



# The Wave Watch

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P.K. Yonge Developmental Research School  
at the University of Florida

# Through The Eyes Of A Student: The PK Difference

Jada Coles, Staff Writer

As a developmental research school, PK is bound to be different. If you ask me, our difference is what sets us apart from other schools. With a mission to design, test, and disseminate innovations in Pre-K-12 education, PK Yonge is a place where creativity is expected, and excellence is encouraged. Having a diverse student community means having unique pathways and curriculum plans that fit each student appropriately. With inclusivity being something that PK embraces, no student is ever excluded and put into a separate classroom or program apart from other students.

As a 9th grade student that has attended PK since the 2nd grade, I can tell you that PK strives to do what's best for all of their students; no matter the circumstances. While some may argue that the work given to students is a bit rigorous, this coursework only prepares students to excel in the upcoming grade. In just the 5th grade, transitioning classes, getting assigned personal chromebooks, and preparing for FSA (now FAST) tests were all a part of preparing us for middle school! While in middle school, teachers prepared us for that big jump from the 2nd to the 3rd floor. With more independent classwork, collaboration with younger students, and encouragement to use resources and ask for help, transitioning from 8th to 9th grade was more of a step than a jump! I can definitely say that PK has always ensured that each student is prepared for the next grade.



My experience has been amazing. I love how the classes are structured and you get to have more time in class to do things," said Nicole Souilliard. "My advice for incoming freshmen would be to play the game. Don't fail a class they're trying to give you an easy A in."



"My 1st year at PK has been amazing and very exciting. Some advice I have is to be positive and organized with your schoolwork," said Emily Le. "Always be open minded and willing to join clubs and meet new people."



"My first year in PK Yonge has honestly been a unique experience. I've met many people who have become awesome friends. I've also had some great teachers who care about their students. I felt a part of a community where everyone had my back and felt that everyone had each other's back," said Talia Karrar. "Some advice I would give to incoming freshmen is to be prepared, organize your time by using a planner, and put yourself out there. Don't worry what others think about you, and don't keep yourself in your comfort zone because you'll regret it. Expand your interests!"

## The Author's Viewpoint:

*High school is a once in a lifetime experience. Make sure you make the most of it! In just four short years, you're determining so many aspects of your future. Yes, schoolwork is important, but make sure you spend time with your friends and family too. PK offers numerous clubs and opportunities to get involved in both our community and around the world! At first, I swore that I wouldn't join any clubs or get involved in extracurriculars. Now 8 months in, I'm a part of yearbook, JAM club, and I plan on joining more next year once my schedule allows for them. As Talia said, don't be afraid to put yourself out there! So many people tell me all the time they wish they would've been more confident and more willing to try new things. Don't grow up to have that regret! Join that club, talk to those people, and make those connections. These memories will last you a lifetime!*

Now in high school, I have numerous AP and Honors classes, school work based around public speaking and college readiness, and multiple opportunities to be a part of clubs and organizations that will help me prepare for my future in college. Being an artistic and creative student, I have taken a liking to the Entrepreneurship & Digital Design pathway. Through this pathway, I will receive numerous certifications in things like Adobe Photoshop, Adobe Illustrator, and WordPress! Having these certifications under my belt will not only allow me to have valuable experience early, but it will also help me to apply for internships that will aid me in pursuing my future career successfully. As we lean more towards the entrepreneurial side of this pathway, we'll learn more about starting and running a successful business. With the knowledge we receive about digital design and entrepreneurship, we can put it towards the designing of our future business. Already we've spoken to successful entrepreneurs, made our very own logos, and we're beginning to set up our websites that will contain all of our works and projects!

I've taken the time to interview three of my fellow 9th grade classmates, and asked them all the same question: "How has your first year at PK been, and what's some advice you would give to incoming freshmen?"



# ***Ride the Sound Wave:***

## ***R-evolution Unleashed by the Blue Wave***

Aubrey Pardue, Staff Writer

The P.K. Yonge Modern Music program has worked tirelessly all year long to put together an unforgettable, mostly student-run concert experience called “R-evolution.” Think of it as our very own high school version of Coachella — a full-on music festival packed with energy, talent, and major school spirit. This epic event will showcase students from middle school through high school, all coming together to share their passion for music and performance.



***Come see R-Evolution***  
**FRIDAY, MAY 16, 6:30 P.M.**

What makes *R-evolution* so special is that it’s not just a concert — it’s a movement. It celebrates creativity, collaboration, and the power of music to bring people together. Each band performing has crafted a unique sound, playing both covers of popular songs and powerful, original music written and produced by students themselves. Whether you’re into pop, rock, indie, or alternative, there’s something for everyone. You’ll hear songs by artists like Taylor Swift, Nirvana, Olivia Rodrigo, and many more. These students have been rehearsing for months, fine-tuning their sets, and preparing to give you a show that’ll have you on your feet all night long.

The concert will feature multiple stages, both outdoor and indoor, so the music will be flowing wherever you go. And it’s not just about the music — the entire campus will be transformed into a vibrant festival zone. There will be lots of goodies and treats available for purchase to keep your energy up between sets. You’ll also be able to pick up exclusive R-evolution t-shirts, merch, and other fun goodies to remember the night by.

But here’s the best part: it’s totally free. That’s right — no tickets, no entry fee, just good vibes and great music. All you have to do is show up and bring the energy. We’re inviting the entire community to join in on the fun, so grab your friends, siblings, parents, neighbors, cousins — everyone’s welcome! Let’s pack the place and show just how powerful the Blue Wave spirit can be when we come together for something we love.

This event is more than just a showcase of musical talent — it’s a testament to what students can accomplish when they’re supported and inspired. The P.K. Yonge Modern Music program has created something truly incredible, and R-evolution is the result of months of hard work, creativity, and passion. So come out, cheer on your classmates, soak in the music, and be a part of something electric. Let’s make some noise and create memories that will last long after the final note is played.

Get ready to ride the sound wave — R-evolution is coming, and the Blue Wave is ready to rock.

# Should I Stay or Should I Go: Is Dual Enrollment Right for You?

Grace Kireta , Staff Writer

Many students are having to face the difficult decision of deciding to dual enroll or stay as a full time student at PKY. Dual enrollment offers students the opportunity to take college courses either online or in person at either Santa Fe, the local state college, or the University of Florida, the local university. However, many students are having difficulty deciding whether dual enrollment would be a good option for them. There are many factors to consider, and numerous high school students have given their opinion in order to provide guidance for students struggling with this decision.

## Key Things for Making a Decision

Some key items to keep in mind when making this decision are that by dual enrolling, high school students are able to get a jumpstart on earning their Associate of Arts (AA) or Associate of Science (AS) degree. With degrees such as these, when entering a four-year undergraduate program at a university, you'll already have the general education requirements that are usually earned in the first two years of the program, meaning that you would earn your bachelor's degree two years faster than those without an AA or AS degree.

Additionally, when comparing AP classes to dual enrollment classes, while both are college level courses and are able to give you college credit to some degree, it's important to realize that a wider range of colleges and universities accept AP classes for college credit as opposed to dual enrollment classes. However, earning college credit from dual enrollment classes is often easier because for AP exams, each college or university will require different passing grades (3, 4, or 5) to earn college credit for the course at their institution. Simply put: while AP courses are widely more accepted as ways to earn college credit, dual enrollment courses are easier to earn credit in, even if they're not as widely accepted.

Ultimately, your decision to dual enroll or stay on campus at PKY should be made based on your personal strengths and preferences in class environments. If you find yourself questioning your ability to keep up with the rigor and difficulty of a dual enrollment course, consider staying on campus at PKY and possibly experimenting with AP courses to build up your confidence. With this, it's important to remember that even if you don't dual enroll for your junior year, you can still apply to dual enroll for your senior year when the time comes. On another note, if you're looking for an opportunity to branch out or try a variety of different electives, dual enrollment may be the best option for you.

At the end of the day, there's no wrong or right answer, but hopefully some of these discussion topics have helped you in your decision.



# Student Views: Dual Enrolled vs. Not Dual Enrolled

Grace Kireta , Staff Writer

## Dual Enrolled: Magnolia Leon



Photo courtesy of:  
Magnolia Leon

Magnolia Leon is a rising 12th grade student at PKY. She chose to dual enroll at Santa Fe at the end of her 10th grade year and has been part-time dual enrolled since the fall of 2024. When making the decision to dual enroll, Magnolia said that freedom was one of the biggest factors that made her decide to dual enroll.

“When you dual enroll, you have so much more time, so much more time to do just whatever you want. Last semester, I had two classes that alternated days, but sometimes classes would be canceled, and then you just have the rest of the day off,” said Leon.

As a student who still takes classes at PKY while also at Santa Fe, she believes that “if you take standard classes such as English or Psychology, the material at Santa Fe is actually easier than high school.”

In terms of the social aspects, she says that she’s found a greater sense of community at Santa Fe and that, “at high school, people are immature and everyone’s laughing at everybody else, but at Santa Fe we’re laughing with each other.”

As for advice to those choosing between Santa Fe or UF, she said to “go to Santa Fe if you are a more interactive learner, but if you can handle rigorous college level classes where they simply lecture and you take notes, attend UF dual enrollment.”

Magnolia took ENC 1101 (covers 11th grade English) and Psychology for her Santa Fe fall semester classes, and is taking ENC 1102 (covers 12th grade English) and American Sign Language this spring.

## Not Dual Enrolled: Hasi Tumati

Hasi Tumati is a graduating senior at PKY. She chose to not dual enroll and only take classes at PKY.

It’s important to realize that when dual enrolling and taking college classes, the grades you get from those classes will begin to build your college GPA.

It can be risky for individuals who are unsure how well they can handle college level classes as the grade you get will be stuck to your college transcripts. As for Hasi, she said that this was one main reason as to why she didn’t want to dual enroll.

