

THUNDERBEAT

BELLEVUE PUBLIC SCHOOLS IS PARTNERING WITH “ON TO COLLEGE WITH JOHN BAYLOR,” AN ACT PREP PROGRAM, FOR BELLEVUE WEST AND EAST JUNIORS.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4.



NEW SCIENCE STANDARDS BRING CURRICULUM CHANGE

EMMA GAGE
MANAGING/COPY EDITOR

In the 2020-2021 school year, Bellevue West will replace its Environmental Education course with Earth and Space Science and will change the Medical Biology course to Medical Terminology for the health sciences.

On Sept. 8, 2017, the state of Nebraska approved new science education standards which has caused Bellevue Public Schools to reevaluate its science course offerings.

Made up of science and engineering practices, disciplinary core ideas, and cross-cutting concepts, Nebraska's science education standards describe what questions and concepts students should be able to understand after completing a course at each grade level.

Because of the recent changes, BPS's Environmental Education class no longer meets the state

science standards.

“Earth Science lines up better with the new state science standards that we are introducing next year,” current Environmental Education teacher Austin Zeimet said. “So by making the change from Environmental Ed to Earth Science we’re making sure all the kids have met all the standard requirement for the state.”

High schools must change their Environmental Science courses because Earth Science standards that were previously covered in middle school are no longer being met at that level.

“There’s always been an Earth Science component, but there was an Earth Science class in middle school that fulfilled that requirement,” West science department chair Nicole Menard said. “Now middle school’s going to integrated science.”

The four main components covered in science courses are

physics, chemistry, biology, and earth sciences. Integrated Science covers a small amount of each of those four different components. According to Menard, this results in the earth science standards no longer being met at the middle school level which means that they must now be covered in high school.

West’s current Environmental Education teachers will teach the new Earth and Space course next year. Robert Parks has taught the course for 15 years, and although he is sad to see it go, he believes it will be a positive change.

“My cooperating teacher when I first did my student teaching said you should change the courses you teach about every five or six years to keep things fresh,” Parks said. “This is a change dynamically that will actually probably reinvigorate my emotional energy in the teaching atmosphere.”

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‘BUT TO US, WHEN THEY’RE IN THE ROOM, THEY’RE WRESTLERS. NOT BOYS. NOT GIRLS. THEY’RE WRESTLERS.’

- COACH CURTIS GOCKE

This year’s wrestling team introduces female wrestlers.

Disclaimer: Reporter Gia Blanks was not involved in the editorial process of this story.

ELLIE WOODARD
REPORTER

Juniors Gia Blanks and Amaanyi Ramirez and senior Gigi Harrison are the first female wrestlers on the wrestling team in five years. Despite the difficulty of competing against athletes who are bigger and possibly more experienced, the girls are up for the challenge.

“I have no problem wrestling people bigger or smaller than me, but it can be pretty difficult wrestling someone bigger than you,” Ramirez said.

Harrison and Blanks are strong believers that looks don’t make the wrestler. Skill is the only thing that matters.

“You don’t decide who you’re wrestling,” Harrison said. “They

put you on the mat because you’re in the same weight class. Sometimes you get people smaller than you. None of that matters when you’re on the mat.”

This means the expectations for every wrestler are the same.

“The mentality and the body of work they have to put in is the same,” Coach Curtis Gocke said. “It’s just a different gender. But to us, when they’re in the room, they’re wrestlers. Not boys. Not girls. They’re wrestlers.”

Wrestlers don’t have to work with the opposite gender, if uncomfortable. Although it makes them feel like outsiders sometimes, the girls don’t take it personally. They stay to themselves in their trio.

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SNEAK PEEK

**JAY DUCKER WINS GATORADE
NEBRASKA HIGH SCHOOL
FOOTBALL PLAYER
OF THE YEAR**



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**“LIGHT UP
BELLEVUE” BRINGS
HOLIDAY SPIRIT TO
THE COMMUNITY**



PAGE 4

Marksmanship team sets sights on future after finishing tenth nationally



Photo by Jay Walker-Schulte

Junior Diego Ellis practices one of the shooting positions to prepare for the upcoming Marksmanship season.

BROOKE JONES
ENTERTAINMENT EDITOR

Bellevue West AFJROTC's Marksmanship team finished their season with a 5-2 record, placing tenth overall against schools nationwide. The team was led by junior Diego Ellis.

From waking up early for 6 a.m. practices, to competitions right after school, the 21 members of the marksmanship team devoted hours to improving their skills. Club sponsor Col. Scott Vanderhoof facilitated the practices and monitored the teams rankings.

"We shoot every morning Monday through Friday,"

Vanderhoof said. "Then we have Monday, Wednesday, and Friday practices so that makes about eight practices a week."

Senior Caitlyn Haydam has been with Bellevue West's marksmanship program for nearly three years and prides herself on a great senior season.

"We have a way stronger team this year," Haydam said.

The team competed once every couple weeks against other JROTC and ROTC programs across the country using an automated scoring system. Once the members finished the prone, standing, and kneeling competitions, they sent their results into a computerized program that compared their

scores to the other teams.

The marksmanship team surpassed several previous records since their start in 2014. Front runner Diego Ellis assisted the team with high scores in the standing category.

"I don't know how he does it," Vanderhoof said. "He very rarely shoots poorly."

Ellis began shooting about two years ago and earned some of the highest scores that the team has seen since its start.

"Since last year I feel like I've improved a lot," Ellis said. "I've been getting higher scores and I've just been less distracted by things."

Through the marksmanship team, members can earn

scholarships and compete in college teams across the country. Vanderhoof said he hopes that through winning enough competitions, some of his students can go onto college to compete in Marksmanship.

"I'd really like if we could get someone onto college for competing with the marksmanship program," Vanderhoof said. "That would be great."

In comparison to past years, the team has exceeded Vanderhoof's expectations. With a large portion of the team consisting of freshmen and sophomores, he looks forward to more high-scoring seasons.

"The future is promising for this team," Vanderhoof said.

News — in — Brief

LEANNE BUGAY
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

West hosts first "academic signing"

Bellevue West hosted their first "academic signing" for students who received a scholarship of over \$5,000 on Monday, Dec. 16 in the auditorium.

Mock Trial earns honorable mention at state

Mock Trial earned an honorable mention at the 2019 Judge Lyle Strom High School Mock Trial Championship. on Monday and Tuesday, Dec. 9-10.

Thunder Rolls lose first round at state

The Thunder Rolls unified bowling team lost in the first round at the state championship on Monday, Dec. 9 to Norfolk. They placed seventh out of eight qualifying teams with 812 points.

