



BELLEVUE EAST TOM TOM



BELLEVUE EAST HIGH SCHOOL

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HIGH SCHOOL DRIVE

Hope Squad saves students

Suicide prevention group looks for warning signs



Hope Squad was introduced to East to help peers give support and a listening ear to one another. Hope Squad came together during advisory to learn about the warning signs, and how to give someone comfort as well as to learn about mental health. The students selected are those who show care of the students body as a whole. Anybody can go to these students and talk about anything that may be on their mind. *Photo by Kaida Page*

Silas Chisam
Sports Editor

Hope Squad was introduced at East this school year in order to help train selected students on how to give guidance to peers with mental health concerns.

“We’ve noticed that a lot of students have mental health issues just in Bellevue in general,” Hope Squad sponsor Laura Capel said. “We wanted to take the opportunity to train students how to talk about it and deal with it and encourage them that there is hope for the future.”

Hope Squad was started in 2005 by Dr. Greg Hudnall in the Provo City School District in Utah because of the high numbers of suicide

in students age 10 to 14. Hundall made a commitment to prevent suicide by creating the Circles4Hope community suicide prevention model. His school district went on to create Hope Squad and the suicides went from one to two a year to none for nine years because of the group.

“I wanted to join Hope Squad because I always wanted to help people but I never knew how and being part of Hope Squad helps me achieve a personal goal of mine,” freshman Deysi Solorio-Santiago said.

An email was sent out by a Hope Squad sponsor, Colleen Pribyl, to the student body asking for three students that would qualify certain characteristics for

Hope Squad. The students got to learn more about Hope Squad and its goals before voting for fellow students that they thought would be a good fit.

“I was really happy when I found out [to be in Hope Squad],” junior Caitlyn George said. “I wanted to join Hope Squad because I want to encourage others to continue on with their life and encourage them to push through everything that is going on.”

Hope Squad is a 3-year program. The first year deals with getting sponsors, approval from administrators, and students nominated. The second year involves the members learning about mental illness and looking for the warning signs in students that have suicidal

thoughts. The third year is when new members of the Hope Squad get trained just like old members to help their peers in the future.

“As the seniors graduate, they will elect new freshman, then we will have opportunities for upperclassmen to be re-elected and then new students be placed in if we feel the need,” Capel said.

The Hope Squad at East has about 35 students. This amount was determined by the number of students elected. The goal with the students are to train them with lessons on how to help students, what to do when the authorities need to get involved, and look for warning signs in a student contemplating suicide.

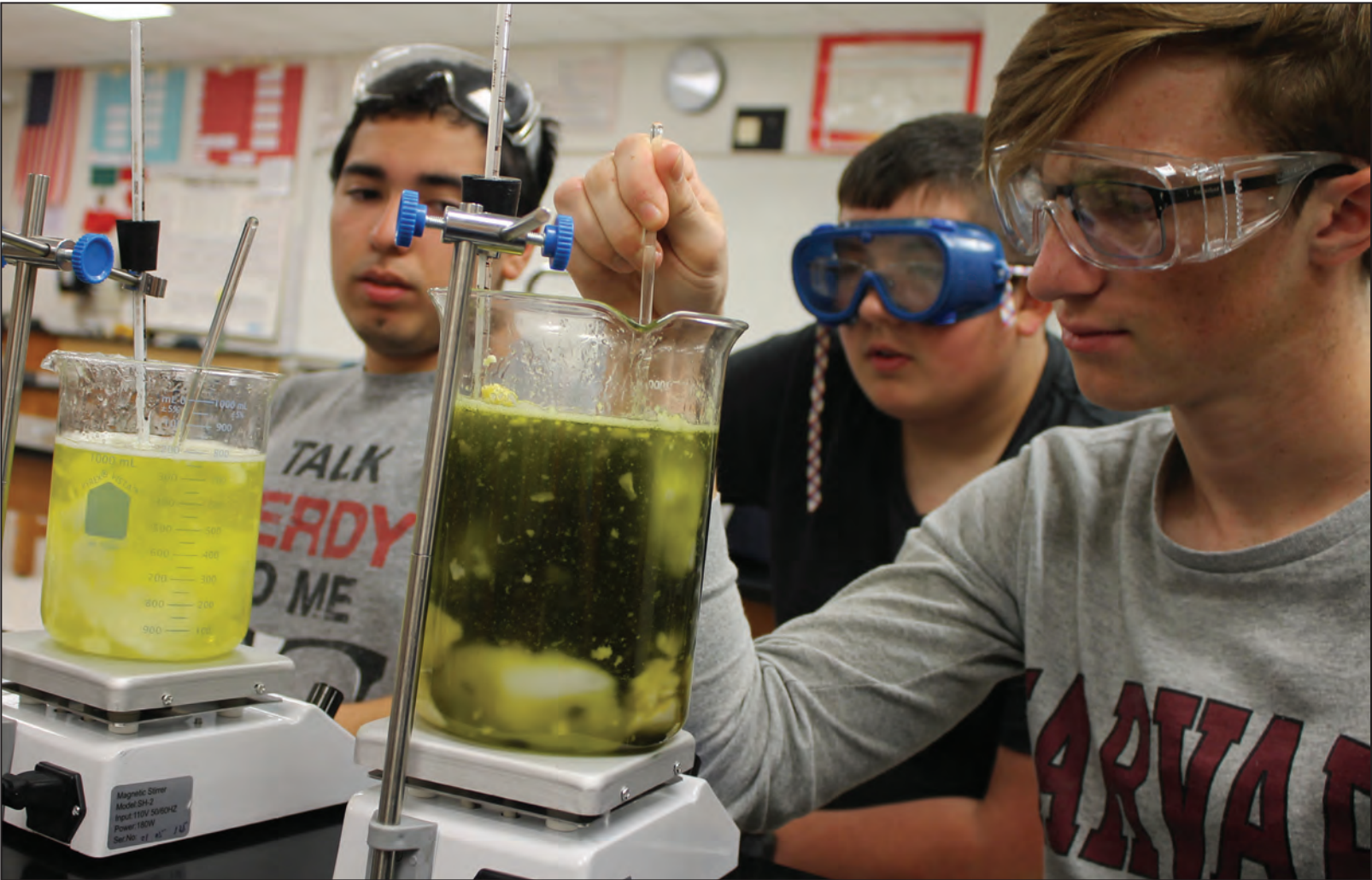
“The lessons are provided by

the organization that started Hope Squad,” Capel said. “Each of the topics has a lesson to accompany it and activities for the Hope Squad members to participate in to help support the lessons.”

The benefits of Hope Squad is to prevent suicide. Being a student led group allows student comfort when talking about these thoughts. Students who need help can get a hold of a student in Hope Squad, a trusted adult, or call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-8255.

“I hope that students are more comfortable talking about suicide and depression and other mental illness and that they realize that there is an outlet and that seeking help is not a bad thing,” Capel said.

VEI takes on soap making comany



(Left) Virtual Enterprise International (VEI) students make soap during GPS in Phil Alcocer’s class on Oct. 4. *Photo by Jaclynn Ray*



(Above) Soap is made using ingredients like oil and lye. It is a process that requires safety and focus. *Photo by Jaclynn Ray*

Camrin Smith
Reporter

The East business department introduced a new interactive business class this semester , Virtual Enterprise International (VEI). This is the first year students can take the course and immerse themselves into a business in a virtual environment. “This is a ‘real world’ of a class as it can get. The learning curve is incredibly steep and I think the growth in the students is going to be outstanding,” business instructor Andrew Werner said. “VEI is basically a student led class, where the students run a business that they’ve created; they have their jobs and they have their tasks.”

