Dr. Rippe because he gets harassed,” Latin teacher Leslie Hooper said. “But it’s kind of fun to see the back and forth between him and some of the other stakeholders in the school district.”

The Twitter hype has produced many student created memes and even a hashtag, #TooSlippeForRippe.

Millard Public Schools superintendent James Sutfin said he finds the social media activity surrounding snow days hilarious at times.

“Students are great about alerting me to a potential snow event,”

Sutfin said in an email. “I don’t have to watch the news anymore!”

But some people think the social media hype has gotten out of hand. Junior James Griffin thinks that sometimes snow day speculation on social media gets out of hand.

Both Rippe and Sutfin say they don’t mind the snow day hype as long as it stays positive, clean, and respectful. Sutfin posted to Twitter Feb. 11, stating that it’s “Time for a social media timeout.”

“I use social media to interact with students and sometimes people over step,” Sutfin said. “I want people to know that I am willing to banter and have fun, but 1) keep it clean 2) keep it positive 3) Be a part of the social media community.”

And despite all of the activity and hype around potential

snow days, social media has no impact on the decision to call off school, according to Rippe.

And as the snow begins to melt and thoughts of spring are brought to the forefront of many people’s minds, the aftermath of BPS’s seven snow days can be seen and felt as third quarter comes to an end and teachers try to get caught up in the curriculum.

Junior Grace Kretzer said she’s feeling the set-back in her AP and advanced classes.

“Some teachers are trying to rush the curriculum so that we’re done by the end of the semester,” Kretzer said.

Hooper said she’s made up for most of the lost curriculum, but there are still some things she had to cut.

“We’re about seven days behind where we should be,” Hooper said. “So lost out on some of the learning opportunities that we otherwise would have had.”

Although Griffin says he doesn’t feel the snow days have set him back in school work, he does feel like he’s missing opportunities to be putting effort into something.

“It’s also giving me enough time to recuperate my energy if I’m feeling down that week or feeling tired that week and just be more efficient and have a lot more energy in school,” Griffin said.

Griffin said he feels that the work ethic and the quality of work being turned in by students has gone down and that, despite the excitement, students seem “sluggish” before and after snow days.

“Nobody wants to put any effort into school and they’re all sitting in classrooms like empty shells of people,” Griffin said.

But Hooper said she thinks that some of it may be because some students are lost in the material.

“Cause we’ll be here and then we’ll miss and day and we’ll have to get caught up and then we’ll miss a day and have to get caught up,” Hooper said. “So I think some of the work ethic just comes from being lost on what we’re working on.”

Despite the setbacks, Hooper says she enjoys the days off so that she can stay safe. Staying safe is what what Rippe and Sutfin say is the thing they take into account above everything else.

“Enjoy the snow days and the banter,” Sutfin said. “Enjoy the fact that schools across the city want the same thing: a surprise day off.”

BPS, CRCC to bring therapist to high schools

LEANNE BUGAY
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Continued from Front Page.

“The response has really been phenomenal in Millard,” CRCC’s Director of Therapy Services Kalisha Reed said.

The program places one of CRCC’s licensed mental health therapists in a school to provide that support and education.

A core job for the therapist is to conduct therapy appointments with referred students after parental consent and insurance approval. The therapist will work on problems such as depression, anxiety, suicidal thoughts, family issues, and various other mental health issues with referred students in therapy.

“It’s still a very collaborative effort with the families and with the parents,” Reed said. “However the parents are not missing so much work and the students are not missing a lot of ‘out of school’ time, but then they’re also able to still meet with a licensed mental health professional.”

Reed said that the therapist that will come to both Bellevue high schools will emphasize a strong focus on integration and collaboration with the schools. CRCC aims for students, staff, and administration to get to know the therapist and be able to have open communication and group work with them.

“One of the things we’ll do with these folks, that we talked to CRCC with, is they can do classroom presentations to talk about coping skills, suicide ideation, or whatever topic is needed that relates to mental health,” Mills said.

CRCC’s mental health therapist will also spend their time bringing mental health awareness and education to teachers on topics like trauma and mental health issue referrals. They will aim to attend events like registration nights, parent-teacher

conferences, and the first day of school to further bring awareness of the new resources from CRCC.

Reed said that CRCC takes a strong priority in students’ privacy. The therapist is not allowed to discuss specific student cases with other staff members unless there is parental consent. Student referrals will also be discreet so as to not unintentionally embarrass kids.

CRCC encourages families that can’t afford their therapy services or have outstanding co-pays to reach out to them to discuss financial aid options.

“We never want payment or cost to be a factor for accessing mental health services,” Reed said.

CRCC is still in the interview phase for the therapist. Reed projects that the process will be completed in 4 to 5 weeks. Mills said that BPS is still hopeful that CRCC’s therapist can start soon.

“Mental health is finally coming into focus, I feel, for a lot of people in charge,” Polk said.

While students will soon start to have access to a licensed mental health professional at school, it won’t solve everything with their mental health and social-emotional needs.

“If we had an additional counselor we’d look at what that role would do,” Minahan said. “Do we want to just take a little bit off of everybody’s plate or would it make sense to relook at roles, and look at how to change our roles to better serve kids?”

Rohlfs said that administration and counseling have looked into restructuring how obligations and students are divided up between the four counselors in the past, but there will be no immediate changes. As for additional counseling staff, West will not be hiring any for the foreseeable future due to financial limitations.

“I think it’s on students and parents to talk to district administrators, school board members,” Polk said. “They are the ones who make these decisions. And what they hear from parents — that makes a huge difference to them.”