City of Bellevue Recreation to host summer job fair

The City of Bellevue's Parks and Recreation Departments will be hosting a job fair for summer employment on Friday, Dec. 27.

Students can apply and interview on-site 10:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m. at the Reed Center at 1200 Lord Blvd.

BPS partners with John Baylor ACT Prep

MEG GROSS
OPINION EDITOR

Continued from Front Page.

Bellevue Public Schools is partnering with "OnToCollege with John Baylor," an ACT prep program, for Bellevue West and East juniors.

According to West principal Kevin Rohlfs, partnering with Baylor's program has been something the district has wanted to do for many years.

"Dr. Robert Moore, the [assistant] superintendent, was able to pull together some money for a grant which allowed us to bring in John Baylor," Rohlfs said. "So we're excited to be able to get this opportunity."

The total cost for the program adds up to \$30,265 according to Moore.

"The Bellevue Public Schools Education Foundation is covering 50% of the cost and the school

district is covering the other 50%," Moore said.

After winter break, Baylor and "OnToCollege" will begin working with the junior class to prepare for the ACT.

"I personally will deliver about one-third of the course live to Bellevue West and Bellevue East students," Baylor said. "The math and a few other video sessions will be shown in class."

Baylor's program focuses on increasing students' ACT scores.

"Increasing that ACT score is the best paying job a high school student could ever have because a higher score helps avoid remedial classes and triggers scholarships at two- and four-year colleges,"

"Within the school, our juniors will be very busy the first couple months of the new year," Rohlfs said. "It will really expose us to all four sections of the test."

This partnership with the program will also benefit seniors.

"By starting now, all BPS seniors, at no cost, have full at-home access immediately to all OnToCollege content for the remaining two ACT tests many colleges still consider for scholarships: the December and February ACTs," Baylor said.

According to Baylor, the end goal for the program is to get students "fired up" about reaching their academic and future goals at a low cost.

"They'll see higher scores, bigger scholarships, no remedial classes, and better job offers: the ultimate goals," Baylor said.

"We want test day to be pay day for BPS students." *Disclaimer: "OnToCollege with John Baylor" purchased ads in The Thunderbeat prior to partnering with BPS.*

"We want test day to be pay day for BPS students."

John Baylor

Baylor said. The juniors will be working throughout the next semester with the program in lectures, practice quizzes, and lessons.

325 students earn OSHA certifications

GNALLY BOUKAR
REPORTER

Three hundred twenty-five students at Bellevue West have earned their Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) certification through their Woods I class in the past three semesters.

According to skilled and technical sciences teacher Matthew Henry, Nebraska is not an OSHA state, which means local governments and schools aren't held to OSHA guidelines.

"We follow OSHA standards but if something were to happen here, OSHA would not come in here," Henry said. "That would be the insurance company that [would] come and say 'hey are you following this stuff?'"

According to West's OSHA course description, the OSHA card is intended for workers in fields such as health care, factories, and warehouses. The purpose of the course is to help educate workers in the possible hazards of the workplace.

Henry said these classes can


cost upwards of \$300. However, West teaches them for free and only requires students to pay for the card, which is \$10.

Students take quizzes to cover the information from the module. If students fail, they are allowed to retake them, and once the whole class has passed, there is a final test. In order to earn a safety card students must score a 70% or higher. After finishing the 10-hour class, students will receive their lifelong OSHA cards from their instructors.

Senior Tyler Martin said OSHA taught him how to be safe in the workplace and utilize safety equipment like safety glasses and hard hats, which are commonly found in shops.

Martin also said that taking the course now will save him time. He said his class took about 16 hours and was inexpensive compared to how much it would cost out of high school. Martin wants to use his OSHA certification to aid his future career as a repairman.

"It'll help tremendously going into the field knowing how to use equipment properly," Martin said.



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Next meeting: Monday, January 6 at 6:30 p.m.



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Editorial: lockdown drills need to be taken more seriously

EDITORIAL BOARD

Students of all ages across the country are no stranger to the scrolling headlines announcing the country's most recent school shooting. On Tuesday, Nov. 12, Saugus High School in Santa Clarita, Cal. was that headline. When a student entered their quad area and shot five of his peers, killing two, it sent the familiar spark of fear among American students.

Bellevue students are not immune to this fear. It has served as a driving force for our students to ask "Would I be prepared if this happened to me?" Yet, the apathetic and annoyed attitude that staff show towards lockdown drills despite their frequency gives the blatant answer to that question: No.

Our lazily-conducted drills are ineffective and give the bare minimum effort in order to prevent inconveniencing anyone at the school. The identical advisory drills (where teachers are notified prior to them) do not practice anything other than flipping a light switch and sitting idly in the corner.

That procedure fails to account for so many other situations. Would our students know what to do if they were caught in the

hallway, eating lunch, or lounging in the commons when something broke out? No. A stampede of unprepared students would push and shove their way through our tight hallways, every student for themselves. It would be chaos.

In the Secret Service's 2019 study "Protecting America's Schools: A U.S. Secret Service Analysis of Targeted School Violence" 44% of the observed school shootings occurred in less than one minute: the Nov. 12 Saugus High shooting took merely 16 seconds. This means that the immediate actions that are taken by students when something breaks out could be the difference between life and death.

In the past four years, our school has never conducted a lockdown drill outside of our advisory classrooms, which only gives the impression that school shootings aren't serious enough to be worth the time of day. The other issue with our procedures is that they lack the necessary in-depth discussions and coverage that would prove that we are taking the issue seriously.

We're not saying that we have to become trained soldiers, but we need to learn how to protect ourselves. This includes learning what warning signs look like, which is yet another topic avoided

by our current instruction. In the Secret Service report, every observed attacker "exhibited concerning behaviors" prior to their attack. These include communicating their intentions to someone else in some way. Part of our procedure needs to include how to recognize those messages and what to do with them.

Many problems surrounding school shooting drills come from the age gap between those in charge of running drills and the students that need them. Our parents, teachers, and other adults grew up with much less trauma than current students, so it's hard for them to understand the anxious mindset we get when school shootings are brought up. No one seems to want to deeply discuss it with young kids or take it seriously because it is uncomfortable.

But if that were to happen, the communication gap could be bridged and it might provide insight as to what students are concerned about. It will be hard, and it will be unsettling: but it should be, and needs to be, that way.