After pitching ideas for a busi-

ness, students got to work in August. Each member of the class has their own jobs, and with those jobs come daily tasks. They also have to run their own virtual lives within the business.

“Not only is this an excellent opportunity to get exposed to different jobs in a business, it’s also great for personal finance purposes,” senior Marcos Labrado said. “In this class you get paid with your virtual salary, but you have to do your taxes, and pay your rent, you learn more than just business.”

The VEI class created a company called No Coast Soap. The company sells bar soaps, lip balms, bath bombs and scrubs. Like every other company in the real world, there are different components and areas of

work: accounting and finance, sales and marketing, human resources, administration, technology and a company chief executive officer (CEO).

“I am the vice president of marketing and sales, so my job is to make our product and make sure it’s appealing,” junior Shelby Van Holland said.

On Oct. 4, several VEI students joined together during GPS to make soap. Making soap from scratch consisted of measuring out, melting and mixing together ingredients that include oils, scents, and lye. The bars of soap will be used when the students go to Tennessee for their trade show on Nov. 17. They are required to bring actual products with them so other students from other

companies can decide to buy their products.

“The soap making process was not an assignment, but a much more important thing that needed to get done,” Van Holland said.

Being the first firm in the midwest, there are many advantages students get by taking the class. The members of the class start their business from scratch, build it up together and work together to formulate ideas to make a successful company; however, it sets them apart from the rest of the companies in the U.S., which means they will struggle finding buyers.

“You really experience what it means to start a business, and what you have to do to make sure your business stays afloat,” Labrado said.

VEI made soaps scented with lavender, citrus and peppermint to sell. *Photo by Abbie Deng*

#BeKind distributes hope and kindness

Matthew Powley
Video Editor

The Bellevue Public Schools (BPS) district is showing support for the #BeKind movement through various activities throughout the school year.

The #BeKind movement is an effort to spread kindness around BPS and the Omaha Metro. Ralston Superintendent Mark Alder and his wife, Joni, decided to start the movement after the suicide of their son, Reid, due to bullying. With the support of BPS and Omaha Public Schools (OPS), the support for the movement has grown. The district is providing training from Project Harmony to help students handle adverse childhood experiences.

“Teachers are being trained in how to deal with trauma and there are a variety of groups offered to help with students who are suffering from mental illness in the coun-

selling office,” history instructor Sara Fjell said.

Spreading kindness and support includes more than teachers. This year East has started a new club known as the Hope Squad to give students the opportunity to go to their peers to talk about various problems they may be dealing with.

“These are students voted into the role as a peer who is willing to lend a listening ear and offer hope in a time of darkness in the life of any student at East High,” Spanish instructor Piper Porras said. “I have seen some of the names per grade and these are quality humans with hearts of gold.”

East is part of many schools showing support for #BeKind; other schools in BPS are also taking part in helping spread kindness and support for the movement. West has also taken part since the beginning of the semester.

“At every home football and

basketball game we are highlighting activities of kindness from a student group at West and a student group from our opponent. The two groups meet at center field and the announcer shares what they are doing,” West principal Kevin Rohlfs said.

Besides addressing kindness in athletics, West is also addressing it during advisory, a time set aside for discussion, planning and advice, which gives students the opportunity to focus on participating more with the #BeKind movement.

“Every week teachers are given a kindness activity challenge to share with their advisory students. The last week of November, Hope Squad will sponsor a Kindness Week. It will focus on the small acts that anyone can do to demonstrate kindness towards others,” Rohlfs said.

Even the elementary schools in BPS are organizing events to help

with the spread of kindness. Bertha Barber Elementary and Central Elementary organized events for their students and staff to participate in to help spread acts of kindness, and just recently decided to give toward the movement to show kindness is a necessity, even for kids that are still in elementary school.

“Just recently the two schools came together for a day of service, a great way to shed light on the #BeKind initiative. During this time students participated in a walk-a-thon to raise money for service dogs who help veterans suffering from PTSD, stuffed backpacks with #BeKind activities for all of the students at Betz, created care packages for first-responders, reflected on their own acts of kindness, and spent time supporting Green Bellevue efforts,” Central and Bertha Barber principal Amber Dembowski said.

#BeKind and the acts of kindness

associated with it shows those students how they should grow up giving to their peers and providing listening ears for those who may need it.

“The staff at both Bertha Barber and Central move through their days positively with the mantra ‘we build people.’ This is a reminder that we build up our students, our families and each other.” Dembowski said.

With #BeKind starting less than a year ago, there has already been positive changes in and outside of East. Senior Maggie Collins has high hopes for the program and every student who may need to show their support in the future.

“As the Be Kind initiative grows older I hope that East form into a positive place uniting with other schools in the area to be kind. There’s no point in being kind to just your school when there’s a world ahead of you,” Collins said.

New GPA system; no valedictorians

McKayla Vermeer
 Co-Editor in Chief

A new diploma and grade point average (GPA) system was instituted by administrators in the Bellevue Public Schools (BPS) district this school year for the current freshmen.

“The changes take effect with this year’s freshmen class in both high schools. The new process is designed to encourage more student to take additional and more advanced coursework and recognize additional students at graduation,” assistant superintendent Robert Moore said.

The new system includes being able to graduate and earn diplomas beyond the standard one and will include diplomas of Highest Distinction and with Distinction. To earn the diploma with Highest Distinction a student must successfully complete at least three advanced or Advanced Placement (AP) classes a year, and to earn a diploma with Distinction a student must complete two a year.

“It impacts how I look at my grades by making me feel like I don’t have to do as well as I know as I can do, and that I can just [do] half my work and be okay,” freshman Alaina Grisafe said.

With the changes to the diplomas comes the removal of the valedictorian status in order to recognize a larger group of students for their academic accomplishments. Additionally, the current GPA scale will change from a 5-point scale into a 4-point scale in order to remain consistent with other schools in the area.

“I feel like people aren’t going to push

themselves [because they cannot] achieve the ultimate goal as a valedictorian,” Grisafe said.

The decision to make these changes was proposed last year by a group of teachers and administrators across the district. A major reason why it was proposed was to encourage students to take more challenging classes in their high school careers to help build their GPA and college applications.

“I believe this new system can really encourage students to challenge themselves and try classes that may be more difficult because they will get rewarded for it,” senior David Johnson said.

With all these changes come the benefits of encouraging the taking of AP classes and being able to recognize more students for their academic achievements. Upperclassmen that already have selected valedictorians, however, will miss out on the opportunity to test out the new system.

“I think the new system makes a lot more sense than the old one and I wish it would’ve been put into place sooner,” Johnson said.

However, not every student is happy about the changes that are being made. Some students feel as if taking away the valedictorian status does not give them anything to work toward, or they lose motivation for something they’ve strived to achieve since their freshman year.

“I believe that there are negatives, I feel like getting rid of Valedictorian is ruining someone’s life academically, by taking away something they’ve been working towards most [of] their schooling,” Grisafe said.

East HOSA sends support

A new chapter adopted by HOSA after Hurricane Florence hits North Carolina

Madie Ybay
 Features Editor

Health Occupational Students of America (HOSA) is helping a North Carolina (NC) chapter, between August and June of 2019, recover from Hurricane Florence.

“I am glad we are taking a part in helping others in their time of need. With such a disaster tearing apart schools, it’s nice to know that we can at least make it a little better for those affected,” junior Ryan McCully, HOSA member said.

Hurricane Florence hit the east side of the U.S. in late August and into early September. According to CNBC, it was one of the most costly hurricanes in the Atlantic as it hit many homes, schools, companies and other buildings. It also had affected over 150 HOSA chapters in North Carolina.