She said that due to “how crucial my college GPA is for my future plans, which is medical school, and I didn’t want to go in as an inexperienced high school student into a college class just to get Bs and Cs and then start college with a low GPA instead of a clean-slate GPA of a five.”

When asked about any regrets, she stated that not having as flexible of a schedule is one of the main downsides to her decision to stay on campus, and that when taking dual enrollment classes you’re able to choose your own schedule in terms of what days and times you want to attend your classes.

She also explained that in order to compensate for not dual enrolling, she’s taken a lot of AP courses. When comparing dual enrollment courses to AP courses, AP courses are often seen as much more rigorous and challenging due to the set rubric and requirements for the AP exam which students must pass in order to earn college credit.

Hasi recommends that students take into account what type of learner they are when deciding to dual enroll since UF dual enrollment is likely to offer much less support due to the large class sizes, and unless you are confident in your ability to earn an A taking a college course, think twice before dual enrolling as whatever grade you earn will affect both your high school GPA and college GPA.



Photo courtesy of:  
Hasi Tumati



# Curtain Up: P.K. Yonge Shines at Thespian Festival

Hannah Wynn, Staff Writer

The Florida State Thespian festival was held at the Convention Center in Tampa, Florida over spring break from March 19 to 23. The P.K. Yonge Thespian Troupe #4102 attended with eighteen students as well as the sponsors Ms. Hemmerich and Ms. Harriss. In addition to performing, students were able to see productions from other schools and participate in workshops.

The P.K. Yonge students who attended were Ashlynn Price, Amira Souk, Hannah Wynn, Abby Wynn, Blue Johnson, Jaylen Thompson, Ella Grace, Natalie Knoll, Lyla Grossman, Ester Thompson, Nora Montgomery, Max Lim, Juniper Barros, Leon Scarborough, Malaya Hawkins, Zion Thomas, Jasmine Campbell and Gracie McMillen.

The students who attended had to qualify for the state competition by first participating in the district competition and receiving a score of Excellent or Superior on their performance.

Six student acts plus a One Act Play from P.K. Yonge were chosen to perform at the state competition. Those students performed their acts in front of a panel of judges, their fellow P.K. Yonge Thespians, as well as Thespians from across the state of Florida. Each act was judged and assigned a score that could range from Fair, Good, Excellent to Superior.

All of the performances by P.K. Yonge students at the state festival received a score of Excellent or Superior. The performances that received a score of Superior included the group Pantomime “Gears of Time,” the Student Directed scene “Anonymous” and the Duet Musical “The Actuary Song.” The performances that received a score of Excellent included the Duet Musical “Impossible,” the Duet Acting scene “Pride & Prejudice,” the Musical Solo “On My Own” and the One Act play “Alice in Wonderland.”

The students found the festival to be fun, nerve wracking and entertaining.

“This was my first time attending the state Thespian Festival. I didn’t realize how many students in Florida were a part of Thespians. I think there were students there from every city. I was really nervous to perform in front of people who are so serious about theater, but I made it through,” said freshman Abby Wynn.



*Photo courtesy of: Hannah Wynn*

*P.K. Yonge students rehearse the pantomime at the Florida State Thespian Festival.*

There were several Mainstage performances by other schools in the evenings including the high school editions of “Six,” “Hadestown,” “Harry Potter and the Cursed Child,” “Lost in Yonkers,” “Constellations,” “For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide/When the Rainbow Is Enuf,” “Ragtime” and “The Revolutionists.”

“The shows were so professional. I didn’t realize that the performers were high school students when we first started watching the shows. I think that they were as good as the actors and singers that I have seen on Broadway. The shows were awesome,” said Abby Wynn.

P.K. Yonge students also had the option to attend educational workshops which included instruction in topics like directing, stage management, set design, auditioning, intimacy coordination, costumes, choreography and even aerial performances. The students also helped run the festival by performing as door keepers and timekeepers. At the end of the week, the students and teachers returned to P.K. Yonge exhausted but inspired to continue their theatrical pursuits.

# Students Dash Through a Splash of Color

Dania Moreno , Staff Writer

The color run is an exciting event that happens at P.K. Yonge once a year and this year was on March 29. It happens around the school but it begins at the elementary building and makes its way throughout the school grounds. This event is much more than a typical fun run. It is a celebration of school spirit, community, and student involvement.

Beyond the physical activity and colorful chaos, the Color Run reinforces a kind spirit of service and involvement in students but also their families. For example, this year we have a student from 10th grade, Nuttawan Krasinsri who played a role in making the event a success, but also had fun while doing it.

“The Color Run is something I look forward to every year,” said Nuttawan. “It is a fun event where you get to run while being covered in colorful powder. But it is more than that, it is a chance to participate, learn new things, and contribute to the school community.”

While many students sign up to run, others like Nuttawan choose to support the event behind the scenes,

“I helped pass out shirts, throw powder at runners, and assisted with both setting up and cleaning up,” she added. “Being part of the team gives you a different perspective. It shows the hard work and how rewarding it truly is.”

The Color Run has grown to be more than just a tradition. It is also an opportunity for students to earn community service hours. With many schools emphasizing service learning, the Color Run offers a perfect way and opportunities for students to meet these requirements in a fun and engaging environment.

“You can be a runner, or you can be a volunteer,” Nuttawan explained. “Either way, it is a great experience. Volunteering gives students a chance to get involved, especially if they need hours for school or just want to give back to the community in the school.”

For many, like Nuttawan, the Color Run has become a meaningful part of the school experience.

“It only happens once a year, so I try to be part of it,” she said. “It is exciting to see everyone come together whether you are running, throwing powder, or just cheering. It brings a lot of joy.”

The Color Run is designed to not only promote physical activity but also to encourage school wide engagement, from the high school students who run or volunteer to the elementary kids with their supportive families who sweetly run side by side. By combining exercise with creativity, the event draws in a broad range of participants.

The colorful powder adds an element of surprise and excitement, turning the race into a celebration rather than a competition, but some might add fierce competition for the fun of it. The school continues to prioritize student engagement events like the Color Run that serve as key experiences in building a connected, active, and close knit community within the school grounds, while still giving options for example older kids who would rather participate in volunteering like Nuttawan.



*Photo courtesy of: Dania Moreno  
Students and parents run through green chalk powder at this year's Color Run.*



## Beyond the Badge: Officer Belleville's Mission to Protect and Connect

Aubrey Pardue , Staff Writer

School Resource Officers (SROs) play a vital role in creating a safe and supportive environment within schools. These specially trained law enforcement officers are assigned to work in educational settings, where they help ensure campus safety, respond to emergencies, and build positive relationships with students and staff. Beyond security, SROs often serve as mentors and educators, helping to guide students, prevent crime, and promote conflict resolution. Their presence not only deters potential threats but also fosters trust between law enforcement and the school community, contributing to a safer, more connected learning environment. In addition to maintaining safety, SROs play an integral role in teaching students about important life skills such as responsible decision-making, respect for others, and handling peer pressure. Their ability to connect with students in a supportive, non-intimidating way can positively impact the overall school culture, helping to create a space where both students and staff feel valued and secure. By serving as a resource for both students and faculty, SROs help to bridge the gap between the school and the wider community.

At P.K. Yonge, our School Resource Officer is part of the University of Florida Police Department. Officer Henri Belleville has served as the P.K. Yonge SRO since 2019.

While we usually see him around campus keeping things running smoothly, there's a lot more that goes into his day than most people realize.



*Photo courtesy of: Aubrey Pardue*

“On a daily basis, I help with the physical security of the campus, I answer calls for service — like when DCF comes in or when a student acts in a criminal way, I have to help with that. I keep the campus safe, I help traffic in and out of campus, I coach the baseball team, and for breakfast I either have yogurt or some hard-boiled eggs, a good healthy breakfast. Oh, and I gel my hair in the morning,” said Officer Belleville.

His job involves a lot of responsibility and quick thinking, but what stands out the most is how much he truly enjoys being here. From managing serious situations to directing traffic with a smile, Officer Belleville brings both professionalism and personality to everything he does.

He handles tough situations with care and precision, while still finding time to connect with students, support school activities, and even coach the baseball team.

His daily routine is a perfect balance of responsibility and positivity, showing that even the busiest job can be done with a good attitude and a sense of humor.

Whether he's working closely with staff on safety protocols or just making students smile in the hallway, Officer Belleville proves every day that he's not only a key part of our campus operations — he's also someone who genuinely cares. Each day brings something different, and he faces it all with energy, heart, and of course, perfectly gelled hair.

### **Officer Belleville's Favorite Part of Being an SRO**

Something you may not know about Officer Belleville is what his favorite part about working at our school really is. Sure, you've probably seen him around campus keeping everyone safe and lending a hand, but behind the scenes, he's doing even more than most students realize. When asked about his favorite part of the job, he shared something truly meaningful.



*continued from page 8*

“I implemented the UFPD Adopt-a-Family for Thanksgiving, where we adopted three families and provided them with full Thanksgiving dinners. I also started ‘Shop with a Cop,’ where we took a few students to Target and gave them the opportunity to pick out up to \$200 worth of gifts — all paid for. I love working with the kids and students, and getting to build good relationships with them is one of my favorite things I get to do.”

These programs go far beyond what many people expect from a school resource officer — they’re about spreading kindness, giving back to the community, and making a lasting impact in students’ lives.

For Officer Belleville, being here is about more than safety; it’s about connection, compassion, and creating a school culture where students feel seen, supported, and valued. From helping families during the holidays to simply being a positive presence in the halls, Officer Belleville is constantly going the extra mile without seeking recognition. He is more than just a friendly face in uniform — he’s a true role model and someone who represents the best of what school spirit and service look like. Now you know — Officer Belleville is quietly making waves on our campus in the best way possible.