One of the things that everyone needs to do better is to focus on controlling what we are able to. It does no good to blame the greater political system or government when issues like gun

"WE'RE NOT SAYING THAT WE HAVE TO BECOME TRAINED SOLDIERS, BUT WE NEED TO LEARN HOW TO PROTECT OURSELVES."

control are not going to be solved in the immediate future. It does not matter what your political affiliation is. Excusing inaction by blaming politics and the government is a selfish act that leaves the children of our school systems hanging.

It is with that mindset that we have created a generation of students who have had to worry about active shooters since

kindergarten, and we owe it to them to be adequately prepared for the very situation that they fear.

The tragedies of our high school years should be made up of things like heartbreaking football losses, bombing a quiz, and failing your driver's test. They should not include losing your peers, teachers, or friends in an appalling event that we were ill-prepared for.

iPads: not the solution



CHLOE MCALEER
GUEST REPORTER

Since 1976, Apple has grown from a small company simply selling computers to an international corporation worth billions of dollars. As the company has grown in value, so has its influence in schools.

Since 2010, iPads have been used as teaching resources in multiple schools across the country. Though this may be applauded by some educators and administrators as a great advancement in education, other educators, administrators, students, and parents are not so sure of it.

In the Bellevue Public Schools district, iPads are a common occurrence in the lives of students. In the 2020-2021 school year, each high school student will have their own device distributed to them. iPads are now being used to help with teaching, reinforcing topics, and as a reward for students who accomplish their tasks.

Though iPads may seem like a step in the right direction, they can cause harm from over

exposure to blue light. Researchers at Harvard say that consistently being exposed to this blue light may cause health problems such as obesity, cancer, diabetes, and heart disease.

Overuse of electronics by students also takes away from social interaction with teachers and peers. Instead of being taught by a teacher, a student must learn from a machine. iPads can't answer questions, rather they only review the material as programmed.

Along with health issues, iPads also may bring financial issues. According to an April 2018 article in the Bellevue Leader, an iPad for each student will cost around \$13.5 million. Another financial issue to consider is the cost of repair and replacement of broken iPads.

Teachers also require many days of training to master this latest technology. For the past few years, many of my teachers had to miss multiple school days for iPad training, causing disruptions in my peers and my own education.

When this new technology is in place in every classroom, teachers will have to be prepared to act as on-site tech support. How much class time will they spend "fixing" iPads rather than teaching their subjects?

Spending \$13.5 million on iPads is a huge amount of money that might not take into account for future expenses such as updates, services, and repairs. BPS could be using this money to help their staff, students, and maintain their properties rather than giving this money to a huge tech company.

BPS web-filter needs re-adjustments to fix learning block



GIA BLANKS
REPORTER

Our district website filters are too inconsistent.

At Bellevue West, some websites are restricted by district-wide filters, which monitor incoming and outgoing websites to make sure they are safe and appropriate for student use.

Some blocked websites should be unblocked because they are innocent or because we need some of them for class. On the other hand, unblocked websites such as Cool Math Games should be blocked because they are a distraction from classroom time. I like the fact that most social media and television streaming websites like Instagram, Messenger, Pinterest, Netflix, and even Disney Plus are restricted on school devices. The website filter does a good job of catching this. Sites like these are distracting to students. These filters have a tendency to restrict the wrong things.

There are three commonly

used techniques to block access to internet sites: IP blocking, DNS tampering, and URL blocking using a proxy, according to opennet.net.

In order for our schools to receive money for internet use, we must abide by the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) laws. These CIPA laws give the district discounts on internet pricing for the schools.

"Anything pornographic or anything close to it will be blocked," Bellevue Public Schools director of facility and technology Greg Boettger said. "We also have sites that don't have a category. Which means someone built a website and we don't know where to put it in and so it is marked as uncategorized."

Until those sites are categorized, it will remain blocked for either teachers or students.

I can't get some of my work done because the things I need to learn are blocked. During German, our teacher assigned us a reading task about Thanksgiving in Deutschland while she was gone. No one in my class could do our work. Sometimes, a site that may have been unblocked last year is no longer unblocked. The teacher has to go and double check the site a couple days in advance to see if they need to submit a website into the help desk.

If a teacher needs a website unblocked they have to submit it to the help desk and wait for a

response.

"It could take anywhere from minutes to days and that depends on sites and how much digging we have to do for the site," Boettger said.

Innocent websites, such as the volunteer sign up at the Salvation Army websites are blocked. Being unknowingly blocked is not okay. Students should communicate more with teachers to have a website submitted to the help desk.

These website restrictions should be reviewed. There are a few sites that should be restricted but can't happen because they don't meet requirements. If the district does go over the requirements, they should teach teachers what the requirements are for a website so then teachers know what type of websites are on and off limits. Students should be able to submit a site to the help desk so they can sign up for volunteer work or even put in a job application, because some students don't have access to the internet outside of school.

If Bellevue Public Schools made a few tweaks to the website filtering restrictions, then it would be perfect. The district should take into account the fact that not every student has the same financial background and our school could be their only source to internet that students have. What is being blocked has the potential to affect the learning environment and overall success of students and teachers.

Vote for candidates' ideas instead of their parties



ELISSA TREU
REPORTER

With the 2020 presidential election approaching, almost every eye in America will be glued to the many debates and campaign events across the country. Social media will be flooded with

angry rants and posts, headlines will be claiming scandal against presidential candidates, A-list celebrities will be pledging their allegiance to whom they believe is the next savior of the United States, and voters will draw the separation line between Democrats and Republicans.

It tends to feel like a TV drama. To manage the mayhem, it's important to look past a candidate's membership to their proclaimed party and critically analyze the ideas they have for the future of the United States. In other words, vote for a candidate's ideas, not their party.

President Trump's biggest competitors are former Vice President Joe Biden and U.S.

Senators Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren. With these candidates running against President Donald Trump on similar principles, it's easy to assume that it doesn't really matter who wins the Democratic Primary. Although all of these candidates are Democrats, their ideology and ideas vary on the political spectrum.

One important issue that these four candidates are particularly divided on is expansion of the Supreme Court in order to allow Democratic presidents to appoint more left-leaning judges to balance the right-leaning majority. This became relevant after Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell blocked

former President Barack Obama's 2016 Supreme Court nominee Merrick Garland to install more conservative judges. Senator Warren supports the expansion, while Senator Sanders stands against it. "My worry is that the next time the Republicans are in power they will do the same thing, I think that is not the ultimate solution," Sanders said at the "We the People" Summit back in April.

Taking a look at universal health care, Biden claims he will "build on the Affordable Care Act by giving Americans more choice, reducing health care costs, and making our health care system less complex to navigate," according to his campaign website. His plan would not eliminate the choice

of private health insurance. This fairly moderate viewpoint clashes with Warren and Sanders' more radically left plans of transitioning to Medicare for All, which would insure every American under a government-funded health care program and eliminate the choice of private health insurance companies.