“We feel it’s necessary because the core of HOSA is helping others in need,” HOSA member Lindsay Swanson said. “We are helping them in their time in need and we would expect the same from others if the same happened to us.”

The HOSA chapters, in North Carolina created a form allowing other HOSA chapters across the U.S. to help support the hurricane affected chapters. Each HOSA adviser fills out the form and are matched with a North Carolina chapter. East was matched with John T. Hoggard High School because of their similar size and demographics.

“I am excited to help the chapter at John T. Hoggard because it’s really showing the

importance of helping others. I am glad I can give this experience to the students,” HOSA adviser Jennifer Carda said.

To help the chapters recover from the hurricane, East will send supplies and raise money for the adopted chapter once informed about what supplies they need.

“As a student, I want to help as much as I can. Whether that be helping gather supplies or just help raise money, because that’s what HOSA is really all about,” McCully said.

In June, at nationals, the HOSA chapters hope to meet. Right now, however. East is creating group t-shirts to include the HOSA chapter at John T. Hoggard High School. Connection between the two chapters had just begun they are still unsure with the specific details of who the chapter may be.

“I am excited to meet the other chapter, because it’s nice to put faces to the people we’re going to be working with so closely,” McCully said. “At that point, I feel like we’re going to almost be like family so it’s going to be great meeting them.”

Students who want to help support HOSA and the North Carolina chapter can help with fundraising. East HOSA chapter will be asking for donations, once they receive the list of supplies needed in North Carolina. Students can also help gather supplies to John T. Hoggard High School.

“I feel like adopting this NC chapter is going to be slightly difficult for our HOSA chapter, seeing as we haven’t really done something like this before, but it is a unique opportunity for our chapter to bond,” McCully said.





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Junior Alexander Campuzano, playing Juror 4, holds back Sophomore Jack Wegner, who plays Juror 3 during a dramatic scene in the “12 Angry Jurors” play. *Photo by Sharon Guchu*

Camrin Smith
Reporter

It’s opening night, the auditorium is full of family and friends. Backstage, the cast and crew prepare for a show that was in the works for over a month. The curtain rises and the cast walked out in front of the audience. Hands were shaking and hopes were high for each and every member. The lights dimmed and black silhouettes appeared on stage. “When I see the auditorium full of people my heart skips a beat, it makes you feel so proud because you worked so hard to accomplish this,” sophomore Ciara Stueve who played Juror 6 said. “Everything you worked for lives up to the moment of performance.”

Chieftain Theatre put on “12 An-

gry Jurors” on Thursday, Oct. 11, through Saturday Oct. 13. Director Joe Hamik decided to put on another serious, hard-hitting show.

“It’s a classic play that I believe has opportunities for several performers; it’s a show where a lot of the parts are about the same size,” Hamik said.

The play was written by Reginald Rose originally as “12 Angry Men,” has been adapted to “12 Angry Women,” and finally “12 Angry Jurors,” so the play wasn’t limited to just men. It’s about a jury struggling to come to a unanimous verdict over a boy that was accused of stabbing his father. The 12 jurors have very different personalities and backgrounds that often conflict ed with their opinions throughout the play. This leads to a hung jury. Each

character is of a different nature and required varied types of practice.

“I like to just imagine a back-story to my character,” Stueve said. “For ‘12 Angry Jurors,’ I just place myself into a courtroom and go through the six days of the trial, going over all the evidence we had to sift through and how I would feel afterwards.”

The cast and crew have been working on the show since Sept. 17. Rehearsals took place four times a week after school running lines and repeating cues. That time was also spent for crew to get costumes together, to figure out lights and sound checks, and for the cast to know who their character is and what they’re about.

“To help me get into character, the easiest way is to list off the goals

and mindsets of a character in my characters voice,” junior Alexander Campuzano, Juror 4, said. “It helps me to think of who I am when I step into the shoes of my character. When acting it’s so fun to figure out how to create and become the character I’ve been assigned.”

According to Hamik, every production goes through a period of time where each crew member struggles. Line memorization, making each line sound natural and conversation-like was an overall struggle for the cast. There are minimal characters that were on and off the stage throughout the play, the majority of the cast were on the stage the entirety of the show.

“It provides an interesting challenge because the students are on stage the entire time. They’re physi-

cally in front of the audience the entire time,” Hamik said.

The constant rehearsal resulted in a cast and crew of over 20 people spending over six hours a week together to make this performance one to remember. According to sophomore John Hutchinson, every cast and crew member was friendly and welcoming, which he said was the overall best part about being in the-ater.

“If you want to get on stage and perform in any way, don’t wait for a sign or a push. Do what you want to because before you know it your chances will be over,” Campuzano said. “I chose to join the cast of my first show because my friends wanted me to. After that, I got a taste for acting on stage and I haven’t stopped since.

Students learn French culture, language

Sharon Guchu
Reporter

French Club helps students learn about the French culture by educating with cultural foods, hosting students from French countries and field trips to different places. Different types of foods and refreshments such as macaroons and madeleines can be found and games such as Double.

“French Club is a club for students who want to do culture activities or different activities during the French week and go on field trips,” French club instructor Nora Boyd said. “It’s kind of like a social and somehow like a community service for students.”

There are no requirements to be in this club, so anyone interested in learning about the French culture is free to join. French Club was cre-

ated long before the 14 years that Boyd has been here. Students like sophomore Kaylee Adzafui and junior Anthony Holler join the club because they want to be more educated about the culture so they can communicate with extended family better which shows the benefits of French Club.

“I decided to join because of my culture. My parents speak French and I wanted to know more about the language itself,” Adzafui said. “It has been helpful because I learned a bit more about the culture and I find that it gets me closer to people who are really interested in learning French as well.”

According to Adzafui, going to French Club is easy for her and other club members because of the fun games, delicious snacks, along with other students in the club that give it an inviting feel.

“My goal is to speak more and sort of adapt part of the culture,” Adzafui said. “This can be helpful to those who have families in places where there is French culture because when they visit they you wouldn’t be completely clueless about the culture.”

There are lots of goals for this year, both for individual students and the club as a whole. Boyd shared some of the goals that they are hoping to accomplish and ones that have been accomplished. The goals this year are to have a good National French Week as well as hosting French students.

“National French Week is going to be a lot of fun this year. We always have and I am super excited to be participating and celebrating French culture,” Holler said.

National French Week is the first week in November where schools

across the nation celebrate French Culture. At East, students celebrate by playing games in the cafeteria. Each day is celebrated with different themes such as cuisine, the arts, technology, science, games, careers community events, sports, traditions, music, and dance.

“The goal is getting accomplished with the T-shirts and national French week and in the spring we have an opportunity to go on overnight activities with our state organization and we go to UNL to compete,” Boyd said.

In the spring of 2019 UNL will hold the Language Fair where students will compete against each other in many different language related categories. French, German, Japanese, Chinese, Russian, or Spanish students are welcome to compete. Students last year competed by singing songs, doing skits,

writing poems, dancing, and making posters.

“I didn’t get the chance to compete last year, but I am excited to compete this year,” Holler said. “It sounded like a lot of fun, I’m kind of disappointed that I missed out. But I am excited to go this year.”

The club doesn’t meet very often. However, Boyd encourages students to join the club to get a feel of what French Club really does. French Club meets twice a month on Thursdays in the room C-07. Meetings are from 3:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. In meetings, students usually play games, eat food, and socialize.

“I really love French Club because it feels super welcoming and I am glad I joined it. I just feel at home and comfortable with the club. I definitely recommend it to anyone who is thinking of joining the club,” Holler said.

Forensics prepares for new season

Hailey Hendry
Co-Editor in Chief

Walking into competition, students are practicing their pieces, only talking to a wall. Dressed to impress, every student is not having any interaction with any other competitor. The loud chatter comes from reciting pieces before they perform.

