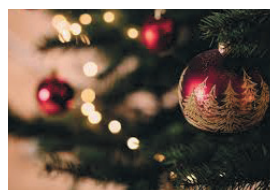




East faculty looks to implement a new academic dishonesty policy.

Found out more in the in-depth pgs. 6-7



Want to know the best Hallmark holiday movies?

Find out in Emily Nelson's Hallmark movie marathon on pg. 12



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State troopers wait for a description of a driver who committed a violation while doing an enforcement operation. “Our goal is to reduce crashes. Period. Save lives, at the end of the day, that’s the goal. Sarpy County has had a very bad year this year. There’s a lot of reasons for that,” Bellevue Police Sgt. Larry Lampman said. *Photo by Silas Chisam*

Task force works to lower fatalities

Silas Chisam

Entertainment Editor

The Bellevue Police Department, in conjunction with other local Sarpy County police departments, the Sarpy County Sheriff’s Office, and the Nebraska State Patrol started a task force in September of 2019 in response to the recent rise in fatalities.

An increasing amount of drivers have been hitting the roads in Sarpy County with Sarpy County having the fastest population growth rate in the entire state of Nebraska.

“We are doubling and tripling other areas of the state with population growth,” Bellevue Police Sgt. Larry Lampman said. “With that comes the cars that go with it. More schools, more cars, more young drivers, and unfortunately more bad crashes.”

The Sarpy County Traffic Safety Task Force is made up of several different law enforcement agencies within Sarpy County all working toward a common goal.

“This is a combined effort among five agencies including, the Nebraska State Patrol, Bellevue Police, Papillion Police, La Vista

Police, and the Sarpy County Sheriff’s Office,” Lampman said. “This is something that we do year round. This is now just a focused effort. Bellevue Police work for Sarpy County on a daily basis, and the State Patrol, as well Papillion and La Vista.”

This is not the first time that a task force similar to the Sarpy County Traffic Safety Task Force has been active. Task forces similar to the current task force have seen great results from their activity and positive community engagement.

“There was a task force like this back in 2000 that I was a part of, and it reduced crashes. In the late 2000s, 2008-2012, there was a Sarpy County task force, there was a grant paid, during that time the accidents reduced. Obviously with enforcement, people slow down, people stop at the lights, so they decided they were going to do this again,” Lampman said.

Rises in fatalities and traffic accidents are the main reason this task force has been formed, in hope for similar results to previous years when they ran operations.

“The task force began with the Chiefs and the Sheriff in Sarpy

County along with the Colonel of the State Patrol. They realized that we had a growing population and a growing number of fatalities in the county,” Lampman said. “The Chiefs came back to the Supervisors of the traffic units and asked our opinions. At that point all the agency Supervisors met, came up with a gameplan, and came up with the dates, and here we are today.”

Even with all of the different officers from all over the county, the task force is able to work efficiently with the help of a memorandum of understanding between all of the Sarpy County law enforcement agencies.

“There is a memorandum of understanding, an MOU, that was in place since I’ve been a police officer, that we have the authority to stop and make an arrest anywhere in Sarpy County,” Lampman said.

All of these agencies are working toward one common goal and hope to educate the public by doing these types of enforcements.

“So the goal of this is just to get the number of fatalities in the Sarpy County area down. We’ve

been having a higher than normal number of fatalities in the county recently. We are trying to get those numbers down and reduce traffic crashes and so forth,” Bellevue Police Ofc. Shaun Manning said.

A day for the task force is filled with activity. In one day they stopped 76 cars all across Sarpy County with charges ranging from speeding to possession of marijuana.

“We are dedicated strictly to traffic enforcement. We don’t get pulled away for radio calls; we don’t get pulled away for rescue calls. We don’t get pulled away for anything. They are dedicated strictly to running traffic for the set hours,” Lampman said.

Sarpy County’s Traffic Safety Task Force is still in the beginning stages so it is unknown whether or not the task force has impacted the overall number of fatalities, but the members of the force still have high hopes.

“It is too early to tell whether our efforts have affected crash numbers, however, our presence is well known through media campaigns and social media, so the word getting out will hopefully

cause drivers to take pause before committing traffic infractions,” Sarpy County Sheriff Sgt. Percifield said.

The task force has a very public presence by tweeting out their locations, violations they will be enforcing and then their results at the end.

“Overall, the response has been positive. We have had many citizens reach out thanking us for our efforts and even suggesting new spots to conduct traffic enforcement,” Percifield said.

Future enforcement efforts are already being discussed with a potential grant from the Nebraska Highway Safety Office to continue these types of operations.

“It sounds like the state Highway Safety has awarded us a small grant to start. So we’ll put together the same operation. Usually 2 officers per agency and plan dates for 2020, and continue running this, I foresee, two times a month,” Lampman said. “It sounds like there is potential for more grant money available so it could continue the following year and could be more than two per month.”