### **Dad Jokes, UF Sports Events, and Fist Bumps**

It’s clear that his positive impact extends far beyond the walls of our school. Fellow UPD Officers had a lot of great things to say about him — both professionally and personally.

One sergeant shared, “He is almost always found at UF sporting events patrolling them and keeping both the players and the Gator fans safe.” It’s clear that Officer Belleville takes his role seriously and is dedicated to protecting not just students, but the larger community as well.

Another sergeant mentioned how well-known and well-liked he is around town: “He almost always is recognized by students outside of school and is always giving a fist bump or a high five.”

That kind of connection says a lot about the relationships he’s built — students trust him, remember him, and genuinely enjoy interacting with him. He’s not just a uniform on campus; he’s a friendly face who makes people feel welcome and safe.

And of course, no conversation about Officer Belleville would be complete without mentioning his sense of humor.

One sergeant joked, “He has pretty good dad jokes, but mine are better.” It’s that fun-loving spirit that makes Officer Belleville so approachable and easy to talk to.

Whether he’s patrolling major events, chatting with students in the hallway, or sharing a laugh with his fellow officers, he brings a perfect balance of professionalism and personality. It’s easy to see why he’s such a beloved member of both the school and the wider Gainesville community. He’s not just a great officer — he’s someone who brings people together, one fist bump and dad joke at a time.

### **“Just a Really Great Guy”**

Senior Connor Geiger has known Officer Belleville for a very long time and had some truly meaningful words to share about his experience with him.

Reflecting on their years of interaction both inside and outside of school, Geiger said, “he’s an amazing coach and mentor, and just a really great guy to be around.”

This short but powerful statement speaks volumes about the kind of person Officer Belleville is, especially to students who have had the chance to spend time with him over the years. As a coach, he’s the kind of leader who motivates, encourages, and pushes students to do their best, not only in sports but in life. His mentorship goes beyond the field or the classroom — it’s about offering guidance, listening when students need support, and always being someone they can count on.

Whether he’s coaching, patrolling the school, giving advice, or just chatting in passing, Officer Belleville has left a lasting impression on students, especially those who have gotten to know him over several years. His kindness, leadership, and everyday presence have made a positive impact that will continue to ripple through the Blue Wave community for years to come.

Safe to say, Officer Belleville isn’t just a school resource officer — he’s a part of what makes this school such a great place to be! If you are nice enough to him, maybe he’ll share a hard boiled egg with you, or teach you the secret behind his hair gel.

## Teaching by Day, Performing by Night: High School Teachers Star in Local Plays

Sofia Castellanos, Staff Writer

For both Ms. Weber and Mr. Lincoln, stepping back onto the stage after years away wasn't just about performing—it was about reconnecting with a part of themselves they had put on hold.

Life as a teacher, parent, and professional often leaves little room for creative pursuits, but community theater provided them with an opportunity to rediscover their love for acting, form new bonds, and find joy in something deeply personal. While their paths back into theater were sparked by different motivations—nostalgia for a beloved show in Ms. Weber's case, and the chance to support his daughter's passion for Mr. Lincoln—their stories reflect a shared sentiment: theater, even when exhausting, is a uniquely fulfilling experience.

Ms. Weber was drawn back into theater when she saw that the Gainesville Community Playhouse was putting on *Ragtime*, a show she had enjoyed performing in high school.

She joined the ensemble, intentionally avoiding a lead role because of her busy life. "I have a baby and stuff and a job and so even I think if I could have been a lead it would have been too much work."

Rehearsals were demanding, and she often had little time with her family in the evenings. "I would pretty much get home from school and then have maybe two hours to eat dinner and hang out with my baby and my husband a little bit and I would just have to go until pretty late at night."



*Photo courtesy of: Gainesville Community Playhouse*  
*The Ragtime cast, including Ms. Weber in the ensemble, perform. The cast also included 4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher Mr. Brack in the brown suit.*

One of her favorite parts of the experience was social. "It was nice to, like, meet a bunch of new people," she said, especially since "I don't have a ton of time to meet other people" outside of work and close friends.

Mr. Lincoln also returned to theater after a long hiatus since his acting experiences in high school and college, motivated by a desire to bond with his daughter who was actively involved in stage productions.

"I found it as a good way to connect with my daughter who is very much interested in doing theater stuff." He explained, "I was like, well, you know, I'm already driving to the theaters like I might as well stick around and do stuff."

This all started two years ago after his daughter was in *Annie* and the Star Center Theater decided to put on its sequel which had some adult roles that needed to be filled. Their most memorable shared experience came during a production of *Hairspray* this spring.



*Photo courtesy of: Star Center Theater*  
*Mr. Lincoln as part of the Hairspray cast.*

"She got to play the lead character Tracy and I got to play one of the leads, Edna, which is Tracy's mom. It was like I got to be her mom on stage, which you know was a slightly different take on things from normal," he laughed.

Like Ms. Weber, he found it hard to juggle teaching, acting, and family responsibilities.

"It is a drain because when I'm in a show, basically I teach, I do this show, and then I go to bed," he said. "It's like, you know, it's three months of your time... almost every moment of free time is gone."

Both Ms. Weber and Mr. Lincoln found that returning to the world of theater brought a renewed sense of joy, purpose, and community to their lives. Though rehearsals were long and balancing schedules was demanding, the connections they made and the personal growth they experienced made it worthwhile. As Ms. Weber put it, "It's not so bad being tired when it's doing something you like."



# The Dangers of Procrastination

Jada Coles, Staff Writer

Chances are as a student in 2025, you've encountered procrastination once or twice. Rather it be those IXLs for math, or that science project you know you should've already started, procrastination can sneak up on you. When it does, it is not pretty. As a procrastinator myself, I know of the many distractions that look particularly appealing when you have an important thing due. Between social media, extracurriculars, and attention-grabbing hobbies, focusing on your academics can be a difficult task. Procrastination is something that all students deal with once or twice in their academic career, so there's nothing to be embarrassed about!

"One way procrastination and academic stress has affected me as a 9th grader is that I sometimes wait until the last minute to do my homework, or study for tests. When that happens, I feel really overwhelmed and anxious because I'm trying to do everything all at once. It makes it harder to focus, and I don't always do my best work. Then I get stressed out even more because I'm worried about my grades. It's like a cycle that's hard to break," said freshman Callie Hammond.

Here are three tips on how you can deal with academic stress and procrastination!

## Tip #1: Break down your larger tasks/assignments:

- Make assignments seem less daunting by breaking them down into smaller steps. Say you have a 500 word essay to do. Trying to complete this essay in 1-2 days of nonstop work is unrealistic. Instead, try writing a paragraph or two everyday. By doing this, you'll find that managing your time and breaking down your assignments will create a much easier workload, and therefore limit your stress.

## Tip #2: Set realistic goals for yourself:

- Setting goals before you start on an assignment is a great way to ensure that you stay on track, manage your time responsibly, and avoid that overwhelming feeling you get when you wait until the last minute to start the assignment you had 2 weeks to do. Having unrealistic goals for yourself can cause you to feel unmotivated and stressed!

## Tip #3: Prioritize your tasks:

- Doing your tasks in an order of importance can really help you to take off some of that academic pressure, and allow you to put more energy towards those (annoying assignments). Getting that bigger task out the way first can give you motivation to do those smaller assignments that will take you less time and energy to complete.



Lastly, our school provides us with calendars that are extremely helpful when you have a lot of assignments for the next week that you just can't keep track of in your head. For me, having a million things floating around in my head makes me stressed out. Writing out my list of assignments for the day helps me to be both prepared, and informed of all the things that are due either by the end of that day or at the end of the week. Procrastination is not something that is easy to just stop doing. With practice and patience, procrastination will be something you no longer have to worry about. Incorporate these tips into doing your schoolwork for a week and see if you feel a difference!

# Working Teens: Balancing Paychecks and Papers

**Mickinzi Anderson, Staff Writer**

Between late-night homework sessions and early-morning shifts, some high school students aren't just showing up to school — they're showing up to work, too. With rising costs, personal goals, and a desire for independence, many students are stepping into the workforce while juggling their academic responsibilities. But what's it really like to balance a part-time job with a full school schedule?

To get a closer look at this reality, I spoke with three high school students — Rachel, Desiree, and Jade — each managing a different type of job while still trying to make it through their teenage years. They share their struggles, successes, and advice for anyone considering working during high school.

## **Rachel – Pizza Hut, 20 Hours/Week**

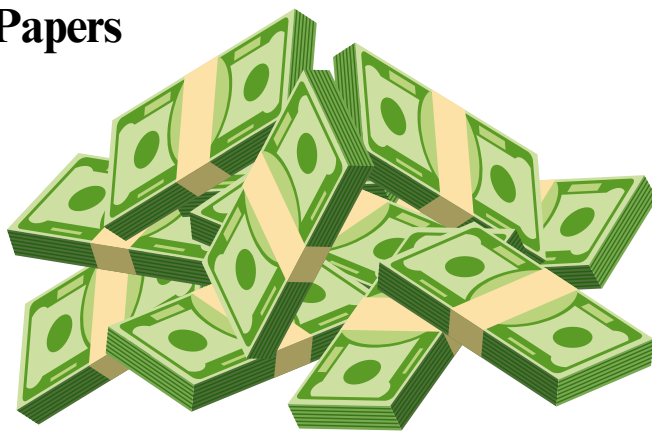
For Rachel, getting a job at Pizza Hut made perfect sense. The restaurant is close to her house, it offers flexible weekend hours, and she can earn solid tips, which is a major plus. “The best part is probably the people I work with,” Rachel says, smiling as she recalls her coworkers who have become close friends over the months.