In the past, according to senior Jadon Putney, the team captains strictly helped new team members and gave answers to those who had questions. Putney is this year's Forensics team captain, which means he is trying to gain recognition for what Forensics really is.

"When we say that we're part of Forensics, people still think that we cut open bodies," Putney said. "That's not what we do. We use our voice, we use our mouths as weapons, we use them as things to bring light to social issues and we take them to competitions and we win."

Forensic speech is the study and practice of public speaking. According to the National Forensics League, Forensics promotes lifelong speaking skills, as well as builds upon and develops the already present skill any student in Forensics may have. These students will then take those skills to competitions and perform in front of other Forensics students and judges.

"Forensics is almost an activity for students where you can express what you would like to express," Putney said. "For example, I've done poetry all four years, and now I'm ranked first in the state for poetry, and from poetry I've done pieces ranging from racism, police brutality, from George Zimmerman, minority rights [and] another piece about black rights. Last year a piece about fear of fathers, and this year a piece about silence."

Forensics is split into two different categories: Interpretation (interp) pieces (acting) and Platform speaking. Interp pieces will be DI (Dramatic Interpretation), HI (Humorous Interpretation), Original Oratory, Duos, Poetry and Poise. Platform speaking, according to Putney, is almost like writing a persuasive speech for English class. According to senior Quiana Logans, to prepare for the competitions they select to participate in, the students will write their own speeches for platform pieces and will select an interp piece and start memorizing it.

"That's what's funny about Forensics is the ways that we prepare," Putney said. "We talk to walls. You go stand in the corner, and you just start reciting your piece as if you're performing in front of thousands and you want to get across what you're saying."

According to Putney, he did not always want to be apart of Forensics. The only reason he joined was because his parents pushed him to. Now, he says he's glad they did because Forensics has shaped who he is today and has become something he really enjoys. Because of how much he enjoys competing, it pushed him to work much harder.

"Coming in [to high school] I've always wanted to be an athlete, but I realized that I was given the power of a voice and for people to listen to me," Putney said. "You have people that do things naturally and poems have always been a natural thing for me, but you don't reach the very top naturally."

While trying to strive for that first place, that becomes a priority to those who take Forensics seriously. The majority of the students in Forensics are upperclassmen and are trying to prepare for life after high school, as well.

"When it comes to balancing everything, you just have to prioritize and make the most of the time that you have," Logans said. "Set



Forensics coach John Campbell talks to his students and helps them with what needs to be done for their pieces before their upcoming competition on Nov. 2. *Photo by Hailey Hendry*

nonnegotiable study and work times, then stick to them. Be sure to leave time for friends and relaxation or you will burnout."

According to Forensics coach John Campbell, taking Forensics is a path to college. Many student have come out of Forensics earning full ride scholarships and earned master's degrees with no cost to them. There are currently three division one Forensics programs in the state that are coached by students that have come out of East, and 11 national champions.

"[My] biggest thing that is helping kids find what they want to do, whether it's a speech, what they want to articulate, what they want to say. That's not always easy to figure out and find," Campbell said. "We have some great returning kids. It's hard to know because we lost so many superstars.

Luckily, we have great people that are still [taking Forensics]."

The first competition is on Nov. 2. It is the Millard North Novice where only beginners can participate in this competition. According to Campbell, Putney will be judging this competition because any student that has had any sort of background in Forensics cannot participate. Usually, those who have had multiple years in Forensics will judge this competition; Putney is one of those students and has done very well in his competitions.

"In the beginning of my school career, I felt outmatched, shy even though I still did pretty well my freshman year," Putney said, "No matter what, no matter if I get first, second or last I know that I worked as hard as I could, and whether my placement was last, my work effort was first place."

Marching band places at Invitational; regional approach

Brooklyn Anderson
News Editor

Bellevue East Marching Band takes the field. Each band member is lined up perfectly straight and ready to march to the beat. Each member lifts their instruments to start playing the notes coming out creating each note perfectly. The instruments combine together to make consistent sounds spreading throughout the field and the crowd. Fans show off their purple and white gear as they cheer for the band.

"A vast improvement on focus, self-discipline and confidence," marching band Director Charles Wright said. "The students in general are working extremely harder this

year."

The Bellevue East marching band has had significant improvements for the 2018-2019 season with new instruments, more band members, and more work.

"I can honestly say this has been my favorite season I've marched," senior Ashley Hudson said. "I am so proud of everything we've accomplished since we started in May."

The marching band participates in the NSBA (Nebraska State Bandmasters Association) Circuit. The local circuit has local bands competing against each other for state. The band placed third in the Golden Regiment Invitational Competition and is a huge success because most high level bands participate in it. The band performed at Bands of

America (BOA) super regionals in St. Louis on Oct. 25 and placed 26th out of 75 bands, and seventh in class AA.

"[BOA] This was the top level for high school marching bands," Wright said. "We competed against approximately 80 bands from all over the U.S. and East participated in this event about five to six years ago."

In order to prepare for some of these competitions, marching band has a defined schedule for specific sections in the evenings and band practices in mornings. They start at seven to the end of first hour on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays. The normal time from beginning of first hour to the end are on Tuesdays and Fridays.

"Overall the practices and competition

have gone very well," Wright said "We have many students who participate in athletics, clubs and different things and those students have been overall outstanding with getting to practice based on the schedule the coaches and I work out."

The marching band has grown in quantity and quality over the course of one year said by Wright. With only 113 students last year, it has grown to 146 students this year. Fifty of them are freshman which takes leadership and more dedication from underclassmen.

"It was hard at first, but it's not that bad being a freshman," freshman Mackenzie Larson said. "I learned how to memorize music efficiently and how to work hard and give our one hundred."

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Mental health impacts teen lives at home, school

Help for mental illness limited at school

Abbie Deng
Opinion Editor

There has been an influx of students in high school reporting to have some sort of mental health issue. According to the National Public Radio Education, up to 1 in 5 students that live in the U.S. show signs of a mental health disorder in a given year.

“Mental health is a problem that’s been growing in the world since the beginning of time. Now, I feel, it’s been so ignored that many people have mental illnesses. We live in the day and age of anxiety and depression which tons of people have. Because it’s such an important topic and so many people have mental illnesses, it’s something we should pay attention to,” senior Hope Rodenbarger said.

Mental health is not something students leave at home when they come to school. When a student’s mental health gets in the way of

their learning, it takes away from their ability to focus on their school work.

“Nationally, only 40 percent of students with emotional, behavioral and mental health disorders graduate from high school, compared to the national average of 76 percent; additionally, over 50 percent of students with emotional and behavioral disabilities ages 14 and older, dropout of high school,” according to the Association for Children’s Mental Health.

There are many limiting factors to the ability of schools being able to be involved in their student’s mental health. These factors stem from the students themselves not wanting the school to be involved, to the student to counselor ratio and student to social worker ratio.

“Our biggest limit is we are not licensed mental health practitioners, so the therapy and counseling we can provide is somewhat limited,” guidance counselor Sara Powell

said. “Along with trying to implement these methods which typically would be a 45-60 minute session in a private practice for 400 students per counselor presents a time limit.”

In East there are four counselors, two school psychologists and one social worker. Each split the responsibility of attending to the mental health needs of students. The ratio of student to resource limits the amount of interaction a counselor can really have with their student.

“About 150 students per teacher that they’re in charge of, counselors are in charge of 350 to 400 and then you have one principal that overseeing, in our school almost 1,500-1,600, so who picks that up? Even if I refer somebody there’s still a line of people waiting to be seen” Spanish instructor Piper Porras said.