Senior Jonathon Ullom and senior Luke Muffitt play their role while battling it out in the One Act Play “Hammered.” “Getting to have the hammer at the end of the show was pretty cool even if it did look stupid,” Muffitt said. *Photo by Mckenzie Gandy*

Theater put on a show in One Act

Emily Nelson
News Editor

The Chieftain Theatre troupe opened for the One Act Play Festival Dec. 3. The department placed 7th in the One Act Festival at Gretna High School.

Their production “Hammered: A Thor and Loki Play” was written by Christian Borle. One act plays are typically 30 minutes and can either be original pieces or snippets of a play, according to Ullom. This year was Ullom’s second year participating in the

festival.

“This year was such a fantastic time with the group of people I had the pleasure of working with,” Ullom said.

Junior Ciara Stueve who played Atli and Sif, said while this year was really exciting, she missed the more competitive aspect of the festival, but enjoyed the lightheartedness of the play.

“One Act used to be competitive and an opportunity to see other shows and go against other actors to improve yourself and your show,” Stueve said. “However, this has

changed to a more relaxed scene. One Act can be seen as an introduction for those interested in theater.”

Theater director Joseph Hamik said they have participated in One Act for as long as he has been teaching at East, four years, but the department took part before that as well. The departments held auditions after the fall show premiere. To prepare students for the play, he said he had students look up Norse mythology to get into the background of the characters. He said the students spent after school rehearsal time memorizing lines and

perfecting the set.

Hamik said next year they are going to focus more on putting on the fall show and making it a bigger event. Next to the One Act play, the Fall show brings in bigger audience, more money, and takes more time and effort to execute.

“At least for next year we are going to put a hold on One Act for a bit because it is a really tough time of year to try to get kids into rehearsals because there are so many other activities,” Hamik said. “It has sort of become more pressure than it is worth.”

East uses ACT prep course to raise scores

Madie Ybay
Co-Editor in Chief

The On to College ACT preparation program will be introduced to Bellevue Public Schools. The curriculum will be integrated starting in the second semester of the 2019-2020 school year at East and West high schools.

The program is designed to help students improve their ACT scores. Senior Shelby Van Holland participated in the program on her own during her junior year of high school.

“My score went up three points because I had someone teaching me techniques rather than me just studying old questions. I think the program will help students who want to boost scores and want to improve,” Van Holland said.

There will be courses for freshmen and sophomores as well. These courses will include video lessons and activities to help students learn techniques and study styles for test taking.

“Now, most students at Bellevue East don’t have as high of a score as I do, so I think that this program will definitely be helpful to the vast majority of students, due to the program being seemingly designed for students looking to improve their score,” junior Elias Ervin said.

Next semester’s schedule will change to allow students to learn each lesson from the program. Each class period will be cut down two minutes and five minutes will be shaved off of a lunch passing period. This allows for a 45 minute GPS or advisory period every day. GPS will be on Monday and Friday. The On to College study days will be on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and Wednesdays will be a

regular advisory day.

“I hope it isn’t too boring, as I hate to keep mentioning this, but the program isn’t designed for people like me with a high score already. I hope the program turns out to be what happens and scores improve across the board,” Ervin said.

On to College offers many different courses for individuals on their website. From online to one-on-one, students have a variety of options to choose from. One course for one specific test date is \$149.00. This package includes 12 lessons which are then divided into two 20 minute videos. To cover the cost, Bellevue Public Schools paid \$30,530 with the Bellevue Public Schools Foundation providing half of the cost.

“If we see results, if we feel that student scores are able to move up and it’s a benefit for our students, and if it works with our scheduling is obviously number one. Obviously if it’s not working or it’s not a benefit, we wouldn’t do it. We’ve got to see what those results look like and we’ll track that,” Principal Jeffrey Wagner said.

Wagner said the hope for On to College is to help students raise their ACT scores and provide an equal opportunity for all students to do well. John Baylor’s goal is to help families and schools create 2 to 4-year college graduates with minimal debt.

“This is an amazing opportunity for our students to be able to participate in this program at no cost to them or their family,” Assistant Principal Susan Jensen said. “The program has proven to help students see anywhere from a 3 to 5 point jump in scores; if students take the program seriously. Hopefully all of our students will see this as an opportunity,” Jensen said.

Class officers push for more recognition

McKayla Vermeer
Co-Editor in Chief

Each grade level at East is represented by a selected group of students known as class officers with a variety of positions including president, vice-president, treasurer, and secretary.

“My favorite part of being a class officer would be the sense of accomplishment that comes with completing a task. It’s nice to know that I’ve been able to make an impact, whatever the size, on our school,” senior class president Annabelle Carozza said.