Teachers stretch their dollars to provide for students and class

EMMA GAGE
REPORTER

Spending lots of money during back-to-school shopping doesn’t just apply to students and their parents. Every year teachers all over the country spend their own money on everything from decorations to new technology for their students and rooms.

Avery Elementary kindergarten teacher Betsy Jensen provides a wide variety of items for her class, ranging from supplies to snacks.

“I provide things like school supplies, items to help my students organize their belongings, and items on Teachers Pay Teachers that will extend a lesson or match a state standard that I need to teach,” Jensen said in an email. “I also buy cereal for a morning snack, if we do not have any donated, for students who do not bring a snack or did not have breakfast.”

Tracy Johnson-Korenoski teaches a class of second graders at Fairview Elementary and said she purchases decor, curriculum supplemental materials, an audio speaker (to replace the broken one she was given), and flexible seating options for her students.

Johnson-Korenoski said that she does all of this in an effort to make her classes more interesting for her students.

“I want my students to have an engaging classroom environment,” Johnson-Korenoski said in an email. “Therefore, I supply the decor to make it fun and vibrant.”

Jensen makes extra purchases in order to make her classroom more functional.

“Items to organize the classroom are a must for classroom management and teaching the kids how to stay organized,” Jensen said. “I also don’t want to see kids go without something they need.”

Jamie Procopio teaches sophomore and junior level English classes at Bellevue West. She said she finds that buying decorations and other engaging items improves the overall environment of her classroom.

“Mostly I have to spend eight-plus hours a day in here so I want my room to make me happy,” Procopio said. “I think adding extra things also makes people more comfortable to be in here.”

According to the the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, on average, teachers in Nebraska earn below \$50,000 a year which is

At West, teachers can ask for funding prior to purchasing supplies for their classrooms, but usually rely on money that each department gets at the start of the school year and is divided among teachers.

“Before I started working here the district, because it had a little bit more money, was able to supply things to teachers,” Procopio said. “But the year I came was the year they stopped doing that. So for teachers that have been here for a while that was kind of the expectation, so it was harder for them to adjust but I had never known anything else.”

While buying items like decorations and furniture is not necessary for a teacher to do, Johnson-Korenoski said that it goes beyond simply decorating.

“I want to see my students succeed and enjoy their school experience.”

- Jamie Procopio

just under the mean national teacher salary of \$54,520.

Reimbursement is an option for some teachers, though policies surrounding it vary between schools.

At Fairview, teachers can ask for reimbursement but will only receive it if the school has enough finances to do so.

“Teachers do have the option to ask their principals to pay for materials,” Johnson-Korenoski said. “That being said, principals are not able to provide all that is needed in the classroom financially. Most principals would probably love to be able to provide everything that we need in our classrooms. They just do not have the budget to do so.”

“Parents love to see that their child is in a classroom that is engaging and stimulating,” Johnson-Korenoski said. “If a teacher does not take the time or money to create this kind of environment many parents tend to doubt the ability of the teacher based on this factor alone.”

Jensen acknowledged that spending her own money on classroom supplies is her own choice, but is worth it in the end.

“Would I rather not spend my own money?” Jensen said. “Of course! However, I want to see my students succeed and enjoy their school experience. Therefore, it just feels like something that I must do.”

Teachers express their thoughts on the NMSI program

AYANNA SOLOMON-SMITH
REPORTER

Bellevue West is now seven months into the National Math + Science Initiative program that encourages more students to take AP classes that are supposed to prepare them for careers in the science and technology fields. Teachers involved have implemented the grant's program into their curricula in hopes of it causing a positive impact on their students. NMSI hosts three four-hour Saturday sessions for each subject area at Bellevue West and East to give students extra ways to help them prepare for the AP test. They fly teachers to Bellevue from different states to hopefully give students a chance to learn from someone else with different teaching techniques. "Any review is good review," Calculus AB AP teacher Angela Daughtrey said. "Any extra time you can spend practicing or doing something is worthwhile. So in that respect, [Saturday sessions have] been really good and when you get a great presenter it can make it really worthwhile." Having these Saturday sessions and NMSI training has helped a few teachers implement different techniques in their curriculums. "Every training that I've gone to I've gotten at least a lab that I can use," Physics AP teacher Kristina Armbruster said. "I've gotten a couple really good ideas from every training session." NMSI has created incentives for not only students, but also their teachers. They agreed to give students \$100 for each test they passed and teachers \$100 for each student in their class that passes the test. Receiving a three or higher, which oversees AP testing

is what is considered as passing. "Yeah, there's a money part to it now but I just don't talk about it," English 11 AP teacher Megan Brewer said. "I just talk about why you should be in this class if you're college bound or want to be career ready right after high school." Besides the money incentive with students getting a three or higher on their tests, teachers are more focused on their students' ability to learn and retain information and their well-beings in the future. "I hope that they get excited about some math and science and/ or English," Armbruster said. "I hope that they can start to see some opportunities that exist in their futures." Even though the school has had the grant for less than a year, some teachers say that NMSI has made an impact on some students. "I think the students are getting exposed to good review to every Saturday session they go to and in that sense I think it has reached my expectations," Armbruster said. "It'll be interesting to see how it keeps on unfolding with the support." Some teachers also think there could be improvements in certain areas. "The communication seems a little bit slacking now and the support of the mentor part of it has been a little interesting," Daughtrey said. According to principal Kevin Rohlf, NMSI will continue to be incorporated into curricula for two more years. "There have been parts of the grant that's been very nice and parts of the grant that I think still needs work," Daughtrey said. "It's too early to tell. Check back with me in three years and I'll give you a better answer."