Teachers and staff receive training from the district on how situations regarding a student’s men-

tal health should be handled and reported. Teachers and staff are considered mandatory reporters, situations regarding mental health, abuse and drugs are all issues that staff must notify the appropriate authorities.

“One thing we try to do is make students aware we are here for them and they are able to come into the counseling office at any time if they are having issues. Teachers are also a vital portion of making sure students mental health is being watched. We rely on teachers who see these students daily to refer kids to us if they have concerns,” Powell said.

Students using their voice is key in regards to addressing matters on mental health. When a student speaks out finding solutions for these various problems becomes more easy.

“The biggest message I would send to kids is do not be afraid to find a trusted adult to talk about

mental health. If you are unsure find an adult to talk to. It may be as simple as just talking through an issue or more serious where the adult can help you find resources. Then utilize these resources. The access to resources is so readily available through technology and in person, we just need students to utilize them and really help themselves,” Powell said.

During the teacher training select teachers, some teachers participated in a test that assessed their trauma and scaled them on a scale of 1-10. Any person scoring a six and up was at risk and were people advised to speak with a mental health professional. The scores were confidential with the option of sharing the score if they chose. Students are able to take this test, identify their position on the scale and begin to take the appropriate measures based on their results.

“I am open enough to say mine was a five - that meant that I reg-

istered mid-way on the one to ten scale. I have had counseling and mentoring in my life that curbed a lot of the negative risk factors I could have fallen victim to. I am grateful for the interventions I had,” Porras said.

Nasponline.org describes why schools should be involved in their students’ mental health as well.

“Increased access to mental health services and supports in schools is vital to improving the physical and psychological safety of our students and schools... and [encourages] problem-solving skills. School mental health supports that encompass social-emotional learning, mental wellness, resilience, and positive connections between students and adults are essential to creating a school culture in which students feel safe and empowered to report safety concerns, which is proven to be among the most effective school safety strategies,” according to Naspoline.org.

Get to know your East counselors



“Outside of school, I used to be a counselor with youth that were sex offenders, some people that were bipolar, schizophrenic. Inside of school, there are students who are anxious, who are depressed that come in. We try to help them through that as much as we can, but I know they probably also need help outside of school so some times we make referrals,” counselor Michael Chudomelka said.



“I have my master’s degree in counseling and I have been continuing my education by going to different trainings concerning youth and mental health. We provide any kind of strategies to help cope with anything that’s going on. We also have resources like counseling agencies outside of school with referrals,” counselor Sara Powell said.



“This is my fifth year as a counselor. The biggest thing is putting support in place for the student and giving them coping strategies that they can work with and manage when someone is not there. Also, talking to them about people they can trust, people they can talk to, and how to get in touch with them and other support systems if they need help and counselors are not there,” counselor Casie Oken said.



When I was a teacher at Logan, I would work one-on-one with students that were going through some issues and that’s what prompted me to become a counselor. I just always knew that I wanted a job where I can make a difference in people’s lives. I love that I get to be that person that students come to when they are upset, when they are happy, and I’m their safe person,” counselor Colleen Pribyl said.

Student shares experience

McKayla Vermeer
Co-Editor in Chief



Interview with junior Manni Seffron

Q: How does school impact your mental health?

A: School doesn’t mix good with mental health. I’m constantly stressed out which in turn leads me to forget to take care of myself. This may cause me to miss my medication for like a week because of my stress. It has been distracting me from all the wrong things

Q: What specific mental health issues do you deal with?

A: I have been diagnosed with clinical depression and severe anxiety.

Q: How does your mental health impact your school life?

A: I mean, depression nor anxiety ever goes away even if you have medication. They both make me feel trapped within myself and make me second guess who I am. They make me feel unimportant and worthless with anything I do at school

Q: What do you most wish your peers understood about mental health?

A: I wish my peers would understand that when somebody is crying in class over something very simple, they are not crying because they are simply weak but because of their own mind. Mental disorders aren’t fake. They are very real and many people deal with way too many things at once. It’s hard to keep yourself collected when you feel like you’re slowly rotting from the inside and no one can see your pain and suffering

Q: What kind of stigmas do you see surrounding mental health and how do you wish to change them?

A: There are so many stereotypes around mental disorders and it’s all so disturbing. There are many people who glorify a mental disorder and exploit [it] and then a stigma surrounds it. I just want people to stop self diagnosing everyone around them. It is annoying and hurtful

MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES



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INFOGRAPHIC BY: SILAS CHISAM

Mental illness brings risks to students

Madie Ybay
Features Editor

Having a mental illness can put the education of student who has mental illness at risk, as well as can also affect their peers’ education.

“Many students view therapy as something that you do ‘when you are crazy,’ but that isn’t the case in 2018. Therapy is a place where you can take time to talk about you really feel without fear of repercussions. Therapy can help the most when students are honest with what is really going on with them and work on what they would like to be different in their life,” licensed mental health practitioner (LMHP) Alyson Carter said.

To be diagnosed with a mental illness, the symptoms have to significantly affect everyday life functioning. Mental health is a person’s condition with regard to their psychological and emotional well-being. Mental disorders can come in many different forms such as depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and many others.

“Consider how hard high school is without these thoughts, or trouble focusing, or feeling scared by so many people in the hall. Add in symptoms of depression, anxiety, ADHD, or

any other mental disorder and it’s 10 times harder,” East school psychologist Sarah Shaw said.

Many of these mental disorders can negatively affect a student’s education, whether he or she is unable to focus, filter out distracting environmental stimuli, interact with others, handle time pressure, and so on. It can also lead to bad habits that can ruin not only students’ education, but also their overall lives.

“Many people with untreated mental illness often use alcohol, prescription drugs, or illegal drugs to self-medicate. This often wreaks havoc on their brain chemistry, further making it harder to concentrate or even attend school,” Shaw said.

Some mental disorders can disrupt the education of other students. When severe mental disorders go untreated for a long amount of time, they can get increasingly worse. If they remain untreated, they put not only the student with the illness at risk, but others around them. There is a connection between mental illness and school shooters, according to the National School Board Association. However, just because a student has a mental illness does not mean that they will become a school shooter. School shooters have had trends of mental health issues or exhibiting

characteristics of mental disorders. According to the National School Board Association, if a student is exhibiting characteristics that can be classified as dangerous for themselves or others, sometimes a room sweep is in order. A room sweep is when everyone inside of a classroom, excluding the student is evacuated from the room.

Getting students the help they need can be crucial; however, according to the National Public Radio website, it can be difficult for a student to reach out and get help, so it is important to let an authority know if someone is struggling.

“Mental health is an issue that is not always an easy fix. If you are aware of someone in need of help, please let someone know so they can get the assistance they need,” East’s school resource officer (SRO) Anthony Orsi said.

There are professionals at East that are trained to recognize mental health issues and to help treat the situation. Every year Shaw attends conferences that focus on school psychology, mental health in school, school safety, and legal concerns. Shaw has also been working in schools with students on mental health issues for nine years. Orsi is also trained to recognize mental health issues. He

is trained to help students when they become a danger to themselves or others. If a student is in a crisis, Orsi contacts the Heartland Family Services ASAP team, who are trained mental health counselors that can provide extensive resources to help students.

“When a student is in crisis, the first thing they need to do is to tell someone. They need to tell a friend, a teacher, a parent or a counselor. This is the hardest part,” Orsi said. “The school and I cannot help correct something if we are unaware of it. Once the problem is identified, we can find solutions to help correct the problem.”

Students can also receive help outside of the school. Outside of school there are many resources like therapy, hotlines, crisis text lines, and so on and so forth. However, if there is an emergency and someone is in danger, the police should be called.