The process of becoming a class officer at East involves filling out an application. The application can include questions about what activities students are involved in, why students are interested in that position, and what qualifies them to be that person based on leadership and community involvement. Students must have 25 peer signatures and a teacher reference.

“The application process was a lot more simple than you would expect. I definitely recommend trying to become one if it is something that interests you,” Carozza said.

Together the class officers meet to discuss whatever topics they are focused on for the year with feedback from the student body and staff. For the seniors, for example, they focus on designing the senior class T-shirts and also deciding what the class gift for their year will be given to the school. As of right now, the class gift from the class of 2020 is currently unknown.

“Each year as a class officer comes with a different set of responsibilities. During sophomore year, the main focus was fundraising. Junior year, we primarily

worked on prom setup and planning. Senior year, we create the senior class T-shirt, host honors night, and provide the class gift,” Carozza said.

All the grade levels are represented through their class officers at East, even though it’s not as well known of a position. Students may not know who represents them. It is often other groups that get more recognition from potentially interested students.

“There are so many different leadership organizations that class officers just kind of get lost in the crowd,” junior class sponsor Stephanie Halstead said.

Halstead said the students selected are ultimately set as role models for their peers. She said the class officers and other students involved in the organization push for more involvement from students and staff at East.

“I think that if kids knew that we were in charge of prom, they would think differently. I also think that maybe if we did some more activities for the student-body that stood out, people would be more aware.”

The position of class officer and what they do is relatively unknown, but there are ways to help increase knowledge. Halstead says that if underclassmen became more aware of the role and duties of being a class officer then maybe they would be more inclined to pursue joining and partake in the activities and organization.

“I think that we could increase awareness by pushing involvement in the lower grade-levels (sophomores and freshmen), as they also have class officers,” Halstead said. “By the time they were juniors, they would be more aware of what a class officer is and what they do. I also think that we could advertise some of the perks of being a class officer.”

Lack of subs causes teachers to help

Emily Nelson
News Editor

A scarcity of substitute teachers in Bellevue Public Schools caused teachers to cover other classrooms where needed.

BPS utilizes the Frontline system in which staff can enter their absence request, according to Assistant Principal Nathaniel Bacon. He said this request is then approved by building and district administrators depending on the reason of absence. From there, the Frontline system notifies available subs of the absence and they can then choose to take the position or not.

“If subs are not found, then it is up to us within the building to find coverage,” Bacon said. “We utilize the Sub Bucks program for staff members to cover classes during their plan, in which teachers are paid 25.00 per hour, period, that they cover.”

Surrounding districts use this

system as well. Omaha Public Schools also pays \$25 per hour according to Central High School teacher Hillary Blayne. Board member Mary Roarty of Ralston Public Schools said teachers receive \$30 per hour, or period, they cover.

“It is important for teachers to be willing to cover in other classrooms, but we also know that there are times when teachers cannot due to other obligations and planning that they need to get done,” Bacon said.

Bacon said the sub shortage is not just a BPS issue, but a state and nation-wide concern. He said when a sub has down time, they are also utilized in other classes that need them. East also has roaming teachers during some periods that look for classes that need to be covered.

“Ultimately, we are all one team working together to help each other out,” Bacon said. “We want to be willing to help each other out, so that when we need help, others are

willing to help support us.”

Instructor Rachel Carraher said she covered two classes so far this year, but has been asked to cover six times. She said this year is unique because she has a student teacher who has a local sub certificate which has allowed her to fill in as a substitute when Carraher is gone.

“Typically once or twice a year I may have an open sub job that does not get filled,” Carraher said. “However, on average my jobs are filled. Sub jobs are often not filled when the absence is unexpected and on short notice.”

Freshman Melannie Gonzalez said if teachers are having to cover other classrooms, their pay should make up for that. She said she notices a difference in the classroom when there is a substitute.

“I think the class is a lot louder than normal and we do not get the stuff that we usually have to do done,” Gonzalez said.

Carraher said when she does have a substitute, she still leaves

notes to have her students complete work and rarely has them watch a video. She said if she expects the sub to do some teaching, it is difficult to guarantee that it will happen if she has co-workers covering classes. She said she does not think it is fair to ask them to have to teach another class during their plan period so that they do not lose that time.

“I know that I always want to be able to help out my coworkers if I can,” Carraher said. “However, I also have to put myself first when it comes to making sure I am getting all the things I need to do for the day and upcoming days. Teachers rely on their plan periods to help them minimize staying late or having to take work home with them.”

Substutue Stevins Spurgeon said he feels a substitute’s job is important because today there is a lack of stability in many homes, so when that stability leaves the classroom, it is a substitute’s job to provide that again. He said his

focus as a sub is to spend his time wisely and encourage students while he is here to believe in themselves. He said he wants to be the light they may not experience and that when he takes a sub job, he uses it as an opportunity to teach students lessons they may not hear anywhere else.