However, working weekends isn't all fun and games. It comes with a downside: having to balance work hours with school. “The hardest part is managing my weekends,” Rachel says. “I want to enjoy my youth, but I also need to make time to study and be productive on top of school and work.”

At first, Rachel found it difficult to find the right balance, but over time, she learned how to manage her time more effectively. “On days when I'm not working, I try to get ahead on assignments or just relax to recharge,” she says. “It's all about managing time and finding balance.”

Despite working 20 hours a week and dealing with the pressures of school, Rachel is grateful for the lessons she's learned. “It's tough, but it teaches you responsibility,” she says. “I've learned how to stay organized and manage my time better, and it's made me more independent overall.”

Rachel's advice for other students who are thinking about getting a job? “Don't take on too much at once. Start with a few hours a week and make sure it doesn't interfere with school. It's important to know your limits and take breaks when you need them,” she suggests.



## **Desiree – Publix, 12 Hours/Week**

Desiree chose to work at Publix because it offered something beyond a paycheck: long-term potential.

“They offer things like a 401(k) and benefits that are great for teens and adults,” she explains. “It's a great company to work for because they offer good training and growth opportunities. I could see myself staying here long-term.”

Working 12 hours a week, Desiree balances her responsibilities at Publix and school by staying organized and planning ahead.

“Honestly, it's just managing your time,” she explains. “You have to get used to planning ahead, using your breaks to catch up on schoolwork, and staying on top of your assignments. You really can't afford to fall behind.”

One of the benefits of working at Publix is the work environment. Desiree loves the team spirit and the respectful, supportive atmosphere. “The people I work with are great, and Publix really cares about its employees,” she says. “I've learned a lot about customer service, working with others, and being a team player.”

However, finding time for herself is one of the biggest struggles Desiree faces. “I don't get as much free time as I'd like,” she admits. “But I know it's worth it. I'm setting myself up for a good future, and the sacrifices I make now will pay off later.”

Desiree's advice to others who are thinking about balancing school and work? “Get organized, stay on top of your schedule, and use every free minute you can to catch up on schoolwork,” she says. “It's easy to fall behind if you're not careful, so time management is key.”



*continued from page 12*

### **Jade – Dance Teacher, 12 Hours/Week**

Jade's job is a little different than Rachel's and Desiree's. She teaches dance at a studio that her mom runs. As a pre-professional dancer, Jade says her job is a perfect fit for her. "I love working with kids, and I get to share something I'm passionate about. Plus, it's something that could help me in the future," she explains.

Her future plans might include taking over the family business, which makes this job even more meaningful. "I'm learning how to run a business while doing something I love," Jade says. "It's a great combination of passion and practical experience."

However, balancing school and work isn't always easy. Jade lives about 40 minutes away from both school and work, which means a lot of driving and little free time. "It gets exhausting, especially when you have a full day of school, a 40-minute drive, and then you're teaching dance all evening," she says. "But my love for dance and teaching keeps me motivated."

Jade's passion for working with kids makes it all worth it. "I do get tired sometimes, but it's so rewarding to see the kids grow and have fun," she says. "Watching them improve and have a good time in class is one of the best feelings."

### **The Reality of the Hustle**

Despite their different jobs, these three teens have one thing in common: They've learned a lot that goes beyond what they're taught in the classroom. "Having a job teaches you how to deal with people, how to stay organized, and how to manage your time," Rachel says. "It teaches you responsibility, and you have to be self-motivated."

Desiree agrees, adding, "Working at Publix has taught me how to manage different tasks at once. I'm constantly switching between helping customers and making sure I'm getting my work done. It's all about juggling responsibilities."

Jade also believes that the lessons she's learned in her job will serve her well in the future. "It's about showing up, no matter how tired you are," she says. "I'm learning the importance of commitment and hard work. It's not always easy, but it's worth it."

Each of these teens also shared how their jobs have helped them grow as individuals. "When that paycheck hits, it feels good to know you earned it," Desiree says with a smile. "And it's nice to feel like I'm contributing to my family's finances. It's something I'm proud of."

For Jade, the experience of teaching dance has helped her develop leadership skills. "I've learned how to lead and manage people in a way I never expected," she says. "When you're working with kids, you have to be patient, kind, and firm, and that's something I'm continuing to work on."

Rachel's biggest takeaway from her job is the independence it has given her. "I feel more responsible and confident in myself," she says. "When I first started working, I didn't realize how much it would teach me about being self-sufficient."

### **The Bigger Picture: How Jobs Help Teens Prepare for the Future**

Working while in high school isn't just about making extra money — it's about learning life skills that will help in the future. From learning how to communicate effectively with customers to managing time between school, work, and personal life, these teens are gaining real-world experience.

"It's a whole different world outside of school," Rachel says. "You learn skills that help you become more independent."

Desiree sees her job at Publix as an opportunity to learn about the business world. "Being part of a company like this has made me realize how much goes into running a business," she says. "I feel more prepared for whatever I decide to do in the future."

For Jade, her job is not only teaching her leadership skills, but it's also giving her the chance to learn about entrepreneurship. "I'm learning how to run a business while working with kids, and that's something I could definitely use in the future," she explains.

These students may clock out at work, but their efforts don't stop there. They are learning to juggle two worlds — the academic world and the working world — and they're proving that being a teenager today means being tough, talented, and totally capable of handling multiple responsibilities.

Their advice for others? "Start small," Rachel says. "Don't take on too much too fast. It's easy to get overwhelmed, so take it one step at a time." Jade agrees, adding, "It's about finding a balance. It may be hard, but it's worth it." As Desiree put it, "The hustle may be real, but the rewards are even greater."

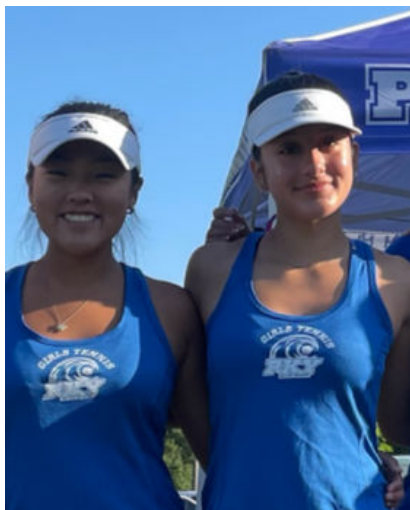


Photo courtesy of: Dania Moreno

## Game, Set, Match

### Girls Tennis Shines at Districts

Dania Moreno, Staff Writer

“The funnest part of tennis for me is playing matches. It is extremely personal because you are your biggest competitor during a match.”

This is due to the struggle you go through when you make some bad judgments and you keep beating yourself up for a mistake that cost you a point. But it is important to remember that you do not lose until that last point, so brush it off and do your best.

#### A Senior's Farewell with Spirit and Strength

Isabella Acuña is a senior whose time on the team has come to an end. She has watched the team evolve and flourish over the years.

For Isabella, this year's district matches carried a deeper meaning as she prepares to graduate. Isabella cherished the memories she made during her high school tennis career, especially the spirit of districts.

“My favorite part about districts has to be the team spirit. Everyone is filled with energy and excitement, plus we all get to show off how hard we worked during the season. One of my favorite memories is cheering loudly with my teammate Emily at districts during my junior year.”

Isabella highlighted the pressure and prestige of districts. “Districts are important for e many reasons. All of our effort and dedication comes down to a few matches within two days. It's a chance to represent our school and advance to regionals or state!”

Her love for the sport runs deep. “Tennis is so fun because of how versatile the game is. It's a great way to relax and chat with friends, or have both a physical and mental challenge. There are so many possible moves to make and there's always room to improve something.”

Her insightful quotes can be inspirational not only for tennis players but also any athlete.

#### The Team Behind the Triumphs

Throughout the season, the team balanced rigorous after school practices with schoolwork, family commitments, and the ups and downs of teenage life. Practices often included drills, match simulations, and time to discuss strategy but they also allowed for fun, celebration, and team bonding.

Districts are the final opportunity for the team to put in all on the line, and the intensity was clear from the first serve. Some matches came down to tie breaks. Others won decisively. Every girl fought hard, not just for themselves but for each other. While not every match ended in a victory, the team walked away from the district tournament with pride, knowing they gave their all.

For senior Isabella, this season is a bittersweet goodbye. For freshmen like Luci, it's just the beginning. But for everyone involved, from coaches to players to the fans and family in the stands, this year's district games were a powerful reminder of the heart and grit that make the girls varsity tennis team a force to be reckoned with on and off the court.



Photo courtesy of: Dania Moreno

The energy was amazing at this year's district tennis matches as the P.K. Yonge girls varsity tennis team stepped onto the court with rackets in hand. For many players, districts is more than just a competition. It is a celebration of hard work, personal growth, and team unity coming from their shared love for tennis.

It is clear that the district matches represented something much bigger than individual victories. For many on the team, it was the culmination of months of determination, discipline, and emotional highs and lows, finally a big achievement for the players, the coaches, and the school.

#### A Freshman's First District Experience

For Lucia Rodriguez, a 9<sup>th</sup> grade varsity player, her first district appearance was unforgettable. She is a standout player who earned a spot on the varsity team in her very first year of high school, sharing her perspective with a bright, enthusiastic smile.

“My favorite part of the district was probably spending time with the team,” said Luciana. “I loved watching all of their matches and cheering them on.”

Having joined varsity as a freshman, Luci described the season as a joyful time in which she was able to make new friends and have new memories with her supportive teammates and coaches.

“Being on the varsity team has been an amazing experience. The coaches and players are all very sweet and supportive. I have made many friends and memories this season!”