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Thunderbirds kick off baseball season against Creighton Prep

BILLY DUNKLEMAN
BROADCAST MANAGER

The Bellevue West varsity baseball team opened their season with a loss to No. 1 ranked Creighton Prep on Saturday, March 17. After trailing the Thunderbirds 2-0, the Junior Jays came back and won 8-3.

The peak of the Thunderbirds undoing came in the bottom of the 4th inning when the West outfield allowed 6 runs. The source of the trouble originated from the pitching.

“We didn’t throw strikes, bottom line. We didn’t throw strikes that fourth inning,” head coach Jason Shockey said. “We came out with some momentum, but we didn’t end up getting enough strikes and I think we had 7 walks in that inning.”

However, the pitching wasn’t the only downfall on Saturday.

“I think that our free bases were something that kind of hurt us a little bit, but I also liked how we came out, but we kind of just had a little bit of a low there for a few innings after that,” Shockey said. “That’s where it hit us a little bit. Everybody’s excited at the very start of the game. Everybody’s usually excited in the 6th or the 7th inning because same sort of thing. A lot of games can be won or lost in those middle innings so that’s something where we’ve got to be better at.”

Despite West’s loss on Saturday, the Thunderbirds still have many

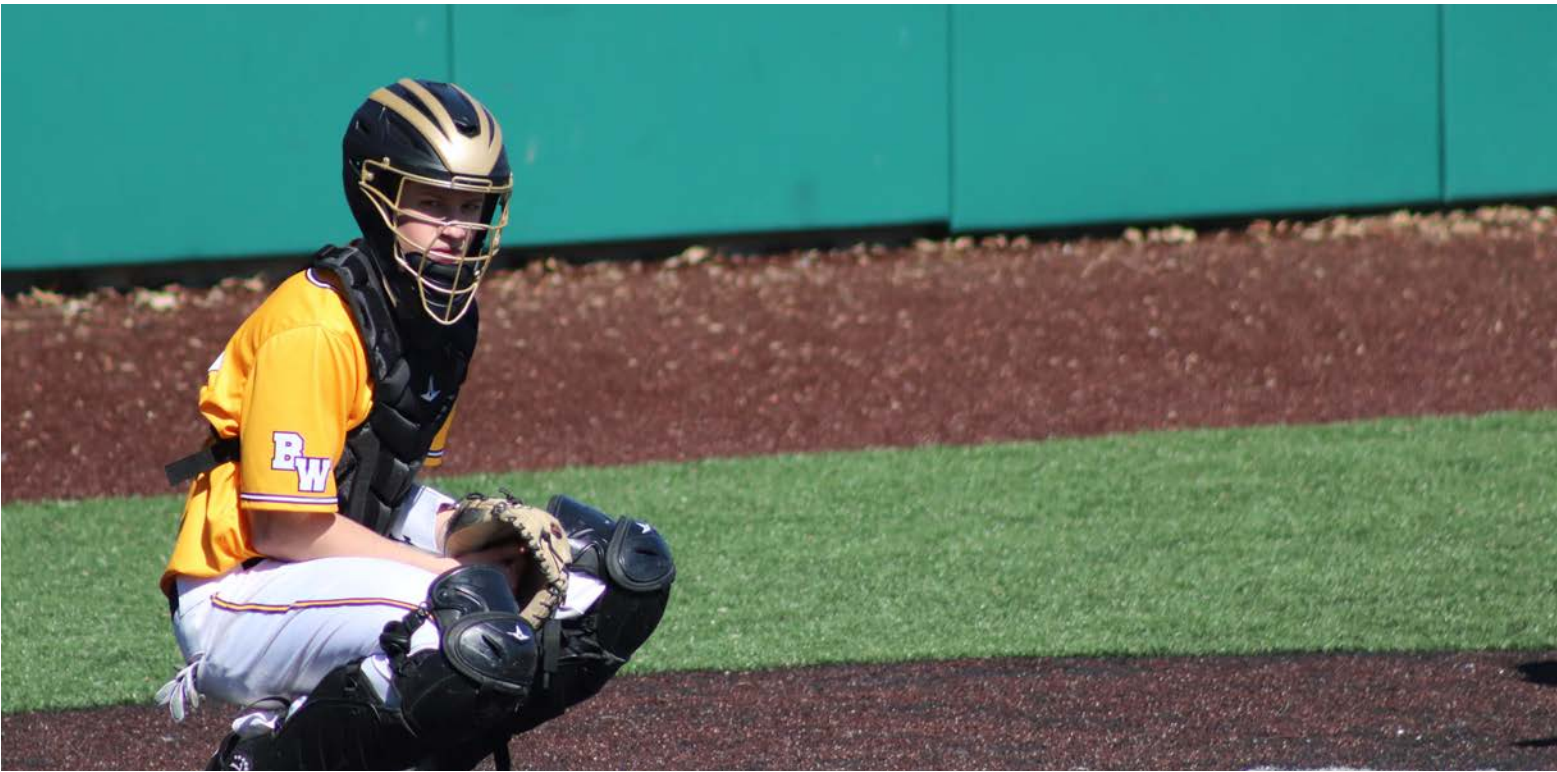


Photo by Jay Walker-Schulte

Junior Eric Anderson waits at home plate to catch a ball during the game against Creighton Prep. The game was moved to Prep due to field conditions at Bellevue West. Creighton Prep won the game 8-3.

things to be optimistic about.

“On Saturday we didn’t come out of the game we wanted to but there was a lot of positives to take out,” senior Caleb Lemon said. “This team is arguably the most athletic baseball team Bellevue West has ever had, so once we get a little deeper in the season and we get rid of the rust we will be able to compete with anyone.”