“I look at substituting first and foremost as an opportunity to be able to reach kids who are not being reached,” Spurgeon said.

Spurgeon said he started subbing because it was a good way to make decent money and to maintain the flexibility he wanted to do other things. He said people may become uneasy with being subs because of the lack of guarantee there will be a job every day.

“It might be increasingly hard to find subs right now because the economy is pretty good,” Spurgeon said. “So a lot of people who did not have the opportunity to get those full time jobs with the stability they want, they have that now.”

Students start preparing for the future

McKayla Vermeer
Co-Editor in Chief

Many students at East this year are rearranging their schedules or taking classes to help best prepare them for their future goals.

“When you talk about five classes, it’s five classes at Bellevue East, at Metro, UNMC Health Alliance, the Career Academy classes at Metro - those all count. It’s not about taking five classes at Bellevue East, because it’s not about Bellevue East, it’s about the students and what’s that pathway for them,” Wagner said.

Students like senior Madi Pelzer are taking advantage of the College Now! program offered through Metropolitan Community College (Metro) in order to complete some of their general education

requirements sooner. College Now! offers Nebraska students the opportunity to take classes for half price at Metro either on campus or online. This is a way for high school students to be enrolled in college courses while in high school.

“It’s not finalized yet but I’m almost positive I’ll have a three course schedule. I’m also going to be taking online college courses through Metro Community College. Bellevue East and Metro offer the College Now program, so taking my general studies now rather than next year is a lot more affordable,” Pelzer said.

Taking college courses while still in high school can seem overwhelming to some. Pelzer says that while this option works for her, it may not be for everyone.

“As long as you know what you

can handle and don’t overload yourself, I think it’s a great option for those planning to attend college and save some money in the process,” Pelzer said.

Students have some sort of flexibility with their schedule as long as they have an idea of what they want to do after high school. Wagner says that at East students have a variety of options to prepare for what they want in life after high school.

“As far as the Career Academy classes, we have students that actually leave and go to Metro. You know, my goal is to try and have 50 of those students this year and next year, but how do we grow that,” Wagner said. “Because again it’s not about graduation, you know graduation is a stepping stone, it’s what’s life after that and it doesn’t

have to be college either.”

Other students that may not be wanting to attend college after high school also have other options for career plans. Senior Ryan Holecek is planning on graduating at the end of this semester in order to join the military.

“Earlier this year, I sat and thought about what I wanted to do after my senior year was up, whether I wanted to go straight to college, or take a year off and I guess it wasn’t either,” Holecek said. “I got in touch with a recruiter and I decided that through the benefits, this was the best option for my life.”

In the case of Holecek, in order to graduate early he has to finish some of his course requirements earlier than other students. To help him accomplish this, he is taking classes through an online program

connected to the school.

“They helped me get started on Acellus so I could graduate early. Graduating early would give me the chance to go to boot camp earlier, which would have me making as much money as people a year or two older than me,” Holecek said. “It would allow me to stay in longer earning more money at a younger age in comparison to other people.”

Giving students the option to do what is best for their future is not a new concept for high schools including East. Wagner says that as a school they always try to prepare students for whatever future they want to work towards.

“We’re really trying to do things to benefit our students and give them that leg up and that advantage, so that’s what we’re going to continue to fight for,” Wagner said.

Task force aims to make the community safer



Bellevue Police Ofc. Shaun Manning searches a driver’s information during a traffic stop while the operation does speed enforcement. “I’m going to run her plates. I don’t always run every single plate but for this one I will because she could not provide me an insurance card, so if it’s indicated on the registration that they had valid insurance at the time when they registered the vehicle I’ll consider it,” Manning said. *Photo by Silas Chisam*



Several officers, deputies, and troopers run traffic stops for the Sarpy County Traffic Safety Task Force as part of a combined effort to reduce fatalities and crashes. “To see all those cars from different agencies out of their jurisdiction. Definitely a positive thing. We work together all the time, you name it. From investigation to traffic to special events,” Bellevue Police Sgt. Larry Lampman said. *Photo by Silas Chisam*



Sarpy County Sheriff Sgt. Kyle Percifield helps run Lazer enforcement during the operation by tracking the speed of cars. “I have been a deputy sheriff for 11 years and I am a sergeant assigned to our Special Services Unit. I supervise traffic enforcement, crash reconstruction, and our school resource officers,” Sarpy County Sheriff Sgt. Kyle Percifield said. *Photo by Silas Chisam*