These are just two examples of contrasting ideas on policy within the Democratic candidates. With so many more prominent issues, this proves the importance of looking past party lines and researching what the candidates individually stand for. Putting the power of knowledge behind your vote is just as much of a civic duty as voting at all.

Key Club earns grant, raises funds for local charity

TAEGAN JACOBS
FEATURES EDITOR

Bellevue West's Key Club has spent the last year raising \$1,000 for Omaha's Ronald McDonald House. They chose this organization after the club officers voted on a local charity they'd like to donate to.

"They help pay for families to come and stay in Omaha," senior Key Club president Molly Storm said. "If they have a medical illness or they're sick, they just pay for their families to fly out and have a place to stay."

This is the largest amount of money the club has ever raised for a singular charity, and the longest they have ever spent on a project, according to Storm. They seized the opportunity after receiving a \$500 Youth Opportunities Fund grant from their partnering club, Kiwanis International.

In order to get the grant, Storm had to fill out an extensive application.

"It's pretty much anyone can get it as long as it's valid enough," Storm said. "And just because you ask for a certain amount doesn't mean they'll actually give it to you. We originally asked for \$1,000, but we only got \$500. But it was more than enough."

Key Club's main obstacle was poor planning for their summer car wash, according to Storm. They decided to hold it on the same day as the "Arrows to Aerospace" parade, which caused a decline in attendance.

"We were planning on raising almost \$500, so it kind of cut off around 200 of those dollars," Storm said. "Other than that, there haven't been that many other than lack of preparation further in advance for these events."

Key Club should meet their goal by the end of their annual Holiday Door Decorating contest at West, according to Storm. They plan to deliver the money soon after.

"If we have money left over in the grant, which I think we might, we'll probably look into how much those big checks cost and see if we can get one of those," Storm said.

Otherwise, various members of Key Club and Kiwanis will gather to deliver the money.

"I love how I've been able to see it all through and finish off my senior year with making such a great impact on a community and the people," Storm said.

"Light Up Bellevue" spreads Christmas lights across town



Photos by Meg Gross

"Light Up Bellevue" is located at Washington Park in Olde Towne Bellevue. Light shows run Sunday through Wednesday from 6:00-10:00 p.m. and Thursday through Saturday from 5:00-10:00 p.m.

MEG GROSS
OPINION EDITOR

Bellevue was illuminated with hundreds of Christmas lights on Nov. 30, all put together by a community group called "Light Up Bellevue."

According to "Light Up Bellevue's" website, the goal of the project is to "beautify the community with lights throughout the year." With the help of Mayor Rusty Hike and the City of Bellevue, "Light Up Bellevue" co-chairman Joanna Hike came up with the original idea about a year ago.

"I noticed that Bellevue didn't really have any Christmas lights," Joanna said. "We didn't have any trees lit up or anything like that."

According to committee member Kati Larson, Joanna was re-

sponsible for the idea and start of the project.

"It was one of those things she wanted to see happen for our community and so she really has been the backbone of that, getting the push to get a committee together and getting everybody involved and making it happen," Larson said.

Joanna then began making a committee to start the project.

"I got a group of people together, somebody that's good with lights, somebody with electricity, my husband at the city office, and just different people that were able to come together with ideas," Joanna said.

The original idea was to put up a Christmas tree in front of the Lied Center, but that quickly expanded into a large display across the city.

"It just kind of morphed into 'Let's go ahead and put up trees in Washington Park' and we actually have blue and white lights at the police station too," Joanna said.

The mastery behind the light show comes from committee member Mike Poth, who has put on his own Christmas light show at his home for 10 years now.

"I saw a commercial with all the lights moving and I thought it was cool and went to the internet to find out how it worked," Poth said. "The rest is history."

Poth says

that he was recruited to join "Light Up Bellevue" by Rusty and Joanna after they visited his home light show last year.

"It was funny cause the mayor asked what I could get for 'X' amount of dollars," Poth said. "I turned to my show and pointed at it and said 'This.'"

According to Joanna, "Light Up Bellevue" has raised around \$85,000 for the light show and has reached out to social media to find volunteers.

"It's just been really nice to see, after the flooding and all of the hardship that the community has gone through, that we've come together to have something that we're really proud of here in Bellevue," Joanna said.



New science courses offered for 2020-2021 school year

EMMA GAGE
MANAGING / COPY EDITOR

Continued from Front Page.

In addition to environmental education, medical biology will also be undergoing changes for the 2020-2021 school year. The class

will now be called medical terminology for the health sciences.

In order to complete the necessary requirements for Nebraska's health science career pathway, Bellevue Public Schools needs a class that covers medical terminology. By adding more medicine-based language into its curriculum, those requirements can be met.

"So we have health science and

then you can go through sports med and end with anatomy and physiology," Menard said. "We were missing that terminology piece."

The new course curriculum will remain similar to what it currently looks like with a focus on the systems of the body. Menard also said that West hopes to gain the option to obtain college credit with this

class through a local community college or other universities.

All changes to the science course offerings are intended to be made before the 2020-2021 school year.

"I'm excited to see what the new curriculum is and how the kids respond to it," Zeimet said. "I think it's gonna be a positive for our school."

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Forensics team finds success in new school year



Photo by Taegan Jacobs

Junior Tyson Forbes and senior Darian Draft lead warm-ups prior to the novice tournament on Dec. 6.

TAEGAN JACOBS
FEATURES EDITOR

Last year, three members of Bellevue West's Forensics team made it all the way to nationals—and, according to returning national qualifier senior Darian Draft, the success of last season has left the team excited for the next.

"We were researching stuff during the summer," Draft said. "We'd go to the library to look for scripts—we started preparation a lot earlier."

And so far, the extra work has been paying off. She got her first bid to nationals in the first tournament of the year, to Draft's relief.

"I had been so stressed about it for so long," Draft said. "The later into the year it goes, you know, the more polished people's perfor-

mances get and the more people end up coming to tournaments, and so being able to get your bids early means you just don't have to worry about it for a while."

She says the first year of forensics is about playing it safe, but once students feel comfortable, they can branch out and start testing their boundaries.

"My first year was definitely just playing it safe and doing group events with acting and informative stuff," Draft said. "And then this year I'm definitely trying to do everything I can and trying to do topics that people don't really talk about. I'm trying to focus on being different, rather than just winning and getting consistent scores."