The Thunderbirds carry a mixed, yet balanced, roster this

season made up of both established upperclassmen and underclassmen looking to contribute in any way they can.

“We wanted to carry a big roster this year because we got a lot of guys that we feel can contribute. It’s just a matter of how much they’re going to contribute,” Shockey said. “We were able to get a lot of guys in today, which you typically don’t see that happening against the number one

team in the state, but we were able to get some guys their firsts.”

The Thunderbirds appear to have one common goal for their team this spring.

“It has been a long time since any Bellevue West baseball team has made it to state, and we know that this year we have the team to do that,” Lemon said. “Our goal is to make it to state because once you get there literally anything can happen and

we love our chances this year.”

The Thunderbirds are scheduled to play a doubleheader against the Columbus Discoverers on Friday, March 22 at West. They play another home game on Saturday, March 23 against the Omaha Bryan Bears.

“We just got to understand that it’s a long season and the beautiful thing about baseball is you always get a chance to redeem yourself the next day,” Lemon said.

Opinion: teachers prioritize athletic programs over academics

EMMA GAGE
REPORTER

As a varsity softball player and Science Olympiad member, I have experienced both academic and athletic extracurriculars in school. Of the two, sports seem to always be heavily valued over educational clubs.

Schools often give the perception that sports offer more opportunities after high school than academics do by celebrating future collegiate athletes as often as possible. While committing to a college for sports is a great achievement, schools celebrate athletes much more than other students who are outstanding academically.

We host ceremonies for athletes committing to schools, whether they are on scholarship or not, multiple times a year for signing day. Meanwhile, students earning National Merit Scholarships (which require near perfect PSAT scores), appointments to military academies, and even full tuition scholarships gain almost no attention for their large academic achievements.

The lack of attention that academics receive is also the fault of adults who openly prioritize sports over education. Students are forced to go to pep rallies for sporting events, see tweet after tweet from

school accounts discussing sports, and are asked to participate in spirit weeks for one game, meanwhile competitive clubs like forensics and mock trial only get publicity outside of their own accounts if they win or do something grand like qualify for state or nationals.

When students see adults pay more attention and support towards sports, they begin to adopt the same principles that say academic clubs are not as exciting or valued.

Part of the reasoning that people often give for an emphasis on sports is that they keep students both in school and in shape. If athletics in schools kept students physically healthy, America would theoretically have some of the lowest obesity rates in the world, considering it’s one of the few countries to combine athletics with schooling. Instead, we have the highest childhood obesity rate in the world at 31 percent, according to the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development.

As for keeping students in school, this concept defeats the purpose of high school. While extracurriculars are encouraged and can definitely help to make school more interesting for students, it becomes an issue when students are more worried about their sport than their schoolwork.

I have played softball at Bellevue West for three years now and have found that it has enhanced my time in high school by serving as a brain break and giving me the chance to make more friends. However, I have also seen how easy it becomes to value your sport over your schoolwork.

When an athlete consistently misses parts of school two or three times a week in order to attend games, classwork piles up. This becomes a problem when teachers sometimes tell you not to worry about prioritizing it because you are in-season and have games and practices to attend after school. Students can start to turn these expectations into the misguided belief that sports take precedence over schoolwork.

When teachers cut athletes a break on schoolwork, they are reinforcing the idea that sports are more important.

The goal of high school is to better prepare yourself for either college or whatever workforce you choose to go into. While sports can enhance your life in school, they are best when kept away from your education.

By blatantly valuing athletics so much over academics, schools are failing to prepare their students for their next step in life after graduation.

Gocke’s first year brings new direction for West wrestling

LEAH LARSON
LAYOUT EDITOR

Gym and health teacher Curtis Gocke has been the head wrestling coaching at Bellevue West for just under a year. The team’s manager, senior Dalton Hazel, said Gocke definitely encouraged more participation among team members.

“He made us work harder,” Dalton said. “He set up a bunch of opportunities for everyone.”

The opportunities Gocke set up included lifting sessions for the wrestlers to attend during the summer. This was made possible by putting together a completely new coaching staff with Avery Rhodes, Randy Null, and Neil Bowman.

Gocke ensured the new coaches’ experience and background in the sport would make the transition run smoothly.

“I brought in three guys that I thought were awesome on and off the mat,” Gocke said. “I knew they were good coaches.”

According to Gocke, an important part of the transition process was forming connections with the wrestlers. He introduced them to numerous summer leagues for them to take advantage of and build skills at. A plan for West to host their own camp, where college coaches or athletes are welcome, is even in the works.

“It’s not just wrestling, it’s get-

ting to know them as kids off the mat, getting to know their families,” Gocke said, “Creating that family feel was fun.”

Gocke also focused on preparing the team for the the state tournament that took place last month. Sophomore Jack McDonnell explained how an important part of that process was proper nutrition and getting in the right mindset.

“Gocke made me a lot more ready, a lot more confident,” McDonnell said, “He gave me all the things I needed to wrestle. He was like my second dad.”

Another goal of Gocke’s was to ensure that every player knew they had a chance at winning state. The strive to compete at one’s best ability was an obvious motivator, but the players’ attitudes during the practices before major matches also played a key role.

“The one thing they can control is coming to practice everyday and being positive,” Gocke said.

McDonnell himself wrestled with one of the top players and came within one point of winning that match. His goal for next year’s season is to win the state tournament. Gocke said he wants to help Jack and other wrestlers reach each of their individual goals.

“I feel very confident that the things we’re doing will allow Bellevue West to get better,” Gocke said.