The task force focuses on the main problems in the county and hopes to educate the public. “The main issue that we see is overall inattention that leads to violation of traffic law. Whether the distraction is physical, visual, or cognitive, distraction/inattention is causing people to not watching their speed, miss traffic signals, and strike other vehicles,” Sarpy County Sheriff Sgt. Kyle Percifield said. *Photo by Silas Chisam*

Bellevue shines bright at night

Cora Bennett
Features Editor

The darkness of the park suddenly lights up as a host of colorfully decorated Christmas lights shine a display of many Christmas themes. Christmas trees, reindeer, and the words “Christmas in Olde Towne” light up

the area. These lights are all part of a group of people committed to “Light Up Bellevue.” The group has been in the works for quite a while, but has just recently made its appearance. Joanna Hike, BPS teacher and wife of Mayor Rusty Hike, enjoys giving back to the community. After seeing the need for some holiday cheer she gathered a

committee. “I noticed that all the other cities were doing something for the holidays and wanted Bellevue to join in on the holiday festivities. I came up with the idea about a year and a half ago. The committee has been working on this project and fundraising since last January,” Hike said.

When people first began talking about it, no one thought anything was actually going to happen. The Hike family created a website and started looking for volunteers. “The inspiration came from a Facebook page where residents were complaining of the lights in the Olde Towne area saying they were not like they used to be. I joined the conversation saying that I would be interested in helping to change that,” Light Up Bellevue committee member Mike Poth said.

Currently there are three main light displays. There is a light show on display throughout Washington park, lights at the police station, and a tree outside the Lied Activity Center. Next year the group plans to put lights on the light poles that are along Mission Ave.

“I love to look at Christmas lights; I think they are really pretty and artistic. I am happy to see that they finally have a local light show, before we usually drove to Omaha to see them,” sophomore Damaya Calip said.

The light display at Washington Park has over 16,000 lights hat synced to music. Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 5 to 6 p.m. the lights will stay one color and will not flash, so that people with disabilities can view the display.

“The messages and colors will change with the seasons, holidays, and events. The mega tree is down right now due to strong winds, but it is in the process of being rebuilt and it will be stronger so it will be able to withstand the strong winds,” Hike said.



In Old Towne Bellevue at Washington Park, Christmas lights are displayed for the winter season to share the cheerful spirit.
Photo by McKenzie Gandy

Students worry about grades, causes stress

Lara Arnold
Contributor

The buzz of the alarm clock scares the teenage girl out of bed. She rushes while getting ready, not bothering to look presentable. The sun is still yet to rise and the world around her is quiet. After she dresses, she puts a soft piece of bread into the toaster. By the time she packs all of her softball gear, her toast is as black as the early morning sky. She stomachs her small breakfast and heads out to her first practice of the day.

The sound of basketballs rumble the ground when she enters the school. She powers through the whole workout and rushes to get to her first class.

Her school day is full of note taking and nodding. Lunch is the time to fill up since her puny toast did not hold her for long. After

school, she rushes up the brick red stairs to the locker room where she gets ready for the next practice of the day - Softball. When it is over she climbs into her mother’s crimson red car and they speed off.

When she gets home, it is time for a much needed shower. Later, she begins her homework and completes it all without a complaint. The next day, she goes through all of this again and again until the weekend arrives.

“Everyday is super tiring for me with all of the sports and then homework after, but I just try to picture sleeping in on the weekend, and that always gets me through a busy week,” freshman Jillian Weber said.

There are many students at Bellevue East that go through a similar routine day to day. Completing homework and passing classes may seem to be a hassle for some students, but an over-achieving attitude seems to help Weber

pull through the weeks.

“I don’t really know what I want to be when I grow up but I think it’s best to try your best in everything even if you don’t know what path you’re going take,” Weber said.

According to Carol Bainbridge, an expert on gifted education, high achieving students do not necessarily need to be gifted. Instead, they have good work ethic, organization, and time management. They also are motivated to get good grades other than easily getting As.

“Before a big test, I usually just take the time to memorize vocab and other things with Quizlets or quiz my friends on things with flashcards,” freshman Jazmyne Ganir said.

As stated by Bainbridge, “high achievers” can take longer to understand topics and memorize things than “gifted students.” This means that over achievers also may take lots of time doing homework, studying, and taking

tests.

“I think I care more about getting good grades because my younger siblings kind of look up to me and always do what I do, so that makes me want to be a good role model to them,” Ganir said.

According Jennifer Cohen, an expert in productivity strategies, over achievers always have a goal they are working toward. Instead of doing the bare minimum, they always go above and beyond with their effort and time they put into tasks or assignments. Over achievers are also never shy to ask for help because they believe it is necessary for success.

“I think that every student is capable of passing their classes whether they are in an advanced or regular class, but I think the amount of effort they put in always shows their intelligence, not necessarily their grades,” instructor Whitney Wilson said.