Draft joined the forensics team by accident her sophomore year when told she couldn't take two art classes. She chose the class after it was recommended

for those who like speeches.

"I had no idea that it was a competitive team or anything at all," Draft said. "I thought you just wrote speeches and did them for a class. And so I just kind of ended up in the class and I liked it."

But forensics is more than just performing speeches.

"I always tell kids it's a place where you can explore different types of performance," forensics coach Becca Hier said.

The different ways people approach speech was one of the interesting things to see at nationals, according to Draft.

"There was some schools that did singing and dancing in their duos," Draft said. "There were some that didn't even look at each other the whole time. And so there are a lot of different choices that you don't even consider people could possibly make that

you get to see at national tournaments."

The three qualifiers, Draft, junior Tyson Forbes, and senior Melanie Escalante, came as a shock to the forensics coaches, according to Hier. Her assistant coaches, Dan Christie and Caroline Drohan, are both former students.

"Honestly, we were kind of like, 'Ok, I guess we have competitive kids all of a sudden. Crap. What does that look like,'" Hier said. "This year I feel like we were able to kind of get a handle on what it is to coach a program of kids who really want to be a national competitor."

And last year's success has brought an increase in interest in the class. Where there was only one forensics class last year, this year there are two—bringing the program out of a five year slump.

"I mean, when I started here there were nine kids interested in this program," Hier said. "And then with any team, I don't care if it's a sports team, a speech team, a choir program or a theatre program, there's gonna be an ebb and flow of how interested kids are. That's the nature of the beast,"

Students are automatically on the team if in the class, according to Draft, but have the choice on whether to be competitive. There are only a few required performances throughout the year, so those who wish to just take the class can participate and get graded.

But, with the increase in interest, there's been an increase in students wanting to compete.

"Yeah, I feel like we have a great momentum right now, going forward into the second semester," Hier said. "Because it's like I watched a bunch of kids catch the bug and catch the love of competing."

At the beginning of each season, the coaches ask how far

each student wants to go: if they want to compete, that includes if they're wanting to qualify for districts, state, or go all the way to nationals.

This year, more students are striving for nationals. That includes Draft and Forbes, as well as two novice forensics performers, seniors James Griffin and Emily Taylor, who both placed at their very first tournaments.

"This is not an easy skill to learn overnight," Hier said. "They both walked into that tournament super nervous, and they kept telling me all day, 'It's gonna be bad, it's gonna be so bad, I'm not gonna do anything, I'm gonna get last in all my rounds, just terrible.' And then James won and Emily got second."

Griffin, who's been a part of the theatre community for five-years, joined forensics to be more competitive and improve his acting—which he says has worked 110%.

"Forensics was an opportunity for that because of the way that it's set up," Griffin said. "And it allows me to compete against other people who are better than me and try and better myself."

He says his win was a shock, especially since he didn't have his piece memorized the first tournament.

"My jaw literally dropped," Griffin said. "I literally was smiling with my mouth completely wide open. Everyone laughed because it was so funny, but it was such a shock. It was amazing."

And it's not only significant for novice performers to get into finals the first couple of tournaments. According to Hier, it's not common for even varsity performers to place in finals this much the first couple of tournaments.

"We have a group of kids now who we're starting to build a culture of excellence that we want to maintain," Hier said.

Tips for preventing the flu

NEBRASKA WEEKLY FLU STATISTICS
WEEK ENDING NOVEMBER 30, 2019

PERCENT OF PEOPLE TESTED POSITIVE WITH INFLUENZA:

21.6%

NUMBER OF INFLUENZA-RELATED HOSPITALIZATIONS:

187 inpatients (2,159 cumulative)

PERCENT OF EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT VISITS DUE TO INFLUENZA:

5.63%

Graphic by Grace Taylor

Data sourced from the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services.

GRACE TAYLOR
REPORTER

Fever, chills, and sore throat are just some of the symptoms senior Paige Stuck had when she was diagnosed with influenza last December. While those may seem like effects of the common cold, it is a similar, but completely different virus.

"Influenza is a respiratory viral illness that causes high fevers, body aches, really bad cough, runny nose, sore throat, all those kinds of things," Children's Physicians, M.D. Clancy McNally said.

According to health paraprofessional Wendy Richard, the symptoms of the flu are just like those of a cold, but they come on harder and, most importantly, faster.

Not only do students suffer the symptoms of the flu itself, but contracting the virus can have other indirect consequences.

"It put me back a lot because I missed like four days of school," Stuck said.

"And then when I did come to school I didn't want to do any work because I didn't feel good at all."

The flu is a year-round virus, but tends to peak December through February. Cases have already been seen in the Omaha metro area as early as this October.

Starting in early October and con-

tinuing the whole month, according to the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, the estimated level of influenza was sporadic. Sporadic means there are reports of small numbers of lab-confirmed cases of the flu or a single laboratory-confirmed flu outbreak.

Bellevue West nurse Cheyenne Spicka said she encourages students to get the flu shot. By getting the shot, the risk of spreading it to others is decreased. A common misconception is that the shot gives you the flu, according to Spicka.

"Something I think people don't know is they think the flu shot causes the flu, but it's a good thing if you feel achy and like that after getting it," Spicka said. "Because that means your body is trying to build up that immune system."

McNally said the virus spreads through people coughing, and touching things. Additionally, if other people are around and touch them they can receive the virus as well.

There are also many ways that students, staff, and schools can reduce the chances of contracting the virus. Coughing into your elbow, washing your hands, and disinfecting surfaces are some possible precautions McNally recommends.

"I think the number one thing is to get your flu shot, it may not keep you from getting the flu, but it will help you fight it better if you do," McNally said.

Jay Ducker named Gatorade Nebraska High School Football Player of the Year

EMILY MABBITT
SPORTS EDITOR

Senior Jay Ducker was named the Gatorade Nebraska High School Football Player of the Year on Dec. 6.

"I was actually just waking up and Huffman texted me about looking at my email and then I saw it," Ducker said.

This award is granted to 607 students from all 50 states and Washington D.C. for 12 different sports. These sports include football, boys and girls basketball, baseball, boys and girls soccer, softball, boys and girls track and field, girls volleyball, and boys and girls cross country.

Recipients are chosen based on three main criteria. These include athletic excellence, academic achievement, and exemplary character. Ducker broke the state record with 110 touchdowns scored in his career, maintains a 4.98 GPA, and has volunteered for programs such as the Special Olympics and Read Across America.

Ducker is the fourth Bellevue West football player to receive this award. He joins players Clester Johnson (1990-91), C.J. Johnson (2014-15), and Jadyn Kowalksi (2015-16).