## Final Inning, Last Cheers: Softball's Senior Night Ends with Big Win and Big Emotions

**Mickinzi Anderson, Staff Writer**

Under the Tuesday night lights on April 22, the varsity softball team stepped onto the field for more than just another game — they stepped into a moment that marked the end of an era. Facing off against Hawthorne High, the girls delivered a powerful 16-0 win on Senior Night, but the score was only part of the story.

This night was about seven seniors who have shared the field — and their lives — for years: Makenzie Radford, Mickinzi Anderson, Jessica Bain, Brianna Garrison, Alison Sanetz, Emma Mansfield, and Harper Jose. For many of them, this was a team built on years of shared experiences, laughter, and competition.

"We've been such a tight group since sixth grade," senior Harper shared. "We've been playing with each other since middle school and are closer than ever."

The game kicked off with energy and ended with fireworks. One of the highlights was Harper Jose's near home run that had the crowd on its feet. But the night's final out was senior pitcher Mickinzi Anderson striking out the final batter to end the game — and her high school career — on a high note.

"It felt bittersweet," senior Mickinzi said. "It was a fun, good, happy game for all of us, but we all knew it was our last time doing this together."

The most emotional moment of the night came during the last inning switch-out, where the seniors were subbed off the field for the final time, giving teammates and fans alike a chance to celebrate their impact.

And the crowd? They showed up and showed out. The bleachers were packed with cheering students, families, and fans, all there to honor the seniors. Parents and siblings even threw out the ceremonial first pitches — with some surprising heat, and others drawing a few laughs. "Some could use some work," senior Brianna joked.

In true senior style, there were fun and personal touches all around. The seniors created a celebration system based on bases: a double meant you had to dab, while a triple earned a Michael Jackson pose. "Emma ate that one up" senior Alison said. The dugout never stopped smiling.

But what comes next? The future is bright for these athletes:

- Makenzie Radford – University of South Carolina Sumter (Softball)
- Mickinzi Anderson – Arizona State University (Academics)
- Jessica Bain – East Georgia State College (Softball)
- Brianna Garrison – Santa Fe College (Academics)
- Alison Sanetz – Florida State University (Academics)
- Emma Mansfield – Jacksonville University (Softball)
- Harper Jose – University of Central Florida (Academics)



*Photo courtesy of: Mickinzi Anderson*

*The P.K. Yonge senior softball players huddle up one last time during their game.*

The team will be losing more than just talent. With 7 of the 11 varsity players graduating, the underclassmen will be saying goodbye to leaders who've shaped the team's culture.

"We'll miss the energy they bring," teammate Caramia said. "They're a huge part of what makes this team special."

As the lights dimmed on the diamond and the hugs lingered a little longer, one thing was clear: this group of seniors isn't just leaving a stat line behind — they're leaving a legacy.

"It's not about how you start. It's about how you finish and who you finish with."

# Write It Down, Get It Done: The Smart Way to Use Your Planner

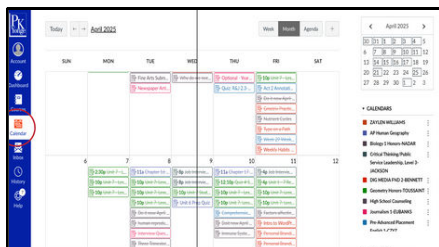
Zaylen Williams, Staff Writer

As every high schooler knows, or even middle schooler, school gets really busy and work piles up almost every day. You might have an IXL due on Monday but then also a human geography textbook questions due that same Monday. Now you are stuck at home and don't know what to do and one is due at 10:00 p.m. and one is due at 11:59 p.m. The same week, you are working on a big summative assignment that takes up most of your time and is due at the end of week. Not only do you have school, but you are also an athlete and so you have to manage your time wisely. This is where the school planner comes in handy.

"The school planner has helped me a lot this year from keeping me organized to letting me remember assignments that I need done for class. There have been many times this school year when I got very overwhelmed, and the school planner helped me combat that overwhelming feeling. It also helped tell me if it was an A or B day, which was really beneficial since I'm new to the school this year," said Talia Karrar.

## Step #1:

Go to your canvas dashboard and on your left side of the computer and go down to the calendar. This step will help you navigate to a space where it will be easier to fill out your planner in the next steps to come.



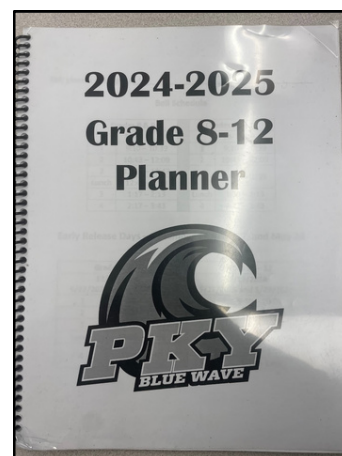
## Step #2

Now you are on your canvas calendar and it is color coded for your different classes with the color key on the right side under calendars. This step helps me to visually see everything that I have to do for that week and helps make sure that I do not miss anything.



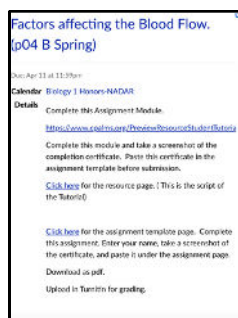
## Step #3

Take out your planner and have your canvas calendar up on canvas.



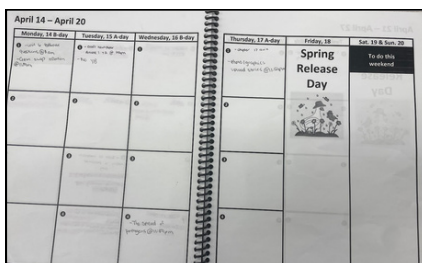
## Step #4

When you're on your canvas calendar, you can simply press on the different rectangles for that week so you can feel out your calendar.



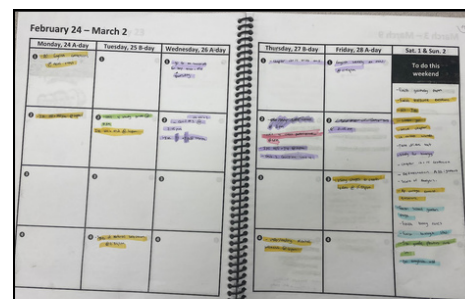
## Step #5

Fill out your planner with all of the information for that week from the canvas calendar.



## Step #6

Once you have filled out your planner for the week, throughout the week you can use a highlighter to check things off that you have done.



Using this method provides a paper copy of your calendar that you can access from anywhere and a visual to do list that you can work from.

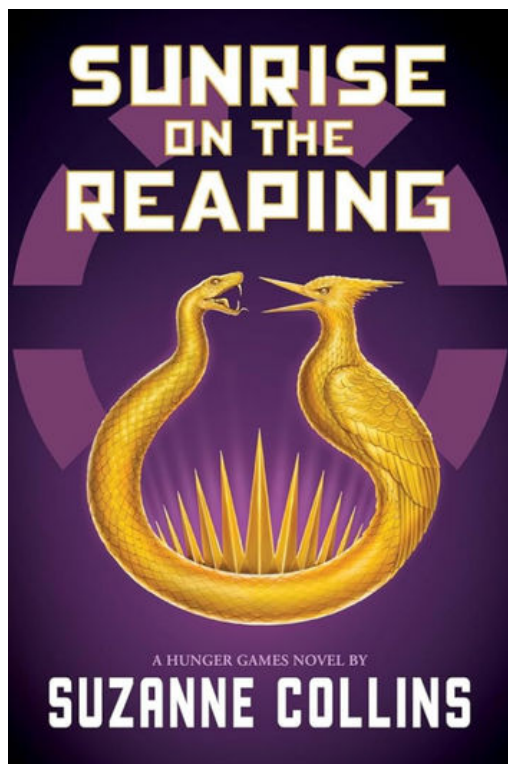
# Top Ten Restaurants for Prom Night Celebration

Ella Walther, Staff Writer

A common tradition for prom is to go to restaurants before going to the dance. All of these places are fun to go to and should be places that you should go to with your date/ friends to get good food before going to the night that signifies the end of high school. Picking a dress, a date, a corsage and an after party will all definitely not be easy so hopefully this list of restaurants takes away another decision to make.

	atmo- sphere	wait time	creative/ options	service	prices	portions	room	crowd
Dragonfly Sushi & Sake	★★★★ ★	★★★★ ½ Get a reservation	★★★★ ★★	★★★★ ★	★★★★ ½	★★★★ ★	★★★★ ★	★★★★ ★
Bowie Pizzeria	★★★★ ★	★★★★ ★★	★★★★ ★★	★★★★ ★	★★★★ ★	★★★★ ½	★★★★ ½	★★★★ ★
Mildred's	★★★★ ★	★★★★ ½	★★★★ ★	★★★★ ★★	★★★★ ½	★★★★ ★	★★★★ ½	★★★★ ★
Harry's	★★★★ ★	★★★★ ★	★★★★ ★★	★★★★ ★	★★★★ ★	★★★★ ★	★★★★ ½	★★★★ ½
V pizza	★★★★ ½	★★★★ ★★	★★★★ ½	★★★★ ★	★★★★ ★	★★★★ ★	★★★★ ★	★★★★ ½
Satchels	★★★★ ★★	★★★★ ★	★★★★ ★	★★★★ ★★	★★★★ ★	★★★★ ★	★★★★ ★★	★★★★ ½
The Top	★★★★ ★	★★★★ ½ Get a reservation	★★★★ ★	★★★★ ★	★★★★ ★	★★★★ ★	★★★★ ½	★★★★ ½
Cheesecake Factory	★★★★ ★	★★★★ ½ Get a reservation	★★★★ ★	★★★★ ★	★★★★ ½	★★★★ ★	★★★★ ★	★★★★ ½
Ford's Garage	★★★★ ★	★★★★ ½ Get a reservation	★★★★ ½	★★★★ ★	★★★★	★★★★ ★	★★★★ ½	★★★★ ★





## THE NEW HUNGER GAMES BOOK: SUNRISE ON THE REAPING. IS IT WORTH IT?

Ebony Hayes, Staff Writer

The Hunger Games franchise, a long going, well-known dystopian book and movie series, was written by Suzanne Collins and first published in late 2008. Since then, the books have skyrocketed to the top of the charts, with the similarly titled movies following suit. The first three books follows a girl who gets picked for the Hunger Games, where kids are forcefully sent to represent their districts in a fight-to-the-death battle with other kids by the capitol. She is mentored by former 50th Hunger Games winner Haymitch Abernathy. The most recent book to this story, *Sunrise on the Reaping*, follows Haymitch's origin story and how he was able to win his games.