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Academic Integrity

Academic integrity policies differ from high school to college

McKayla Vermeer
Co-Editor in Chief

Issues regarding the academic integrity of high school students remains a problem in many schools across the nation, including at East.

“I think there’s a fine balance between what is collaboration and what is academic misconduct,” East principal Jeffrey Wagner said. “We want students to collaborate and we want students to have those discussions; we want students to be able to share ideas with each other and help each other, but we also have to make sure our students understand that giving somebody else a paper, or photocopying something, or sending pictures of something is really breaching that.”

Currently the policy for cases of cheating and academic dishonesty is defined on the district level in the Bellevue Public Schools (BPS) Student and Family Handbook. Among other things, the guideline states that receiving or giving

assistance to other students on graded assignments constitutes as cheating, and those involved in cheating “may expect consequences which include no credit for the assignment and/or disciplinary action.”

Throughout the BPS Student and Family Handbook, there are not more specific guidelines as to how to deal with cases of cheating. Wagner said that part of the problem with cheating is that many students do not know what specifically counts as cheating because there are not more clear guidelines.

“I think sometimes there’s misconceptions of what is or what isn’t construed as academic dishonesty or academic misconduct. I think a piece of it is just trying to identify what are some of those forms or what does that look like,” Wagner said. “I think sometimes people aren’t aware of what would be considered [academic dishonesty].”

Higher institutions of learning,

like colleges or universities, often have more specific codes as to what actually constitutes cheating. In addition to this, many universities have a distinct protocol on how they handle cases and what steps each student would have to go through.

The University of Nebraska - Omaha (UNO) specifically hosts a list of protocols on their website about how each individual case of academic dishonesty should be handled. Assistant Dean of Students at UNO and overseer of the office of Conduct and Community Standards Trenton Frederickson said that there are many reasons why their guidelines are so specific.

“UNO is an academic community and it is important to protect the learning environment. Additionally, it is important that students are doing the work required so that they are prepared for their future careers and life after leaving UNO,” Frederickson said. “Specific procedures are in place to communicate to the community

what the expectations are regarding their academic work and to outline a student’s right to due process should they be accused of a violation of the policy.”

There is a process that comes with deciding whether or not a student was involved in an instance regarding lack of academic integrity. At UNO, there are different ways that an instance of cheating could be handled.

“There really are two resources for handling allegations of academic integrity violation (which cheating is a part of). One is the academic affairs policy that allows an instructor to handle the issue in their class – think failing grade on an assignment, test, or the entire course,” Frederickson said. “The second is our Code of Conduct and Community Standards, which is for repeat violations and could result in a suspension from UNO. Violations of academic integrity are taken very seriously.”

The current guidelines at East do

cause some problems for students that commit that sort of infraction. Because of the lack of specific conduct, confusion can be involved.

“There never really has been a lot of clarity, and because of the difference in how each teacher handles things I can see how it would be confusing for students,” senior Courtney Auclair said.

The difference in academic integrity policies from high school to the collegiate level appears to be an centered on the focus of the institutions. Students coming in from schools with weaker policies are not prepared.

“I would speculate that a high school that does not have guidelines would create more of a problem for students when they do transition to college where there is such an emphasis on academic integrity,” Frederickson said.

In the future, there might be a possibility of updating the current policy at East to be more detailed and inclusive of specific examples.

Wagner said that letting students know the expectations beforehand could help prevent cheating from occurring.

“It’s something I would like to have in our student handbook, or if not district wide, at least with Bellevue East because I think it is something to try to be more proactive than reactive,” Wagner said. “I think trying to make sure our students have that knowledge and an understanding, really, of what that entails or what that could entail, so they’re informed as well.”

Even though a new policy might be in the works for East in the future, it will not be as detailed as the policy at UNO. Because of each situation involving different scenarios and different students, Wagner said it is important that East does not develop very definitive rules.

“I think you have to take into account each situation as an individual situation and the history of the student and some of those

things as well. I think if you have a very delineated, very definitive [policy] then sometimes you take out some of that judgement piece or some of that caution piece,” Wagner said. “I hope we don’t get to a place where it’s so prescriptive or so outlined that it’s either right or wrong all the time, and you would never be able to list every possible situation either.”

Even with a more strict procedure plan on how to deal with cases of academic integrity violations, Frederickson said the best way to deal with preventing cases of academic dishonesty is by educating the students first.

“The more that we can do to be proactive and teach students the expectations of the community, the better. I think it is like any other policy or expectations – knowing and understanding what it is, what the expectations are, and knowing what happens when a violation occurs are best before there is an issue,” Frederickson said.