Ducker said that winning this award was a big accomplishment that capped off his high school career.

"It just kind of shows how the whole high school career thing for me has been a good time," Ducker said. "To win the state ring and then to finally get my individual record also so it kind of shows the whole Jay Ducker career."



Photo by Elissa Treu

Girls basketball program maintains high hopes, high standards despite low numbers

EMILY MABBITT
SPORTS EDITOR

Girls basketball coach Dane Bacon said that the number of girls on the team has decreased this year, but the girls that have shown up have made the commitment.

"The people that are there are doing a really nice job working really hard and being really accountable for not only themselves but for their teammates and they've done a really nice job so far," Bacon said.

Bacon said that of the returning players, there is a young core of talent that has returned.

"We have three returning starters, I think we have nine returning kids that lettered," Bacon said. "I do think that it should be a fun year and we have a lot of experience coming back."

Senior Kayla Elmore said that Bacon relates to the players which makes playing a lot easier.

"He's been through the same stuff that we've been through as a player, so it's very easy with him coaching and he's a very energetic coach," Elmore said. "He's always there lifting us up."

A goal that senior Aubrey

Brazda has for the season is being a leader to the rest of her teammates.

"Watching them succeed and watching us get better and play together is something not every team has," Brazda said. "I definitely do appreciate that."

According to Elmore the team is working well together and they are focusing on little details to get ready for the season.

"Practices have been really good," Elmore said. "We're very loud and we always say a quiet gym is a losing gym."

Brazda said that the team has been working on where players' strong suits are.

"It's just a matter of matching it with each other and seeing who fits what position, our strengths and weaknesses, and making up for other people's weaknesses," Brazda said.

Sophomore Emma Crisman said that the team has come a long way in terms of teamwork.

"We're doing great when it comes to improvising on the go but we need to work on communicating with each other," Crisman said.

Elmore said that the girls are a big motivator for her and that she



Photo by Taegan Jacobs

The girls basketball team huddles together before a home game against Fremont on Dec. 5. Fremont won 70-23.

plays for them, not herself.

"I really like seeing them happy, seeing how they play and seeing them develop from when they were like freshmen all the way to now," Elmore said. "I really love

playing with them."

On the court Bacon said he is pretty demanding of his players but his off the court relationships with the athletes are important to him.

"I do hold them to a really high standard," Bacon said. "But I think at the end of the day they know that it comes from a good place and that I really care about everybody on the team."

CAN'T MAKE IT TO THE THUNDERDOME FOR BASKETBALL OR WRESTLING?

1/25 - GIRLS BASKETBALL VS. MARIAN
@5:30 P.M.

BOYS BASKETBALL VS. CREIGHTON PREP
@7:15 P.M.

1/30 - WRESTLING DUAL VS. BELLEVUE EAST
@7:00 P.M.

2/14 - GIRLS BASKETBALL VS. MILLARD NORTH
@5:30 P.M.
BOYS BASKETBALL VS. MILLARD NORTH
@7:15 P.M.



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WINTER SPORTS PREVIEW

BY LEANNE BUGAY // EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

The winter sports season kicked off on Thursday, Dec. 5. Read more to see how the beginning of the season is playing out, and what teams outlooks are for the next few months.

Boys Basketball

The varsity boys basketball team won their first official game on Thursday, Dec. 5 at home against Fremont 82-38.

"Everyone is just trying to get better as a player, but we all have to work with each other and try to bond as a team," freshman Josiah Dotzler said. "And I know everyone is striving to get to that championship goal."

Dotzler said personally he's working on adapting to a senior-clad team, but he thinks the athletes are already making a lot of progress.

The team plays next on Friday, Dec. 20 at home against Omaha South at 7:15 p.m.

Girls Basketball

The varsity girls basketball team lost their first official game on Thursday, Dec. 5 at home against Fremont 70-23.

"So this year our main focus is just knowing everybody, knowing our roles, and just trusting one another to get the job done and playing as hard as we can because we might not have the most talented team in the state, but we want to be seen as the team that has the most effort," senior Siarra Roberts said.

The girls basketball team plays next on Friday, Dec. 20 at home against Omaha South at 5:30 p.m.

Swim and Dive

The varsity swim and dive team won their first meet on Thursday, Dec. 5 at home against Bellevue East 248-96.

"The boys team kind of got really hit because they lost three legs of their relay, so it's only up to one person that was there from last year to really kind of go for it," sophomore McKenna Decker said. "Our girls team—I think we're ready to break some records. We have a pretty good pool of swimmers."

The team competes next on Tuesday, Dec. 17 at home against Omaha Burke at 4:30 p.m.

Wrestling

The varsity wrestling team earned 147 total match points and placed sixth against ten area teams at their first meet on Friday, Dec. 6 at Fremont.

Junior Jack McDonnell said the wrestlers are focusing on becoming more of a team.

"It's an individual sport but being in the practice room, duals and stuff, you need to kind of come together and get closer together," McDonnell said.

The team wrestles next on Tuesday, Dec. 17 at home in a triangular against Shenandoah and Council Bluffs Thomas Jefferson at 5:30 and 7:30 p.m.

Female wrestlers find place in male-dominated sport

ELLIE WOODARD
REPORTER

Continued from Front Page.

"I don't think they're intentionally trying to put us out," Harrison said. "They've never had a female wrestler at Bellevue West, so they don't know how to treat us like one of the guys."

It's common for a male wrestler to refuse to wrestle against a female wrestler during a meet. The three unanimously agreed that it hurts to have to win by default rather than their skill, but also understand that there is nothing they can do about it.

"There's always gonna be that one guy," Blanks said. "I can't get bitter over a personal opinion."

The Omaha World-Herald reported that the votes for a girls wrestling division at an NSAA Representative Assembly missed by one vote. Activities director Jon Mauro said that West voted in favor of the change, in support for the girl's division as its own separate, sanctioned sport.

"We would have teamed up with Bellevue East and create a Bellevue Team," Mauro said. "Hopefully it would have grown and separated over time. Because if we have girls as a separate team, they can't even practice with the boys."

According to teamusa.org,



Photo by Ellie Woodard

Senior Gigi Harrison and junior Gia Blanks wrestle during practice.

wrestling has increased the most in growth of high school sports in the U.S. From the 2017-2018 school year, the increase of students participating in girls wrestling was 27.5%. For the

girls interested in wrestling, both Gocke and the female wrestlers encourage them to join.

"Do it," Blanks said. "It gives you a sense of yourself and what you're made of. There have been

multiple times where I wanted to quit, but I came here for a reason. I feel like I'm part of a team."