Sixteen year old Haymitch Abernathy, the intelligent, loverboy, has been unfairly picked for the 2nd Quarter Quell, a special, extra-dangerous version of the games that occur every 25 years. With three other tributes from District 12, he learns to manage the unfairness of the capitol and joins an alliance with other underprivileged tributes, calling themselves "The Newcomers."

However, when entering the arena, he learns that the alliance doesn't necessarily mean that he would always be protected. Using his smarts and the advantages of the arena layout, he is able to overcome his competitors and win, leaving him traumatized due to the bloodshed and torture his friends faced.

Going into this book, I was skeptical because I felt as if the Hunger Games story had ended with the final scene of *The Mockingjay Part 2*, but I am proud to say that I was pleasantly surprised with how much I enjoyed it. I was a big fan of the original series and I felt like it was a needed addition to complete the story, seeing as it was frequently mentioned in the second book.

If you enjoyed this book, I recommend the *Divergent* series or *The Maze Runner* trilogy. All three are similarly set in a dystopian universe featuring protagonists who struggle through challenges and fight for survival.

When I discussed the book with Mrs. Koppitch, she called it a "wonderful addition to the series," and said that it will be added to our library "very soon." If you liked the book series, she recommended *The Testing* trilogy by Joelle Charbonneau or *The Handmaid's Tale* novel by Margaret Atwood. If Suzanne Collins were to continue this series, I think she should continue featuring past victors of the Hunger Games but I also believe that right now would be a good stopping place and an opportunity to start something new.

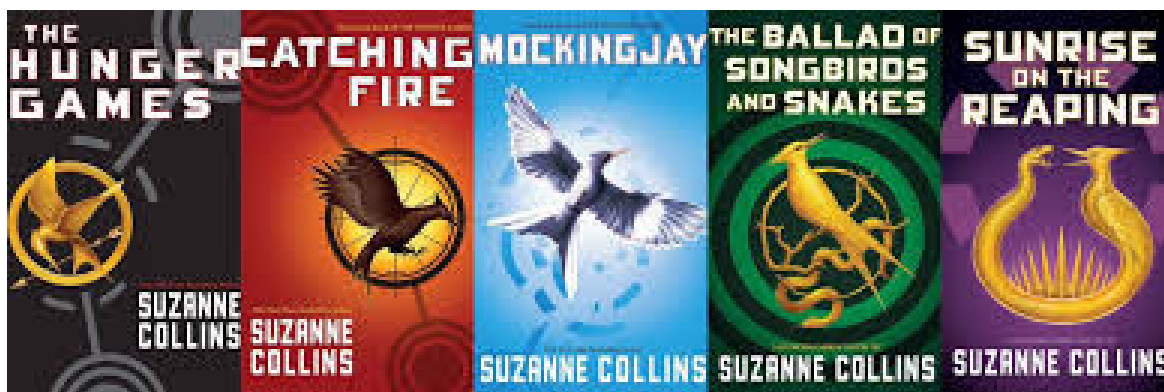




Photo courtesy of: Main Street Daily News

## SAY CHEESE: BOWIE PIZZA OPENS ITS DOORS

Tatyana Coleman-Hubbard, Staff Writer

Bowie Pizza is a newly opened restaurant in Gainesville. Since its recent opening it has accumulated many guests. What really pulls in all of their customers is the super immaculate vibe, service, food, price, hangout ability, and uniqueness of the restaurant.

For starters, the vibe in the establishment is very chill and welcoming. Usually at restaurants you can be overwhelmed by blaring music or underwhelmed by the lack of music and sound. The restaurant filled the atmosphere with ambient music. Not only was the music at an appropriate volume but the lighting was also very welcoming. It was a great blend of light and dark which makes it amazing for taking photos with friends and capturing your experience.

Second off, the service at Bowie Pizza is amazing. All of the staff were very friendly and helpful. One thing that stood out was an employee letting us know that some of the equipment was new and it may take a while to use it. This can prevent any confusion for first time users as they are trying to enjoy their experience. Also, the restaurant had the option of a kiosk and a register to order at. In this day and age, using kiosks allows you to not feel obligated to talk to people which lets people with anxiety have the ability to not feel uncomfortable while dining.



Photo courtesy of: Tatyana Coleman-Hubbard  
The chocolate pizza at Bowie Pizza

Next up, the delicious food. They had around 13 options to choose from on the menu. Including a rare chocolate dessert pizza. The pizza came out hot, so it was exactly what you would look forward to while enjoying your meal. Not only did it come out hot, but it arrived 4 minutes after the order was completed. It was presented in four slices, and is the perfect amount for one person. You get more than enough pie for the price, but don't fret. Boxes were supplied by the restaurant, so if you wanted to take it home you 100% could.

Moving on to the price of these pizza pies. I know when I want to have really tasty pizza I do not want to have to break the bank along the way. This makes the prices at Bowie Pizza so perfect for teens and other students. Their prices typically range from \$11 to \$20. They also gave you the option to pay with cards and with cash. Although this is the ideal scenario for younger people, it may not be best suited for families. Given the fact that the pizzas are 11 inches, each person would have a pizza of their own. The cost of each pizza can easily add up to an amount higher than you would hope for. It also doesn't help that your drink, if you choose to get one, doesn't come with your meal, so you would need to pay extra on top of your total.

Overall, I believe that you get your money's worth. Especially since you can leave on a full stomach.

Bowie Pizza is an amazing new local pizza establishment. I could definitely see myself coming back for more pizza with friends. It's a great pre- or post-school dance meal because it's a nice quick meal set in a very well presented environment. I highly recommend not missing the action and having a piece of the pie.

## Spreading Smiles, One Letter at a Time: Joint Love for Our Elders Club Connects Generations

Lilly Buss, Staff Writer

In a world that moves quickly, it's easy for some of the most important voices to go unheard, our elders. That's where the Joint Love for Our Elders club at P.K. Yonge steps in. With heartfelt letters, handmade cards, and genuine kindness, the students behind this initiative are bringing joy and human connection to senior citizens across the country one envelope at a time.

The club's mission is simple but powerful: to uplift and celebrate older adults who may be feeling lonely, isolated, or forgotten. Whether living in nursing homes, assisted living communities, or on their own, the recipients of these letters receive not just words, but warmth, comfort, and the reminder that they matter.

"Our elders have stories, wisdom, and experiences that deserve to be honored," said Club President Sydnie Colaw. "Writing to them is our way of saying, 'We see you, we care about you, and we're here for you.'"

Members of the club meet bi-weekly to write letters filled with positive messages, thoughtful questions, and artistic touches. Some students share poems, short stories, or illustrations. Others reflect on their daily lives and express appreciation for the contributions older generations have made. Every letter is personal, creative, and designed to brighten someone's day.

Each month, the club partners with the national nonprofit Love for Our Elders to ensure their letters reach people in need of connection. They also collaborate with local senior centers, hospitals, and nursing homes, proving that a small act of kindness can have a far-reaching impact.

The club has grown rapidly since its founding, drawing in students from all grade levels and backgrounds who want to make a difference. What unites them is a shared belief in the power of compassion and the joy that comes from giving without expecting anything in return.

"Our letters don't have to be perfect," said Taylor Hass. "It's the thought and the love behind them that really matters. It's amazing to know that something so simple can mean so much."

The club has already sent out hundreds of letters, and the response has been heartwarming. Seniors have written back, expressing how touched they are by the kindness of young people they've never met. Some even display the letters on their walls or read them aloud during group activities.

In a time when digital screens often dominate communication, the Joint Love for Our Elders club is proving that the handwritten word still holds magic. It's more than just a school club, it's a movement of empathy, creativity, and intergenerational connection.

Want to get involved or learn more? Stop by Dr. Cordero's room during high-school lunch on Tuesdays/Thursdays or follow the club on Instagram at @pky.lfoe Together, we can keep making the world a little warmer—one letter at a time.





# Plan, Prepare, Succeed: Why You Should Join the Pre-Collegiate Club

**Marina Freeman, Staff Writer**

Pre-Collegiate Club is a club directed towards juniors and seniors who are interested in exploring their options for college. The club attends college tours to universities that accept Bright Futures. Juniors and seniors are able to get an idea for what college life will be like and guide them to eventually finding the school that is best fit for them.

Many students may be overwhelmed with the decision-making process of finding a college they want to attend. Touring colleges gives students a firsthand experience of the campus and gives them the opportunity to ask questions they may have about room and board, majors, student life or any other important information about the college.

The Pre-Collegiate club was brought to P.K. Yonge in 2023 and Dr. Geiger became the sponsor of the club. Throughout the past two years, the club has attended college tours at FSU, USF, VSU, UF, Santa Fe College, Florida International University, Florida Atlantic University, University of Central Florida, Florida Agricultural & Mechanical University, and other colleges that accept Florida Bright Futures.

The Pre-Collegiate club encourages students to take action early when it comes to applying to colleges. Pre-Collegiate club assists with college applications through workshops and help sessions specifically to seniors. It is important to start early rather than wait til the last minute to work on important tasks for the college process.