36%

Percentage of students that agree twith the statement that “A person has to lie or cheat sometimes in order to succeed”

49%

Percentage of high school students that claim to have never cheated on a test

16%

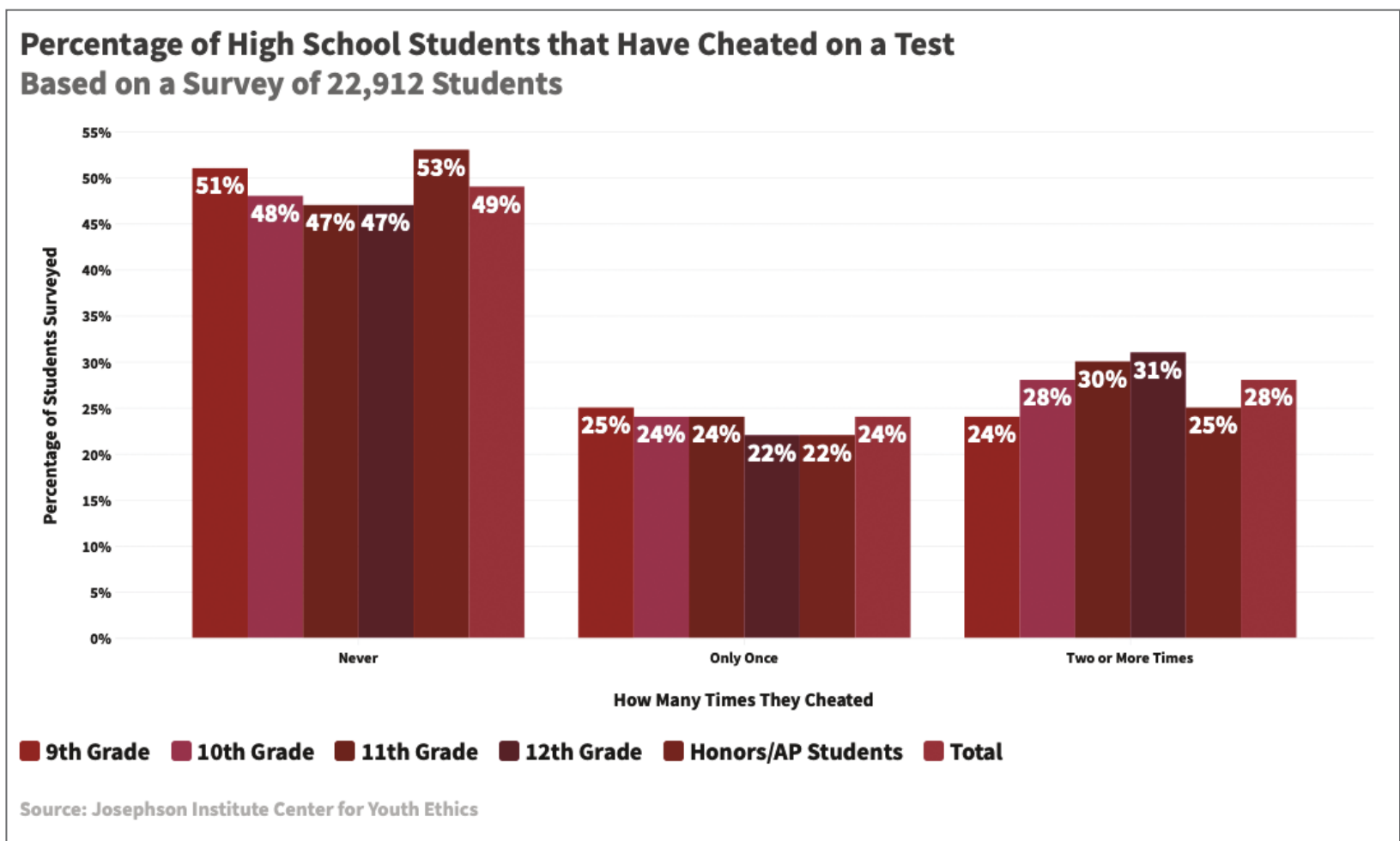
Percentage of students that admitted to copying an internet document two or more times for their homework assignment.