“We, as a society, have to stop stigmatizing mental illness. All mental illness is due to a deficiency or overload of certain chemicals in our body,” Shaw said. “Needing medication or therapy to combat these chemicals is not a weakness. Realizing you need help and asking for it, is terrifying, but isn’t that the definition of courage?”

Coaches help students balance school, sports

Emily Nelson
Reporter

For a student athlete, balancing sports and school begins to be a struggle of incorporating time for themselves and a social life as well. Teachers and coaches at East work together in an attempt to lessen the stress.

“The hardest thing about being a 3-sport athlete and taking advanced classes is the stress that comes with it,” junior Madison Pelzer said. “When I only have an hour or two to study, it is extremely difficult to choose just one subject or two to prioritize. It is also very stressful having to make time for school and sports because it feels like I have no time left over for myself.”

Pelzer remembered freshman year when the homework was not as tedious. She said that the transition from a small amount of homework to having a lot more, was a struggle. According to Pelzer, a planner and working on time management has helped her.

“Now, as a junior staying on top of the two has gotten a lot tougher. Being in advanced and AP classes as well as playing three varsity sports often makes me feel like I’m suffocating with things to do,” Pelzer said.

According to head varsity football coach Nathan Liess, teachers and coaches stay on top of students’ grades to ensure they aren’t falling behind. Liess said when they see a student may not be doing as well in some of their classes, they are required to stay after school and finish their work. This may cut

into practice time and the student would have to make up for what they missed at practice.

“We always let [the players know] if they’re not a student they cannot be an athlete,” Liess said. “Their grades are what is going to take them someplace so we try to make sure they stay on top of that.”

Freshman Gavin Zurcher said he sees the coaches efforts to help students. As a varsity football player, Zurcher said he has a lot of pressure to focus on for game day and added that his teachers and coaches assist him in balancing school and sports.

“My coaches and teachers help me realize that both [school and sports] are important,” Zurcher said.

Justin Williamson from HealthGuidance for Better Health said it is helpful when teachers ensure that students are still keeping up on their school work. He said that having the support can lessen the stress significantly. He also stated that playing sports does have its benefits for students.

“Playing sports gives students an opportunity to get out of their desks and get active,” Williamson said. “On the other hand, doing well academically can help you to be more focused as part of a team. Plus, if you are hoping for a scholarship in your sport, doing well academically will boost your chances substantially.”

While teachers and coaches want to emphasize the importance of school to students, Liess said he doesn’t want to discredit how important it is for students to play sports.

Liess believes there are benefits to this, and that playing sports has more positive than negative effects on students.

“The thing that athletics does, people don’t even realize it, is it helps with time management and that’s why [athletics are] in schools, to motivate kids to have opportunities outside of the classroom,” Liess said.

While Liess acknowledges sports and recognizes the importance of school, he said he will always back teachers up in making sure the students are keeping up with their work. Liess said he appreciates the open form of communication coaches have with teachers.

“Teachers do a great job of communicating through email and face-to-face if so and so is down in this class or so and so has behavior problems and then we can work together to get those fixed,” Liess said.

On the other side, Pelzer said she can not afford to fall behind in her classes or have behavior problems. Pelzer said she has learned to adapt to balancing the workload and still excel in sports. Advice that she offers to freshman is to stay focused and persevere.

“Do not over think it. It’s hard work, but it pays off,” Pelzer said. “No matter how much you love the sport you are playing, school has to come first and even though it’s hard for some athletes to believe, there is a life after sports. Put equal effort into your school and sports and even though it sounds crazy, enjoy both the pressure and success that comes with being a student athlete.”

Club offers leadership training

Brooklyn Anderson
News Editor

Sports Leadership Club was introduced to Bellevue East during the 2018-19 school year to encourage student athletes to gain better leadership skills.

“The club started this year,” athletics director Chad Holtz said. “I felt our student athletes needed to learn how to be an effective leader in the building and on a team.”

Sports Leadership Club was created by Holtz to help change the culture of leadership in teams for sports.

“The goal is to establish leadership throughout our athletic programs,” Holtz said. “[We begin by] identifying student athletes at each grade level that are leaders both academically and athletically.”

The characteristics that are most looked for in a leadership position are credible, committed, caring and confidence builders. Four students from each sport have been selected and have these characteristics.

“I think it will be a great opportunity for our student athletes to work on developing leadership skills and also work with each other to promote a more unified school culture,” varsity coach Sara Fjell said.

Leadership is always encouraged in high school sports. This club was created to encourage students to have that leadership characteristic on or off the field, court, or gym. The students a part of sports leadership were hand selected by the coaches with each sport.

“I became a part of it after our coach picked us out and told us about the new program,” senior Maggie Collins said. “I get to learn about being a leader on my team and how to look for my sport at colleges.”

Becoming a leader for any sport requires dedication and a lot of responsibility according to College Vine Blog. Showing that someone is capable of being a leader on and off the sport, would be what that leader can improve on and what they can help the team with.

While off the sport, academics play a big part so setting an example to the team would give a nudge to the other team players.

“You want individuals who have positive influence over their teammates and can help guide their team in positive directions,” Fjell said.



Coach Tobin Higgs speaks to his players. He, along with other coaches, stresses the importance of both school work and sports. Teachers and coaches both work together for the success of their students both in and out of the classroom. *Photo Tanijah Panknone*

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East Tennis finished the season with four wins and five losses. The JV Tennis team has showed improvement toward the end of the season.
Photo by Alexis Molczyk

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The role of the Tom Tom is not only to promote the accomplishments and highlights of the school, but also to inform the Bellevue East community of events and issues that will affect the students, faculty, staff, administration, and community. Its primary focus is to serve Bellevue East High School and cover issues that affect teenagers today. The Tom Tom does not necessarily represent views of the Bellevue Public Schools and strives to support itself through advertising. In order to achieve the optimum learning situation, as well as serve its audience to the best of its ability, the staff believes that the decisions should rest primarily with the adviser and editors, according to standards of journalism. Material judged to cause significant psychological harm, or that violates the privacy of a person, or that is libelous will not be printed. Obscenity or profanity will not be printed in the Tom Tom. Stories in the Tom Tom will be based on substantial facts with quotes clearly attributed to named sources whenever possible. The Tom Tom will not run gossip or stories or columns founded on rumor without facts. Any student appearing at a public event such as a sports event or music concert may be photographed, and that photo may be published without violating the privacy of that individual.

LETTER to the EDITOR

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STEPHENIE.CONLEY@BPSNE.NET

iPads are more bad than good

Editorial
Tom Tom Staff

In every classroom at East, the scene has remained relatively the same for years - teachers stand up front and students sit in a columns and rows trying to pay attention to the material being taught. The students may be struggling to stay awake, as this ordinary scene gives them nothing to stay engaged. In desperate attempts to create a more interesting classroom environment the Bellevue Public school district has added more - not always useful - developments.

In more recent years, new seating arrangements were added to various classrooms to try and modernize the learning environment along with the institution of something that is turning out to be more of a hindrance than a benefit - iPads. We believe that iPads do not fulfill the intended use in classrooms at East as they do not increase the quality of education or education environment provided.

There are many classrooms that currently have iPads and there are

even more that are going through the training to receive iPads. The training that teachers have to go through just to simply get iPads in their classroom requires that they take days away from teaching to attend training.

The training can cause many problems for both teachers and students. First, the teachers are missing valuable time they could be spending in the classroom educating students. Then, when iPads are in the classroom they are either overused in a poor way or under utilized, causing the time teachers have spent in training to ultimately be worthless.