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THE THUNDERBEAT

90S THROWBACK



Photo courtesy of The Quentin Tarantino Archives

TIFFANY’S TOP 5:

INFLUENTIAL 90S FILMS

TIFFANY DOMINGO
REPORTER

Looking back on 90s movies, it really was the decade that brought out indie films, blockbuster classics, the beginning of Tarantino films, loyal cult followings, pop culture icons—oh, and serial killers! From “Goodfellas” to “Pulp Fiction,” cannibalistic killers to talking toys, charming DiCaprio to sensual Goldblum, and the mind bending “Matrix” to world ending “Armageddon”—here are five movies that have had an influence on movies today.

Pulp Fiction (1994)
One of the most iconic movies to date is Quentin Tarantino’s “Pulp Fiction,” starring John Travolta, Samuel L. Jackson, and Uma Thurman. The film was not only an independent movie, but it was *the* independent movie. The first independent movie to gross more than \$200 million spawned out a generation of young aspiring filmmakers. It forever changed Hollywood by redefining modern cinema, basically creating Thurman and Jackson’s success, and reviving John Travolta’s career.
How did “Pulp Fiction” become such a cult classic? Because

of the filmmaking genius, Quentin Tarantino—a high school dropout who worked at video rental stores, and learned everything about film without actually going to film school. A film about a group of lowlifes living in Los Angeles, with a whole lot of violence and profanity-fueled dialogue, an organized chaos narrative, and glorifying and humanizing a character that would normally be written off as a one-dimensional villain.
The reason why it’s so successful is because people who watched it didn’t know what was going to happen. Tarantino’s screenplay put the narrative in order to maximize our emotional response to the story. It was pure genius writing, and something that no one has ever seen before. Over the course of the 25 years since the film’s release, Tarantino has continued to make classic hits with “Kill Bill” and “Django Unchained.”
Jurassic Park (1993)
Think about the movies that you see today that heavily rely on visual effects and CGI. Many seem so remarkably realistic, and have been improving as the years go on. We can all collectively thank Stephen Spielberg’s “Jurassic Park” for that, as it was the sole inspiration into the movement of

advancing visual effects in films.
“Jurassic Park” would become the defining work of visual effects. No one expected how big of a game-changer the box-office hit would turn out to be. When the movie brought out the big bad Tyrannosaurus Rex, moviegoers everywhere were stunned by how lifelike it was.
A quarter of a century later, the world has seen a total of five Jurassic movies, with one more to come in 2021. Blockbuster movies like “Godzilla,” “Kong: Skull Island,” and “Rampage” have all been influenced by “Jurassic Park.”
Titanic (1997)
A tragic love story that was constructed through the events from the sinking of the unsinkable ship, James Cameron’s “Titanic” is arguably the most popular movie in history. It still holds its place as the most Oscar nominations for a movie, with 14 total, tying it with “All About Eve” (1950) and “La La Land” (2016).
“Titanic” became the highest grossing movie of all time up until Cameron’s “Avatar” in 2010. The film spent a budget of \$200 million, and at the time, was the most expensive movie ever made. In today’s standards, \$200 million is still at large, but is start-

ing to become a norm in box-office hits such as “The Avengers” and “Transformers” movies.
Toy Story (1995)
Everyone’s childhood seemed to stem from the nostalgic film “Toy Story,” which changed animation forever. Disney was able to collab with Pixar (then owned by Apple) to bring out a “buddy comedy” cartoon and translate it into a film in the perspective of toys.
“Toy Story” was the first ever computer generated feature-length film, and was also Pixar’s first movie. Released in 1995, the film became the staple of of Pixar’s upcoming success of animated movies “to infinity and beyond!” It was later on that the company would release major hits like “Monsters Inc.” and “Finding Nemo.”
The Blair Witch Project (1999)
Why is there a trend in horror films that have adapted the “found footage” style like in “Paranormal Activity” and “Apollo 18?” Well, you’re gonna have to trace it back to its original source from 20 years ago, in a little indie film titled “The Blair Witch Project.”
“The Blair Witch Project” was the first successful horror film that featured a documentary-style concept. It’s about three college students who have travelled to a

small town to collect footage on the urban legend, Blair Witch.
The \$60,000 budget movie grossed to \$250 million worldwide. The massive hype the movie received originated from the dawn of the Internet. The Internet was around long enough for people to start comfortably using it. A year before its 1999 release, the marketer of the movie created a website about the “missing” students that were featured in the film. It created an unbelievable hook about urban legends and the existence of paranormal entities, a novel concept during the advent of the internet. With the propaganda of missing persons report and advertising a “based on a true story” mantra, the audiences were still unsure whether the film was real or not by the time the credits rolled.
Although I was born in the 2000s, movies from the 90s—and even before that—have made an impact to my childhood. Movies have been a big part of my life by creating an escape to reality and investing myself into the film. The films that we see today would not be possible if not for the classics that were released before the 21st century that shaped and influenced cinema forever.

Jay’s 90s

fashion staples:

- ☑ spaghetti strap top
- ☑ mom jeans
- ☑ fanny pack
- ☑ scrunchie
- ☑ wind breaker



Photo by Ayanna Solomon-Smith

OPINION:

MUSIC TECHNOLOGY CHEAPENS
INSTRUMENTAL AESTHETIC



Photo courtesy of @imaginedragons on Instagram

EMILY MABBITT
GUEST REPORTER

I frequently find myself flipping through radio stations trying to find a song that I can actually stand to listen to. I typically end up going back to 98.5 or the 80s and 90s stations. Even though I wasn't alive in the 80s or 90s, I find the music from those decades to be more unique.