**Ayrin King, President**

**What does this club offer that has benefited you?**

“This club educated me on the options of different colleges in Florida. Such as Historically Black Colleges & Universities and Predominantly White Institutions. This club has helped me and other people determine what school may be the best fit for us.”

**What college tour was the most memorable and why?**

“Our recent college tour to Valdosta State University and Florida Agricultural & Mechanical University was the most memorable because our group was larger and this tour impacted more of our students since the start of the club this year.”

**What is one piece of advice you would give incoming juniors and seniors about college preparation?**

“Keep your grades up!”

**Ginai Slater, Secretary**

**What is one piece of advice you would give incoming juniors and seniors about college preparation?**

“One piece of advice I would give to the incoming juniors and seniors is to start early! Senior year comes and goes fast. If you have a thought about a school, get your parents to book a tour or voice it to the upcoming pre-collegiate board!”

**What is one thing you learned while being a part of this club?**

“One thing I learned while being a part of this club is to do actual research on different colleges and take in what the tour guides are telling you. The dorms matter. The class size matters. Everything matters!”



*Photo courtesy of: PKY Pre-Collegiate Club Instagram*

**Destini Williams, Treasurer**

**What does this club offer that has benefited you?**

“The opportunity to be able to see different campuses of schools that I hadn’t previously heard of before. The opportunity to have a guided tour while walking around different colleges. I was also able to get a picture of what my life would be like if I attended the colleges we toured.”

**What is one piece of advice you would give incoming juniors and seniors about college preparation?**

“Visit as many colleges as possible because viewing the campuses in person allows you to get a visualization of what college will look like. Talking to as many people on campus to get more information about classes, the campus, and other important information.”

## Printing School Spirit with The BluePrint Club

**Abigail Wynn, Staff Writer**

The BluePrint club is one of the most fun activities that students can join. Graduating senior Hannah Wynn has been involved with The BluePrint for the past three years. She describes The BluePrint as “a completely autonomous business that is run by students and overseen by Ms. Bennett.”

Students take commissions from groups at P.K. Yonge and create promotional materials including t-shirts and posters. Students can work in communication, design or production.

The communications team receives the requests for the products and handles the finances. This can include calculating the costs of each of the products and discussing it with the requesting group.

The design team makes the designs and communicates with the client to make sure that the products are what they had in mind. This can involve creating multiple designs and making changes.

The production team uses the design to make the actual product. One of the main things that they do is burn the design onto a screen and then use the screen to make a shirt. Hannah states that this can be complicated because each color requires a different screen for each of the shirts.

Hannah states that her favorite part of The BluePrint is being able to design the products and learning how to use professional software.



*Photo courtesy of: Abigail Wynn*

“I have learned so much about Adobe Illustrator in BluePrint,” said Hannah.

She said that her work at The BluePrint “helped me learn how to communicate effectively with people so that they can get the design that they want in the quickest amount of time. Dealing with clients can be very stressful, especially when they don’t understand how much work goes into each design. I’ve had to learn to make a creative project when there is a deadline.”

“My favorite design is the one I did for the Winter Pop-Up Shop. It was very fun to make,” said Hannah.

Some of the other projects completed by The BluePrint this year include the Senior Swim shirts, Blue Wave Strength shirts, the Performing Arts shirts and hoodies, the fall play Alice in Wonderland shirts and posters, the Class of 2025 shirts and hoodies, Roaring Riptide shirts, Tennis team shirts, Lady Wave shirts and the spring musical Chicago shirts and posters just to name a few. The BluePrint also had a booth at the Winter Market and the Spring Market.

Hannah said that The BluePrint is for everyone. P.K. Yonge has just created a BluePrint Junior club so that younger students can participate.

***“The BluePrint is a great experience that is a really special part of P.K. Yonge. Be willing to compromise and be willing to work with people. Everyone has to do their part and then pass it on. But mostly, be prepared to have fun.”***

Hannah Wynn, BluePrint Senior





## Opinion: No Sweat, No Sport: The Case Against eSports

Owen Best, Staff Writer

When you tell someone you play a sport, they probably think of soccer, football, basketball, or something like that. Most people don't think of video games. But now a lot of people are calling video gaming a "sport," and I'm not really sure I agree. I think it's its own thing. Yeah, it's competitive and takes skill, but it's not the same as running around on a field or court. Esports is cool and fun, but I don't think it should be in the same category as regular sports.

There are some high schools that are adding esports as a competitive "sport" and this brings mixed reactions. One of my friends who goes to St. Francis High says he's against "this esports stuff" because they are taking the funding from real sports like football where they dropped from a regulation 11 players versus 11 players to an eight v eight which he strongly dislikes.

Now you might be asking yourself how much this school spent on gaming equipment. According to my friend the school dropped a whopping \$3,500 on the new electronics such as TVs, Nintendo Switches and Playstations 5s.

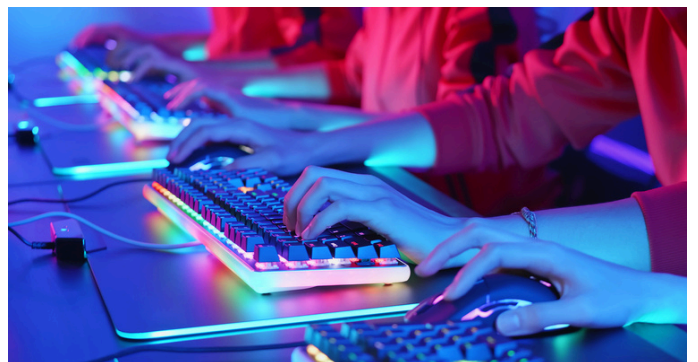
Now, I'm not saying esports shouldn't exist or be supported. I get that a lot of students love video games and want to compete in them. There's teamwork, fast thinking, and strategy involved, just like in sports. But I still think there's a big difference between gaming and something like track or basketball. In sports, you're out there moving your body, practicing plays, staying in shape. In esports, most of the work happens sitting down, and that just feels different to me. I feel like it should be in a different category.

Some people say esports should be a real sport because it's getting really big. There are even colleges giving out scholarships for gaming, and some pro gamers make tons of money. That's honestly pretty cool, and I'm not saying it's not hard. But just because something is popular or takes skill doesn't mean it's a sport. Like, chess is hard too, but we don't call that a sport.

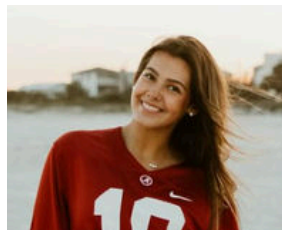
Another reason I think it's different is because of the physical part. In regular sports, you're out there running, sweating, working hard, and sometimes even getting hurt. That's what makes it fun and challenging. In esports, you're mostly sitting down holding a controller or keyboard. It takes focus and fast reactions, sure, but you're not moving around or staying in shape the same way.

I asked my classmate Coda what she thought, and she said, "I think esports should count as a sport because it takes practice and teamwork, just like soccer or volleyball." On the other hand, my friend Keenan told me, "Esports is cool and all, but calling it a sport is kind of a stretch. It's more like a competition."

In the end, I know not everyone will agree, and that's fine. Esports is fun and a lot of people like it. I just think it should have its own category, not be called a sport like football or basketball.







## Column: Senior Insights

### May's Topic: Navigating High School with Confidence

**Carsyn Gleichowski, Staff Writer**

*Carsyn is a PK lifer and will be attending the University of Alabama in the fall.*

As a high school senior, I've experienced the challenges, triumphs, exciting moments, and everything in between that come with these crucial four years. From balancing academics and extracurricular activities to managing friendships and planning for the future, high school is a journey filled with important decisions and valuable lessons.

This column is designed to offer thoughtful, practical advice based on real experiences. Whether you're a freshman just starting out or a fellow senior preparing for life beyond graduation, my goal is to provide guidance, support, and insight to help your decisions feel more confident!

#### #1 Test Prep:

Personally, I found my success with taking the ACT over SAT. I suggest taking both and seeing which test you prefer. Don't expect to take these tests once! I took the ACT five times between the spring of my Junior year to fall of my Senior year. My summer was filled with ACT prep and going to tutoring three times a week at least and doing work at home. I was able to get 75 percent bright futures with the help of my tutors at Sisyfly. I 100 percent recommend looking into getting a tutor or a study group for either the ACT or SAT. Let's be real, these tests suck, but the higher you get your score, the more likely you are to get scholarship money from the schools that accept you. The biggest thing to remember is that these tests do not define you. That might sound cliché, but with everyone around you comparing scores and scholarships, you have to be proud of yourself. You might not get a score as high as other people in your senior class, but don't let that take away from your personal success. Keep pushing and don't give up!

#### #2 How do I start looking into colleges and where should I apply?

First, I would start looking and thinking about schools you might want to apply to in the summer BEFORE your Senior Year. I would also advise you to begin college essay prep in the summer, and apply to schools as early as possible! Once you apply, my number one recommendation is to visit your interested schools and go on tours. I toured two schools: Georgia Southern University and The University of Alabama. I was overall interested in a southern school with Greek life, but I also wanted a school that would lead me down a good path with several opportunities. As I toured both of these colleges, I realized how different my life would look if I went to either of these schools. Touring The University of Alabama, I felt excited and saw so many opportunities for myself later down the road. I could really picture myself there and met amazing people while I was visiting. Now, out of state schools can be very expensive, but Alabama offered several out of state scholarships which made it possible for me to attend next year, so be sure to look into scholarships that the schools offer. My advice to you is to keep a very open mind and look at every option you have and tour wherever you are interested in.