For example, some classes have acquired iPads and then attempted to use them a couple of times, but when it ultimately takes up too much time to get the students accustomed or a technological problem occurs, then the iPads are set to spend the majority of their classroom lifespan in their carts and out of use. On the other side, some classrooms get iPads and then instantly the whole class is transformed into an iPad central educa-

tion system, meaning every single assignment and task that needs to be completed for the class is on the iPads.

By keeping iPads in the classroom students are not receiving the teaching style that may be more beneficial to them. The use of iPads promotes a learning style that is entirely visual and reading based, which only is efficient for the sub-group of students that learn in this manner. Some students prefer to learn auditorily and thus to do not benefit from the visual stimulus that is learning from iPads.

Creating work and assignments on the iPads can cause problems with teachers not teaching the material or students just simply not being able to use to iPads in the desired way in order to get their work done. There are teachers that use the iPads to encourage a more independent learning or use them to allow students to follow their own pace.

Many times, teachers will assign work for the students to complete on platforms like Schoology which not only comes with the

potential for technical difficulties, but also there is a big learning curve. There are students who are not adapted to use technology like this specifically in a classroom setting and that can cause them to be unable to complete their work, or they spend the whole class time just trying to figure out how to work the program they need taking the important learning time the students need from the lesson.

An easy solution to this problem would be to just get rid of iPads completely in a classroom setting, but that is a little unreasonable. A better alternative would be to limit the usage of iPads for each class or make using iPads optional. For example, this could mean giving students the option to do a paper assignment versus one online because many students prefer the comfortability of doing things in person.

What needs to be understood is technology does not need to be used 100 percent of the time in a classroom and teachers are inevitably setting up students for an unproductive learning environment.

Feminism does not mean hate



Emily Nelson
Reporter

Often, the connotations to feminists are dramatic females nitpicking at everything or a women’s activist group working for better rights, with no in between.

The true definition of feminism is the advocacy of women's rights on the basis of the equality of the sexes. In the 1830’s, when feminism first emerged as the Women’s Liberation Movement, this definition rang true. Feminism was a positive movement that was backed by women that wanted opportunities equal to those had by men. They

wanted their voices to be heard and respected as independent individuals, not as a property.

Through the years, the definition has been morphed and is now seen as unnecessary and made up. At family gatherings, when I “step out of bounds,” and speak on gender inequality, almost instantly, the word “feminist” is thrown at me as an insult and is viewed as if the term is a flaming ball of females that apparently never know what they’re talking about. However, I realize I am only a small fish in what seems to be a ginormous lake of hatred for feminism.

It’s not entirely any of my family members’ faults. Some forms of media and society have rejected and discredited the movement so much that many people have been brainwashed to think the negative feminists they see are the only ones that exist. Social media has created a platform for many females to band together in solidarity, but has also created a platform for mockery.

Prominent figures, such as President Donald Trump, have mocked feminist movements. For

example, President Trump called the “#MeToo” movement a “witch hunt,” according to a CNN article. Additionally, women have been shamed for making allegations of assault on social media instead of to law enforcement, deeming their allegations as false or illegitimate; deeming them feminists who just want revenge.

The long standing argument for feminism is not the fight for sameness, but for equality. “If there were two boys in a classroom, and one was physically weaker and smaller than the other, would we believe it’s right to keep the weaker, smaller boy from having the same access - to the teacher, to learning, to the computers, to the books and class resources, to other children in the class - because he didn’t have the same physical strength as the other boy?” Author Suzannah Weiss writes in her “Seven Things the Word Feminism Does Not Mean” article.

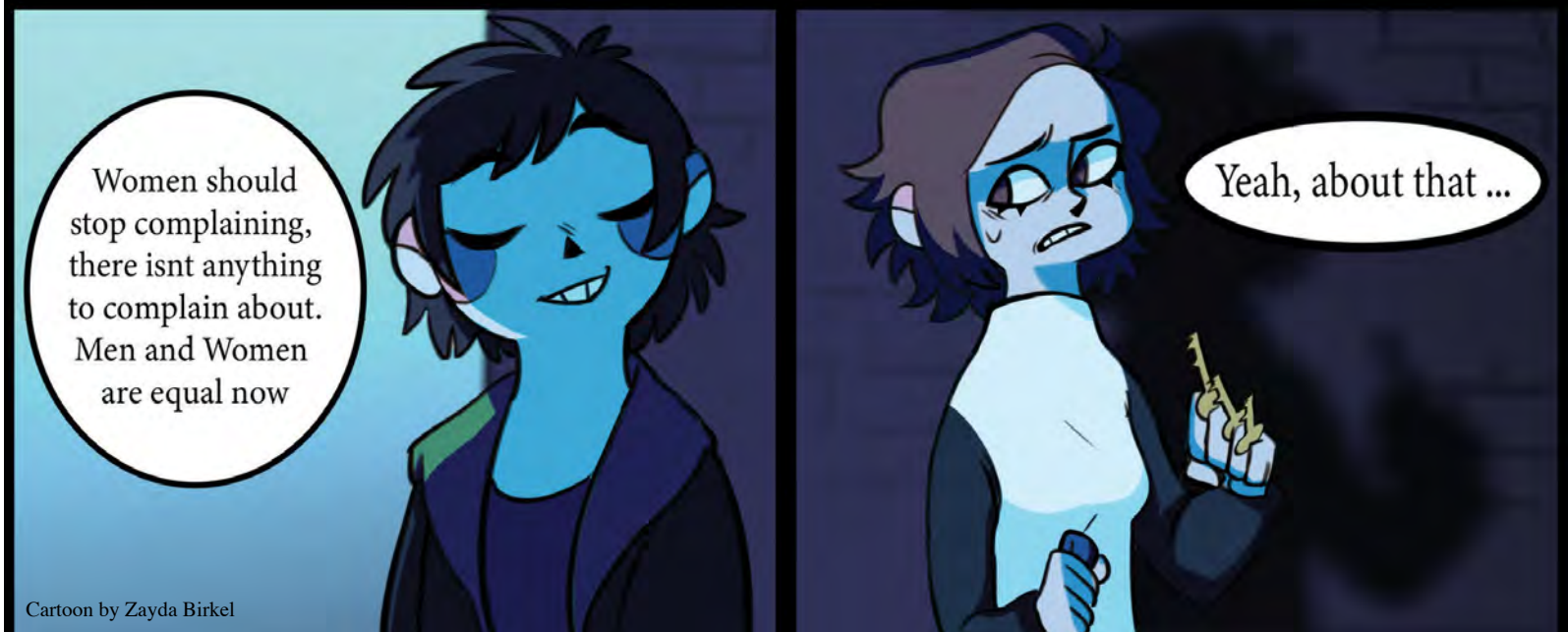
Weiss also touches on feminism not being an attack on males, but an attempt to receive equal opportunities. Although the outlook on

feminism has changed throughout the years, similarly in the movement’s early years, some men saw feminists as wanting to dominate and destroy masculinity; when that is not the case.

“Over 4 in 10 Americans see the movement as angry, and a similar portion say it unfairly blames men for women's challenges,” a national survey conducted by The Washington Post in 2016 found. Not all 4 in 10 may understand what real feminism is.

The struggle appears to be for someone to be either so far against feminism that one believes anyone in support is unintelligent, or being radically associated with feminism to the point where a hatred of the opposite sex forms.

Unfortunately, a movement that would please both sides seems impossible. Now more than ever feminism needs more supporters that are willing to attempt to return a positive name to the movement. Regardless of age, gender, and race, feminist reinforcements are welcomed. Feminists are not evil and should not be treated as such.



Cartoon by Zayda Birkel

Which matters more, ACT scores or GPA?