I've been listening to music ever since I could remember. Let's just say my parents are music junkies and they've also managed to turn me into one. Whether it was my mom's Madonna CD or Stone Temple Pilots, a personal favorite of my dad's, I grew up listening to a lot of different types of music.

I've noticed that a lot of music now isn't made by using instruments, but rather a computer. Although making music via technology may be easier, cheaper, and more innovative, there's a disconnect between music from the recent past and music now.

Music has lost its organic feeling and passion due to most artists not actually using instruments to create their music. Like my mom has said thousands of times before, "What happened to having

a good guitar solo in your song?"

"Starving" by Grey and Hailee Steinfeld ft. Zedd is one of my least favorite songs of all time. There is no actual music in the song—everything is computer made and auto tuned. Quite frankly, it's lifeless and sounds like every other song that plays on the radio.

"Ants Marching" by Dave Matthews Band is a song that has an extraordinary utilization of instruments. Dave Matthews Band uses both electric and bass guitars, keyboard, drums, saxophone, trumpet, and violins. "Ants Marching" is a great example of what music should sound like.

From The Beatles and Elvis to Ariana Grande and Post Malone, we can vividly see how music has changed. The genres, the sounds, and the artists have all dramatically evolved.

Even people's thoughts on what is and isn't good music has had a vast change.

The music of the past had more originality. Current music isn't exactly my cup of tea because it's repetitive and gets over-played a lot. Even though my feelings toward current music aren't great, I am interested to see how music will evolve in the years ahead.



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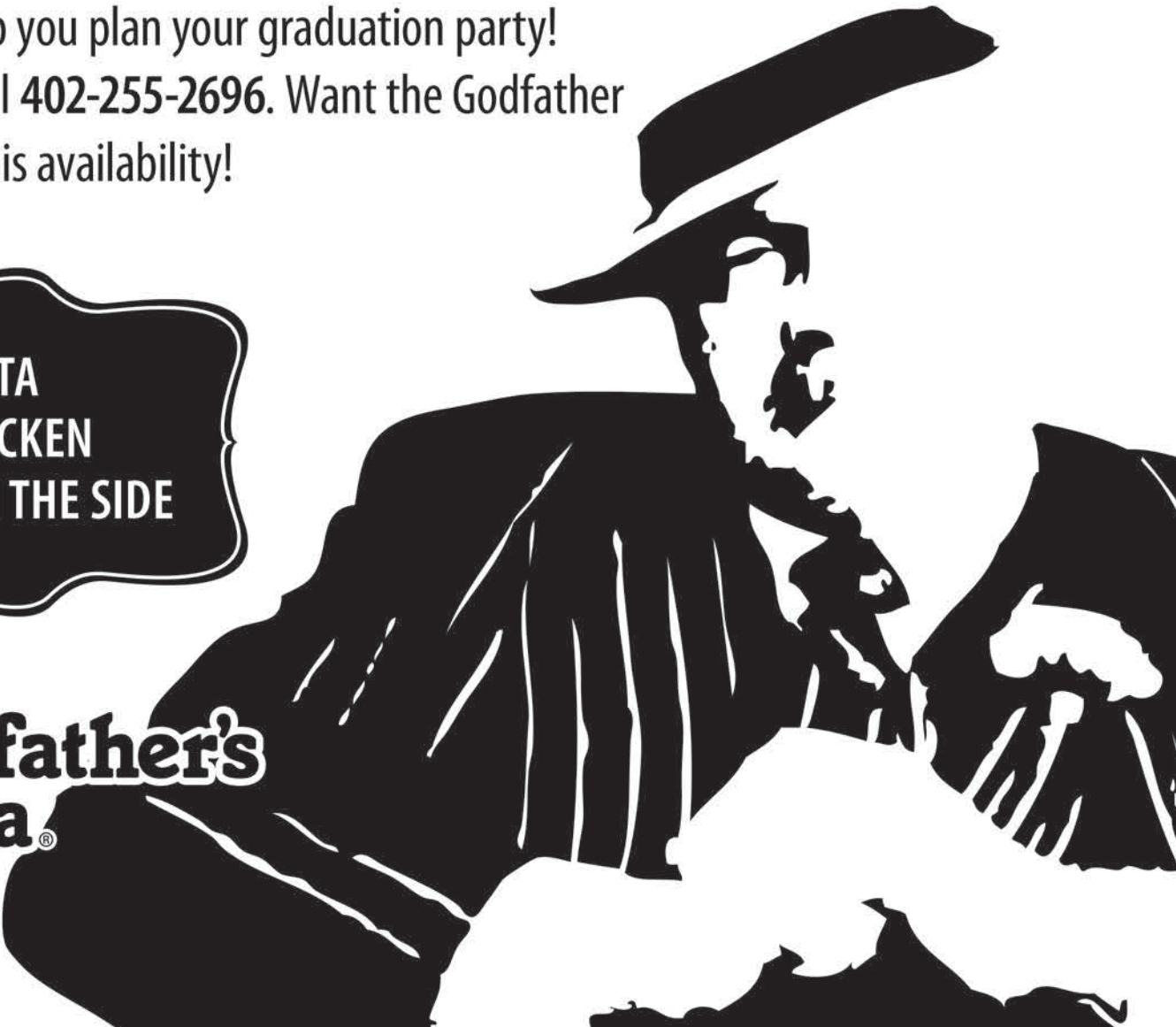




Photo by Jay Walker-Schulte

ALEX TOTH
CO-EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

As a child of the 2000s, I wasn't around to remember, or even be alive during the 1990s. However, the nostalgia of the years past reverberated most prominently through MP3 files and music videos I'd discovered in my early childhood, giving me a--although limited--fond idea of what it was like to wallow in 90s pop culture. These are a few of my favorites from the time period: the songs in which I use as a lens to look back at the decade that was the 1990s.