The female wrestlers said they are tired of other wrestlers going easy on them.

"When we're on the mat, we are wrestlers," Harrison said. "Your skill is against mine. If you're scared, there's nothing to be scared of. Well, there's a little something to be scared of. But just do it."

Woodards share special bond on basketball court

GRACE TAYLOR
REPORTER

Most kids can't say that their grandpa is also their high school basketball coach, but senior shooting guard Owen Woodard can.

Since his freshman year, Owen has been playing basketball under his grandpa, Bellevue West's varsity boys basketball coach Doug Woodard. Doug never officially started coaching Owen until high school.

"I worked with him a little bit, from obviously the time he was little, but I really didn't start coaching him at all, in a coaching sense, on a team, until he got here at Bellevue West," Doug said.

Owen said he recognizes the large amount of respect that

others have for his grandpa as a coach and shares in that.

"He's the smartest coach I've ever had, so he helps a lot and he has a ton of respect," Owen said. "Everyone recognizes him as one of the best coaches in the state."

and his final season having his grandpa by his side. Throughout his high school basketball career, his grandpa has influenced him off and on the court. Doug has also taught Owen valuable lessons about family and life.

how important those people that we're closest to are," Doug said. "We have such a short window with them in our lives, how important it is to value them and how important just the whole aspect of being dependable, being

One message that Doug stresses is an importance on academics. And for Owen who is taking AP and advanced classes, this doesn't seem to be an issue.

"He always preaches how like my grades and stuff [are] more important than playing basketball and stuff and I've taken that to heart," Owen said.

Doug said getting the opportunity to coach a relative, like all relationships, has its ups and downs.

"There's some challenges to it because you have to know when to stop being coach and when to start being grandpa," Doug said. "But the ability to bond, to share, with them, I wouldn't replace it even the times it's tough, the different things you have to be able to navigate through, I wouldn't trade it for anything."

"Hopefully I've influenced him on how important family is, on how important those people that we're closest to are,"

Doug Woodard

Owen is going into his final basketball season as a Thunderbird

"Hopefully I've influenced him on how important family is, on

on time, having a good work ethic, those things."

Brooke's top five albums of 2019

BROOKE JONES
ENTERTAINMENT EDITOR

Although 2019 was rather disappointing in terms of album drops from big artists, a few standouts managed to pave their way into the new decade with albums that change the way we see music.

"Free Spirit" by Khalid

Khalid's second album



perfectly embodied the summer of 2019 with hits like "Better" and "Saturday Nights." The 21-year-old showcased a more sophisticated tone than that of "American Teen" with introspective lyrics that resonate with his young audience. Switching from reggae-influenced guitar solos to a collab with John Mayer, the AMA Award-winning album maintained a lively feel from start to finish. In some

lesser known songs from the album like "Twenty-One" and "Paradise," Khalid explores what it feels like to navigate adulthood and learn from the choices he makes.

"Thank U, Next" by Ariana Grande

Amidst one of the most tumultuous years of the singer's life, she managed to produce one of the most impactful albums

of the year. After the release of the singles "thank u, next" and "7 rings," I couldn't wait for an album full of girl-power anthems. More personal songs like "imagine" and "ghostin'" showed a more sensitive side to Grande following the death of her ex-boyfriend, Mac Miller. Overall, the album redefined iconic and set a new bar for vocalists everywhere.

"Wasteland, Baby!" by Hozier

After a five year hiatus, Hozier returned with "Wasteland, Baby!," a mix of songs reminiscent of his previous self titled album, "Hozier," and more modern, upbeat songs. The singer stayed true to his creepy, Old English vibe while incorporating a more peppy feel with songs like "Almost" and "Nobody." With one of the most recognizable voices of our generation, the "Take Me to Church" singer once again gave us another album perfect for rainy days with dark and dreary melodies and a timeless sound.

"Reboot" by Brooks and Dunn

Country duo Brooks and Dunn released an album full of fan favorites with a twist, featuring today's more popular country artists like Kacey Musgraves, Luke Combs, and Thomas Rhett. Each song is given a makeover that is unique to each artist. Musgraves landed a spot on the Billboard top 100 with her cover of one of the duo's biggest hits, "Neon Moon" with a more mellow, ethereal tone and current beat. As someone who has never been a fan of Brooks and Dunn, I was pleasantly surprised to see other artists take a whack at some songs that I otherwise would not have given a second look at.

"The Big Day" by Chance the Rapper

"The Big Day" brought back major 2016 vibes similar to the rapper's previous album "Coloring Book." The singer returned with his unmatched energy in "Hot Shower," featuring a newer, more

energetic lineup with artists DaBaby and MadeinTYO. The track list had all sorts of twists and turns with appearances from unexpected artists and groups like Death Cab for Cutie, Megan Thee Stallion, and John Legend. "The Big Day" sums up the past couple years of Chance the Rapper's life with more heartfelt songs like "Sun Come Down," where he explains the scrutiny that his family has come under since his rise to fame. In addition to two previously unreleased mixtapes, Chance surprised the music industry time after time in 2019.

Honorable Mentions

2019 brought us some of the best artists of the year in all genres. From Megan Thee Stallion's "Fever," to Billie Eilish's debut album "When We All Fall Asleep, Where Do We Go?," the music industry gained several powerhouse artists that are without a doubt going to make their mark in the upcoming decade.

Ways to be productive over winter break

FRANKIE HESSIG
REPORTER

Winter break is nearly upon us. Two weeks of holiday cheer, at least, is what I hope for. Yet I always seem to run out of ideas a couple of days into break. There are only so many Christmas crafts and holiday-themed snacks you can make before you start to loath the time off.

Every year I end up spending most of the holiday season laying in bed watching Netflix, and more recently, Disney+. Rather than doing nothing and feeling bad about it, I want to do something productive with my two weeks off.

Two things come to mind when I hear the word productive: giving back to the community and preparing for the future. Instead of watching "A Christmas Story" for the third time in a row, I'm going to help myself and those around me.

94.1 Diaper Drive and the Diaper Unloading Party

Homeless mothers have it rough. To help alleviate some of that stress, Channel 94.1 is hosting a diaper drive for those at the Lydia House.

Diapers were dropped off on the weekend of Friday, Dec. 13.

If you are like me and have spent all of your money on gifts for the holidays and still want to help out, Channel 94.1 will need people to unload all the diapers. An added bonus to helping out families in our community is a free lunch.

The unloading party will take place on Friday, Dec. 27 at 10:00 a.m.

Diaper Drive:
747 N 132nd St.