Hailey Hendry
Co-Editor in Chief

Students going to college tend to worry more about the ACT/SAT standardized tests. While that may be a deciding factor in college acceptance rates, students' grade point averages (GPAs) are also becoming a major area of interest when colleges go through student applications. High school students need to focus more on keeping their GPA in tact, and not focus so much on getting a high ACT/SAT score.

Many colleges today are looking for high GPA scores along with the ACT/SAT score to match, or vice versa. According to Halle Edwards at PrepScholar, a high standardized test score means that you have the mental capacity to do well and succeed, but if you

have a low GPA score with it, this could mean that you cannot perform well over a long period of time or in tough classes. Colleges tend to pass over those who can do the work, but choose not to in high school because it foreshadows how they will perform in college.

However, college is not for everybody. The amount of time and hard work students put into their school work sets the bar for how they are going to perform after high school, whether it be going to college, finding a job or both. According to Bruno Beidacki at KentWired, only 59 percent of college students in the United States graduate in six years or less, but only 23 percent of the students that enroll in for-profit universities will graduate in that six year time span. The majority of students graduating from high school across the U.S. will go to a for-profit university; for these students to succeed in college, the amount of dedication they have to their work will affect their future.

The difference between a non-profit and a for-profit university is non-profit universities offer a learning environment to benefit each and every student to help them achieve success in getting their degrees. For-profit universities, often called proprietary schools, offer a service for money for business owners or shareholders, according to Franklin University.

Colleges do, however, understand that some people are not good test takers, get "test anxiety" or are simply not fast enough to take these timed tests. This is why many college are changing their test flexible policies to test optional or test blind. Test flexible means that a student can choose to submit their ACT or SAT score, but every student that applies has to submit one or the other. Test optional means that it is not required for students to submit either score in their college application, but the rules vary from college to college. Finally, test blind means that colleges will rely solely on a students performance throughout high school to determine their application status. These colleges will often exempt students to submit their standardized test score if they have scored above a certain GPA.

East is one high school that offers the ACT test, even though there are 850 colleges that have a test optional or test flexible policy, many of the test flexible colleges are transitioning to a Test Optional policy. According to the Nebraska Department of Education, East's 2016-2017 graduation rate was at a 90.14 percent (320 students), this means that about 9.86 percent (78 students) of the 398 students in the class of 2017 did not graduate or dropped out. However, not all 320 students went to college or are still currently enrolled in college. While East does

offer every student the chance to graduate, there are students that graduate doing the bare minimum, and some don't graduate at all.

On the other hand, those who do have a high GPA, but a low score tend to graduate and succeed more often than those with a high standardized test score and a low GPA. Taking care of your high school GPA will get you into the habit of taking care of your college GPA, therefore resulting in succeeding in college and succeeding in life after college.

On average, according to Preston Cooper at Forbes, "a student with a high SAT score (above 1100) but a middling high school GPA (between 2.67 and 3.0) has an expected graduation rate of 39 percent. But students with the opposite credentials—mediocre SAT scores but high GPAs—graduate from college at a 62 percent rate."

Many colleges have noticed these trends based on studies that have been performed. Not many students understand that keeping your GPA high has already been something that colleges have looked for, but keeping it above a 3.0 prepares you for life after high school. You already set your standards and allows you to form a habit of time-management and getting all of your work done on time and correct. The only thing that hinders your goal is selling yourself short.

High school can determine future success



Abbie Deng
Opinion Editor

From the beginning of freshman year to the last days of senior year, one of the biggest accomplishments for a student in high school is to graduate. In Nebraska, the graduation rate is 89.3 percent, and 84.1 percent in the United States, according to the National Center for Education Statistics. For the remaining 13.7 percent of students in Nebraska that don't graduate, they are automatically cut off from opportunities one would receive with a high school degree, like a higher salary and many job opportunities. High school students should want to excel in highschool and take their earning of a diploma more seriously. High school is not

only a place for education, but a place where students learn about their potential roles in society.

Students who have received their high school diploma will typically get paid more over students who have not received their diplomas. The online magazine for Work-At-Home moms or WAHM.com has an article that indicates six reasons why a student should achieve their high school diploma. One reason is that on average, high school graduates earn about \$143 more per week than those who drop out. Also, students that further their education by obtaining a college degree earn \$479 more week than high school dropouts. The decision to not finish high school automatically places a high school dropout at the bottom on the economic chain.

Another reason why a high school diploma is important is because statistically, students without a diploma have a lower chance of even obtaining a job on their website, wahm gives the statistical difference, "According to a 2006 study, people who never completed high school had a 16.3 percent unemployment rate eight years later. During those same eight years, the unemployment rate among those who earned their diplomas within four years was dramatically lower at only 4.7 percent". Students should take the

opportunity given to them and complete their high school education not only because it opens doors for them but it will make them and the people around them proud of their accomplishments.

A high school education is going to determine one's success for the rest of their lives. Without a diploma, a person is limited to how much they can accomplish and the amount of things they can get out of their accomplishments. Without the education people really lose opportunities to aspire to bigger and better things. Students that don't complete their high school graduation lose basic knowledge that high school teaches its students and their credibility to future employers and higher educational institutions.

NBC news did a story on one of their reporters, Mary Emily O'Hara. O'Hara was a high school drop leaving school at the age of 16 but did not allow her inability to complete her education keep her from doing better success. O'Hara is just an example of one out of many students that realized the detriments of not having a diploma, but she was determined to change that for herself, "I got my GED and went to Portland Community College in Oregon. The first semester, I took just a couple of courses;" from those courses came college, and from college came her success as an NBC news reporter.

When wanting to pursue a post secondary education, it is important for one to have a highschool education. It is possible for one to attend a university without a highschool diploma, however, universities take students that have a highschool diploma into account at a higher rate over students without one. In her story O'Hara admitted that she didn't know where she stood in regards to applying for college as a dropout and competing with other college applicants. If you want to go to a university or college and study the program of your dreams, it is important to take your high school education with you having that diploma makes the transition from a high school level education to a collegiate level education way more easy.

Obviously, there are students who have not been able to attain their high school education for reasons that are deeper than just not wanting to go to school, but many cities have community colleges that offer General Education Programs (GED), and many high schools have credit redemption programs that allow students to complete high school. Moving on to the real world is something that all students eventually have to do, but to do it successfully it is vital that students pursue their high school education. Doors open wider when that diploma is placed in one's hands.

Students need healthier food options in school



Camrin Smith
Reporter

School lunches are great for both students and parents. For students, they don't have to worry about being hungry all day and the parents won't be worried that their children will be hungry during school. It is easier because parents don't have to send their children to school with lunch and the students don't have to worry about the food going bad in the lockers or eating cold food. According to Webmd, Another way that its good is because parents would be sure that their children receives an opportunity to eat a well balanced nutritious meal during the day.

Students spend more time at school more

than they spend time at home and research shows that what kids see modeled they pick up. At school vending machines, most of the food you find there are unhealthy, like chips, pop, and no healthy snacks like apples or smoothies. At lunch there's tasty food, but most of the time its fried like chicken nuggets and fries. There should be alternative lunches that are not just salads.

If schools offered healthier lunches, kids would be drawn to eat healthier, and most of them would adapt to the new change in no time. Some ways schools can start is by adding more healthier choices at the vending machines, exposing students to those op-

tions. For example, schools could dedicate half of vending machines to foods like candy and soda and half to fruit or whole grain bars.

Healthy food choices are known to fill up the student much longer not making them feel the need to eat multiple times a day. Healthier food also help students maintain their energy staying more alert in classes because they are full of nutrients and not junk food.

Schools should do a better job of educating students by teaching and practicing making healthy food decisions. The more they educate the better students will understand the benefits of healthy and unhealthy eating.