Eiffel 65
Blue (Da Ba Dee)

"Blue (Da Ba Dee)" kicked off the horrifying trend of foreign electronic songs everyone knew and had stuck in their head, but that at the same time nobody liked. Coming from the catacombs of Italian house music, Eiffel 65 seemingly created the best worst song of all time. I'll never know why I like this song so much, but there's something disturbing about

its lingering presence in our culture's collective hivemind.

Backstreet Boys
I Want It That Way

Boy bands ruled the mid to late 90s pop landscape with an iron fist, and although the market was incredibly oversaturated with hundreds of wannabe stars, The Backstreet Boys were one of the few that rose to mainstream prominence. "I Want it That Way" is off of their probably most well known album, "Millennium," and is a song that encapsulates not only the entire boyband fad, but the late 90s as a whole. It's catchy and gives you an incredibly hazy sense of nostalgia. It's definitely one of those songs you heard in the womb while your mother was shopping for maternity clothes at J.C. Penney, but in the best way possible.

TLC
No Scrubs

Possibly the catchiest song of all time, "No Scrubs" is a great exercise in the late 90s

R&B and pop fusion-- a masterpiece to be remembered for hundreds of years to come. One of the greatest pop songs of all time was born from an incredibly infectious guitar lick and a simple 808 drum loop. Perfectly simple and catchy, "No Scrubs" was a perfect way to close the book on 90s pop music.

No Doubt
Don't Speak

Gwen Stefani remains a household name in American pop culture, but before "Hollaback Girl" and her spot on singing reality show "The Voice," Stefani fronted the pop-rock band No Doubt. "Don't Speak" comes through hard with both the classic breakup angst and the 90s rock sound we all know and love. Perfect for blaring loud out your car window or singing along to, "Dont Speak" has stood the test of time both lyrically and sonically.

The Verve
Bitter Sweet Symphony

As iconic as the violin hook

that is strung throughout this entire five minute song is, you may think it came from a whole different time period. The Verve's 1998 song "Bitter Sweet Symphony" has scored the likes of movie credits and car commercials for years now and it's easy to see why. Its violin base is an earworm you won't be annoyed that you have, and to top that all off, Richard Ashcroft's spacey vocals and guitar backing go perfectly with the feel of the song.


Kriss Kross
Jump

While my first memory of this song was in a dingy basement playing "Just Dance" on the Wii and awkwardly moving along to silhouettes of Kriss Kross in elementary school, the song has stuck in my heart ever since. It's an incredibly fun and pure take on 90s hip-hop, and it being made by two (at the time) pre-teen kids makes perfect sense. While one half of the duo may be dead, their legacy still lives on as the two who didn't want to take hip hop as seriously as everybody else.


Weezer
Buddy Holly

With grunge taking the spotlight in the mid 1990s, Weezer's self aware style brought a nerdy yet angsty approach to rock within a scene dominated by the cool kids. Their breakout single "Buddy Holly" compares lead singer Rivers Cuomo to 1950s pop star Buddy Holly and his lover to actress Mary Tyler Moore. Both harsh and melodic, Weezer's 1994 sound matched both the times, and juxtaposed the subject matter of their songs. The rest of Weezers "Blue Album" is as great as "Buddy Holly" so I'd recommend checking that project out as well. Weezer remains to be more than a one hit wonder, though. a little burnt out at this point.





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Women should not be drafted into war

ELISSA TREU
GUEST REPORTER



The United States Military has been using the draft since the Revolutionary War, when bodies were dropping quickly and the military needed more able-bodied men to fight. According to the U.S Department of Defense, our military maintains a force of about 1.4 million active duty personnel and the draft is only enacted if calling reserve forces is not enough to tackle a large-scale operation. Although the draft has not been used since 1973, male citizens and residents are still required to register for the draft at the age of 18.

On Feb. 22, U.S. District Court Judge Gray Miller ruled that exempting women from the draft violates the constitution. This decision was made to put more equality into our military, but is not necessary. An equal opportunity to serve is already there for women, as the Department of Defense lifted all gender restrictions for the military in December of 2015, in order to allow women to serve along men in combat jobs.

The possibility of young women being forced to register for the draft also interferes with one of the core principles of feminism: that women have the right to make their own choices. According to Omaha World-Herald columnist Kathleen Parker, in her article “Drafting women to end all wars,” she wrote “This entire debate isn’t really about military preparedness but is about social engineering.” The ruling may be fair in principle, but is ultimately counterintuitive if we recognize that all combat jobs are already open to women.

Men and women are indeed equal under the law, but general biological differences must be taken into account for the unlikely situation of a military draft. Therefore, the United States should not force women into war with less of an ability to survive the physical torment. That being said, Parker also noted “No sane person has ever argued that women aren’t as brave as men or that they lack any other qualities or values necessary to military success.”

Women absolutely have the opportunity go into the military, fight in combat, and become a high ranking general, just like General Ann Elizabeth Dunwoody who earned her fourth star on November 14, 2008. This amazing accomplishment all started with a choice to embark on the challenge, a choice we would not be giving to our American women by unfairly forcing them to sign up for the draft.

Making such a huge decision without taking a step back and critically analyzing the conscious decision to serve being taken away from the American female population is irresponsible and underthought. The United States should not be mandating women into combat solely for the purpose of social justice and a false sense of equality that in the end hurts our female population.