Omaha, NE 68154
Diaper Unloading Party:
2828 N 23rd St E.
Omaha, NE 68110

Hillcrest Senior Health Services

If you are a little hesitant to go out into the cold, there are still ways to positively impact those around you. There are volunteering opportunities at Hillcrest's campuses all year round. There are one-on-one visits where you and a senior citizen can get to know each other. There are other activities you can do such as crafts, bingo, and nail painting. If you can sing or play an instrument, they would love to have you perform.

Prepare for college
We all struggle with procrastination from time to time, and that doesn't stop when it is time to start thinking about college. For me, at least, it increases tenfold. Holiday break will be a perfect time to work on essays for scholarships due next year.

Important scholarship deadlines are swiftly approaching. Two upcoming due dates for the GE Reagan Foundation and the Susan Thompson Buffet scholarships are on Jan. 3 and Feb. 1 respectively. If you meet their criteria you should definitely apply. \$15,550 is on the line.

College visits
Even though class isn't in session during winter break, a college visit will be worthwhile to aid in your decision making process. My college visit helped to alleviate my worry about whether a school was for me.

Admissions representatives and student ambassadors can help determine whether a school is the right fit for you.

"Death Stranding:" Kojima brings culture to the action gaming genre



Photo from Kojima Productions website

JAY WALKER-SCHULTE
CO-EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Recently, there has been a significant debate in the video game world on the weight video games have on culture. Namely: "Should video games be classified as an artform rather than standard entertainment?"

If anything could curb the narrative of video games not being craftwork, it would be Hideo Kojima's "Death Stranding."

"Death Stranding" is reminiscent of standing at a hipster art gallery and staring at a weird sculpture. Sure, your first thought is: "Who actually wasted their money and energy on this?" However, the longer you stare at it, the more enamored (albeit confused) you become.

Rather than enjoyment or disgust, I feel pure magnetism, as if I'm drawn to playing the game against my own willpower.

"Death Stranding" is slow,

deliberate, and the entirety of the gameplay goes at a methodical pace. Honestly, the first hour of playing feels like a chore.

You're basically a FedEx guy, but instead of dealing with feral chihuahuas on grandma's doorstep, you're dealing with horrifying monsters and alluring landscapes parallel to Studio Ghibli backgrounds.

You know the whole walking to your destination portion of games that no one likes? That is the game. They should have called it "Hideo Kojima's \$60 Hiking Experience."

Yet, there is enough to the walking around that makes it work. Similar to "Red Dead Redemption 2," "Death Stranding's" scenery is gorgeous. Additionally, there is a fantastic ambient post-rock soundtrack that really works. The combination of both of these elements makes every trek worth it.

"Death Stranding's" plot is

one of the primary driving forces behind what fuels the player to keep going. The experience is similar to Kojima's 2014 production "P.T." You're really, really confused the whole time.

Yet, it's a good kind of confusing—calling back to early games such as "Silent Hill" or "Resident Evil."

Additionally, your playable character Sam Porter Bridges is ruggedly likeable. He is the standard crass and uncouth Kojima protagonist, which is nostalgic for any long-time fans.

All of these elements tied together makes "Death Stranding" an artistic success. I cannot express how appealing of a project it is.

If you're looking for gritty fast-paced action, "Death Stranding" is not your game.

However, if you're looking for something more, perhaps a cultured refinement of your standard video game, Kojima has got you covered.

Is cutting cable still worth it in 2020?

OWEN REIMER
REPORTER

Because of programs like Netflix, Hulu, and Amazon Prime, the streaming service has truly become the dominant form of watchable entertainment.

What started out as a convenient way to watch movies and TV has become so much more, with exclusive shows and movies being pumped out by every service in an attempt to stay ahead of the other. Some have massive production budgets and even Oscar-caliber scripts. Not only that, but you don't have to deal with annoying commercials or ads while bingeing. Every single program offers something different, so there's a massive demand to subscribe to each one, but that can get expensive.

The concept of a streaming service like Netflix or Hulu started

out pretty simple. Earlier, viewers would have to spend anywhere from \$35 to almost \$125 a month for programs like cable or satellite TV. But with the introduction of websites like Netflix, you could spend around eight bucks to watch hundreds of TV shows and movies from the ease of your computer.

Thus "cable cutting," the concept that you could drop those expensive cable plans and spend a lot less money just watching shows online, was created.

But is cutting the cord even worth it anymore? Since the creation of Netflix's initial streaming service in 2007, a lot has changed. Every service now has something that makes it unique, and they all hunger for as many subscribers as possible.

Most people can't just choose between cable and Netflix anymore. No, it's between cable and Netflix, Hulu, Amazon Prime, HBO Go, Disney +, Apple

TV Plus and maybe even CBS All Access or YouTube Red. Every platform does something different, and to have all of the shows, somebody has to get pretty much all of them.

Let's start with the basics: Of the cheapest plans of every service listed above, the total price is around \$72. Remember, that's the cheapest versions of every program, like Hulu with ads and the "basic" Netflix plan which only allows for one device to stream at a time at 480p (standard resolution).

While that's pretty darn expensive, it still looks good compared to the average cable plan, which is, according to USA Today, about \$85 a month. However, when you look into the more expensive plans for these programs, things get a little more pricey. When the other plans are added, subscribing to every service can cost from \$86 to \$118 a month.

So at this point, if you want to get everything in the streaming world, it's going to be expensive no matter what. So, the focus is drawn towards what streaming has to offer in comparison to cable TV.

We now must ask ourselves, "Are the service's originals worth giving up everything?"

While with cable you have access to the variety of channels each plan provides, and thus thousands of different shows, services make shows and movies that are only accessible by subscribing. Alongside that, most cable plans have plenty of channels that I'm probably not gonna use, like the Food Network or HGTV. And frankly, this is where the advantage of cutting the cable cord starts to become pretty obvious.

Ever since Netflix started dropping the big bucks on shows like "House of Cards," "Stranger

Things," "Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt," "13 Reasons Why," and "Orange is the New Black," originals are being pumped out like there's no tomorrow. Hulu's got "Handmaid's Tale" and "The Mindy Project," Amazon's got award-winning shows all over. Don't even get me started on HBO.

And now with Disney +, the biggest blockbuster movies are being transmitted only to a subscribable streaming service. That beats the Food Network for me at least.

So the concept of "cable-cutting" has changed. But at this point in the last eight or so years, cable TV hasn't done much to make high quality content, and streaming services are pumping them out all of the time. The insane amount of great shows and movies being released on these platforms makes streaming continue to be the best in 2019.