#### #3 Get involved but don't overcommit:

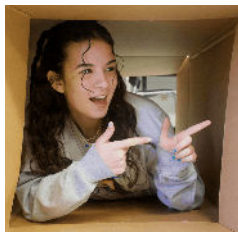
Involvement is so important in your high school years. Whether it's inside or outside of school, I think this can make or break your experience. Joining clubs or groups in school impacts the way you are involved in your school community. Personally, I found myself being involved in outside of school activities with competitive cheerleading, youth groups, and eventually getting a job my Junior year.

I think getting a job is one of the most important things in your high school years. Learning the responsibility and maturity of having a job has made me grow up quickly and learn the importance of being reliable. I would definitely recommend finding a job you enjoy, for example, I am a competitive cheer coach and loved getting involved in my cheer gym. If you are looking for more of a community within school, clubs are the way to go! Our clubs at PK are intentional and always growing. Don't be afraid to start your own club as well! Sports teams at school are also a great way to commit yourself to something involving the school community, even if it's just for fun.

#### #4 What are your biggest takeaways from High School?

I have truly learned so much these past four years, and thinking back to my freshman self, I am completely different. Everyone is learning, growing, and changing these four years, so give everyone a chance! I have learned...

- Stay true to yourself
- Be confident in the person you are becoming
- Give others grace
- Be independent, but not afraid to ask for help
- Find people who make you a better person
- Make friends with your counselor
- Look forward to your future and try your best to plan ahead



## Column: The Friendship Files

Ask your questions about friendship!

**Ocean Arroyo, Staff Writer**

*Ocean is a PK sophomore and involved with Color Guard, Modern Music, and Yearbook.*

### What's the key to maintaining long-term friendships?

Some things that could help maintain friendships for a long time are keeping in touch. If you guys go to the same school, it helps a lot. But if not, planning hangouts or FaceTime or calling can help you stay involved in each other's lives. I've known two of my best friends since elementary school and we hang out all the time.

Though spending time with each other is great, also knowing boundaries and understanding when each of you guys need space is important. Maybe if you all go to the same school and see each other every school day it's okay if on some weekends you all do your own thing and have lives other than just each other.

### How do you reconnect with an old friend after a long time?

If you want to try and reconnect with an old friend, something as simple as just DMing or texting them could do the trick. You can start with a warm-hearted message saying you miss them and you're just checking in on them. You can also start by reminiscing on a great memory you two had together, like if you found an old photo of the two of you guys in your bedroom. It can be nerve-racking to try reaching out but at the end of the day you never know if something could happen if you never try. Maybe the person was thinking the same thing but they were also too scared to reach out. I would say just go for it!

### What makes a friendship healthy vs. toxic?

When in a healthy relationship, friends are supportive, friends celebrate your wins, and friends will be there for you during your losses. Mutual effort - both sides put in time and energy. You shouldn't feel like you're the only one planning things or trying to start conversations. Fun - you genuinely enjoy yourself when hanging out with them.

Here are some signs to look out for when you might be in a toxic friendship.

- If you're feeling drained from interacting with the other person, that might not be working out.
- One sided - you see that they are only reaching out when something is needed or that they never check up on you.
- Manipulative - if they try and guilt trip you into doing something or play mind games with you.

It's important to look after yourself if you feel like you're in a toxic friendship. Taking a break from hanging out with them and just trying to take a step back is a great way to open your eyes.

### How do you overcome social anxiety when meeting new people?

Any kind gesture like a warm smile or saying hi in the hallways can have people on your good side. Partnering with them for a project or just giving them a pencil when they need could start a great conversation and help you get to know them more. It's good to get to know people and see if you guys would be a good fit when wanting someone to be your friend. It's great to have something in common with the other person so you guys have something to talk about.

## The Wave Watch Staff

**Editor:** Naomi Beuhler

**Copyeditor:** Grace Kireta

**Faculty Advisor:** Ms. Eubanks

**Design & Layout:** Ms. Eubanks

### Staff Writers:

Mckinzi Anderson

Ocean Arroyo

Owen Best

Lilly Buss

Sofia Castellano

Kailani Clifford

Tatyana Coleman-Hubbard

Jada Coles

Marina Freeman

Carsyn Gleichowski

Ebony Hayes

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Hannah Wynn

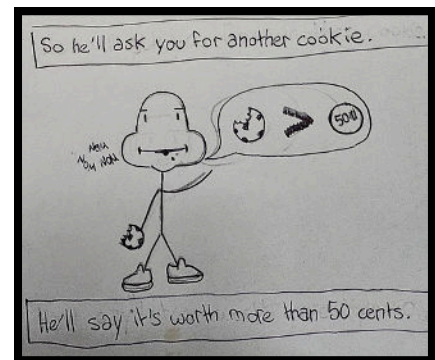
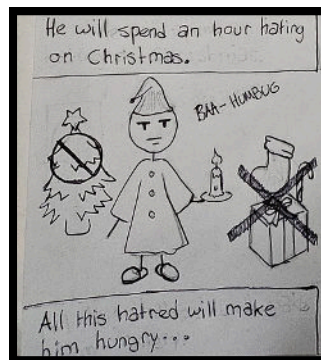
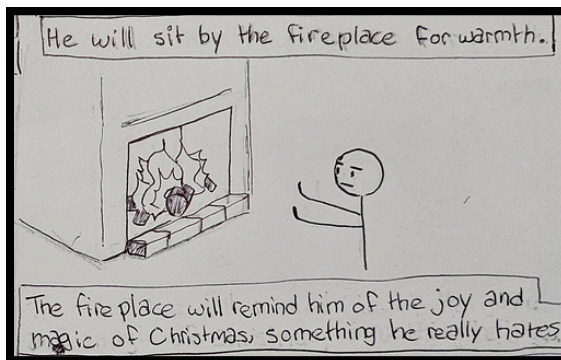
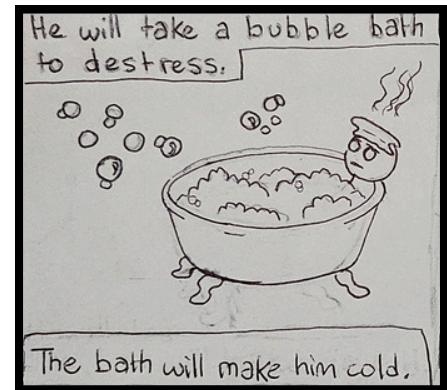
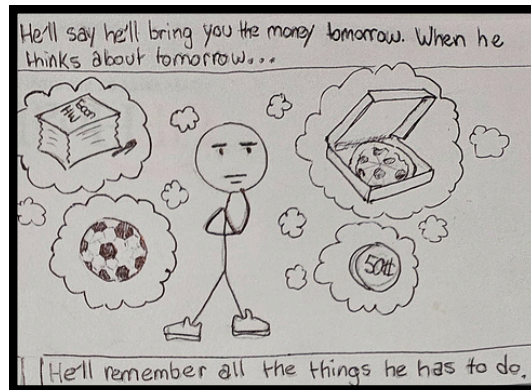
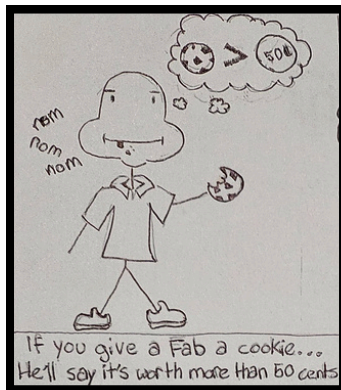
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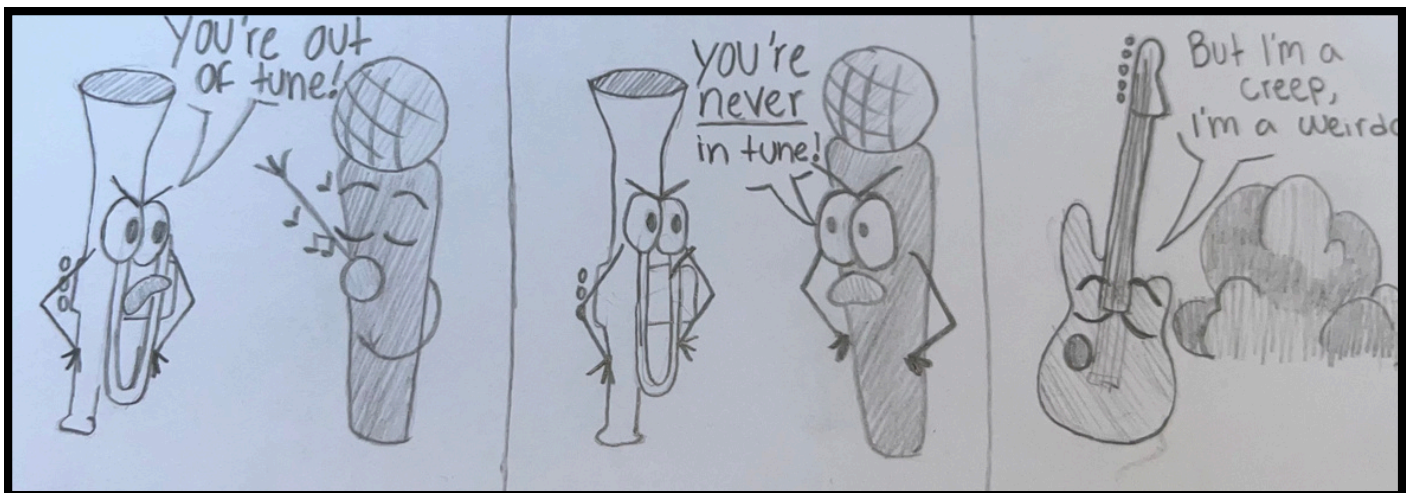
## If You Give a Fab a Cookie...

Sofia Castellanos, Staff Writer



## Band, Theater, Modern Music: A Synopsis...

Naomi Buehler, Editor





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