Foreign languages are most effective when taught early

BROOKE JONES
REPORTER



When a baby is about nine months old, they begin to understand their native language and eventually begin to say basic words like “bye-bye” and “mama.” Accents and new languages can be more easily developed around age four, which is the time when schools in Europe and Asia begin to introduce new languages to preschoolers.

In most European countries like Spain, Germany, and Sweden, foreign language studies begin in elementary school, and some even in preschool. In America, students are allotted about 45 minutes per day beginning at the middle school level, to try to comprehend and learn an unfamiliar language with no exposure to it outside of school. The issue however doesn’t necessarily stem from how we are taught, but when we are taught.

I started taking Spanish I in eighth grade with a 100 percent Peruvian teacher who spoke very little English. Given the fact that my Spanish-speaking abilities went as far as “Cómo estás,” I would panic when I had to answer a question in front of the class.

Many of my classmates were just as confused as I was. We were often expected to understand a language as if we had been used to it since we were young.

The perks of introducing foreign language to elementary schools can help alleviate the stress of being thrown into an un-



Photo by Alex Toth

Spanish teacher Danielle Turner discusses conjugations with her fourth period Spanish III class.

familiar learning environment at the awkward middle school age.

In America, most children that come from English-speaking homes are not exposed to a foreign language until middle or high school. According to NEA Today, only 58 percent of middle schools offer foreign language programs, however, only 38 percent of middle school students take advantage of the opportunity.

Along with the expansion of a child’s understanding of other cultures and a boost in comprehension of their native language, the benefits of learning a second language can go far beyond the classroom. Several companies seek bilingual employees to help with foreign relations and

in several instances, these employees get a significant pay raise.

Unless a student’s main goal after high school is to major in a language or work in a different country, it can seem pointless to waste 45 minutes a day on something that could be forgotten in the longterm anyway. However, it has been proven that languages like Latin can boost a child’s comprehension of their native language by helping them understand root words and their meanings. On top of that, it can open up a variety of cultures that a student may have not been introduced to if they hadn’t taken the language.

Spanish teacher Danielle Turner sees the importance of teaching students at the elementary level.

“I think it’s extremely important for students to learn a second language,” Turner said, “It would be great to have an elementary program to really lay a foundation of language learning within our students.”

From performing better in core classes to breaking cultural barriers, learning a second language can be the most important thing a child does early in their academic career.

It can be hard for a students to completely love a subject when they feel confused the minute they enter the class. By setting aside just a few minutes to teach elementary students the basics of a language, we could open the door for a multitude of opportunities that range far beyond the classroom.

Top motivation tips tested to combat late year senioritis

EMILY SCHMIDT
COPY EDITOR



Whether it’s a battle that spans a few months or a bout that only lasts a few days, a vast majority of students will have a case of senioritis at some point their senior year. If it wasn’t a common experience, it wouldn’t have been named. In order to combat the effects and consequences, many take to Google to find tips and tricks that will foster motivation to power through the assignments of the final year. I tested the three most popular and recommended tricks and ranked their effectiveness on a scale of one to ten: ten being perfect, one being useless.

Rewarding yourself for completing tasks: 7

One of the easiest and most enticing paths to motivation is planning out little rewards for

completing tasks. An extremely popular example is sticking candy between the pages of reading assignments. I tried a variation of it by allowing myself a fruit snack for every ten questions I answered correctly when studying for my Anatomy and Physiology test. Your rewards don’t have to be food, though. If you’re super into reading, maybe treat yourself to a chapter of your current favorite book for every homework assignment you finish. I allowed myself one BuzzFeed Quiz for every paragraph I wrote of my senior paper. In theory, it’s the perfect way to get yourself through monotonous tasks, but in actuality it becomes terribly easy to indulge and over-reward yourself for simple tasks or find yourself procrastinating again. It is an effective method to getting through the “busy work” that seems to become more frequent senior year, but it takes a high level of self-control to carry out properly.

Write your goals out and place them somewhere you’ll see them often: 2

This one is about as effective as it is simple. While it’s nice for

planning and organization, writing down what I wanted to get done on a sticky note and pasting it on my laptop did nothing to keep me focused. I was hoping that I would be guilted into getting my studying done by having it right under my keyboard where I’d see it every time I opened my laptop. Instead, I passed my eyes over it an ungodly amount of times in reaching for my phone to text someone back or opening a tab for YouTube. Many other examples I saw in articles were bulletin boards or similar frivolous options. They may look pleasing, but they won’t get you through senior year.

Do something small yet productive to ease yourself into tasks: 6

On the inevitable days you find yourself with no will to even get started on projects or assignments, a way to get yourself out of that funk could be doing productive tasks to get yourself in the right mindset. Simply organizing your workspace or devoting some time to a project that isn’t school-related could get the ball rolling and make it easier for you to take a crack at that Spanish worksheet

you’ve been putting off. Similar to rewarding yourself for completing tasks, though, you can effortlessly get carried away. I found the best way to prevent that is to set a timer. For example, I decided to practice the guitar as it is constructive and enjoyable, but only granted myself 15 minutes.

People having different experiences and degrees of success is a given, but if the tips weren’t at least somewhat successful for a majority, they wouldn’t be as recommended online. Don’t put the fate of your entire senior year in the tips’ hands, however. Think of them as boosts to help you hit the ground running in getting these few months of high school assignments.

Help others before you help yourself: 7

Assisting others solidifies your understanding of that topic and can increase your confidence. Doesn’t need to be a subject you feel you need improvement in. Brings in a bit of extrinsic motivation as the person seeing you as being super knowledgeable in a subject could push you to prove/gain that knowledge.

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