29%

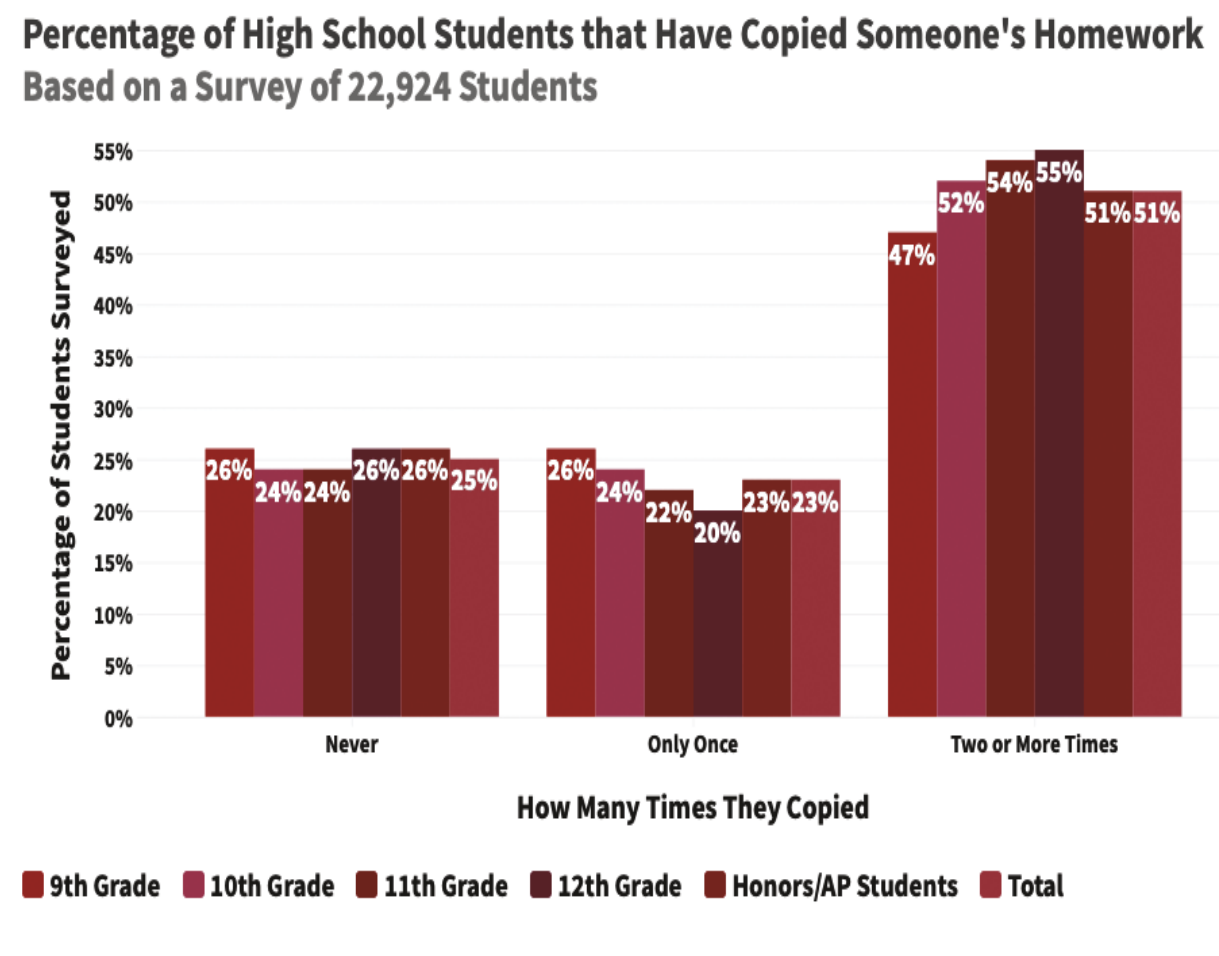
Percentage of high school students that admitted to lying to a teacher about something significant two or more times.

According to the Josephson Institute Center for Youth Ethics in 2012

Statistics show various students cheat on tests, work



A survey conducted by the Josephson Center for Youth Ethics in conjunction with the organization Character Counts asked questions to high school students regarding morals and ethics in their personal and academic lives. Among the questions, students were asked about lying to family members/teachers, cheating on academic work, in addition to characteristics that they believe are important for themselves and others to have. The questions were then organized by answer into various categories of those that answered, including their gender, grade level, and if they are involved in other activities. The graphic representation on the left shows the percentage of students that have cheated on a test, based on their grade level and whether or not they were in honors or Advanced Placement classes. The graph on the right is from the same study, and addresses the question of how many times a student copied another student's homework. *Graphics created by McKayla Vermeer*



East faculty create committee on cheating

Madie Ybay
Co-Editor in Chief

A new academic integrity committee comprised of instructors and administrators was created at East in the 2019-2020 school year to help address the issue of academic dishonesty and to set guidelines for students and staff to follow.

The new academic integrity group includes Shannon Dunkel, Angelica Musil, Lance Raabe, Julie Coombs, Bruce Bartholow, Collin Mink, and Patrick Finan. Their purpose is not based on punishing those students who have cheated, rather their focus is on defining the nuances of academic dishonesty.

For example, the committee hopes to define the distinctive line between collaboration and copying. The hope is to make it easier for students to understand.

“Forming a committee is not going to solve all of the problems related to academic integrity. The goal, rather, is to provide everyone in the building with the opportunity to share some commonalities about the issue,” Raabe said.

The guidelines will be created by the committee; however, each teacher will be able to set their own rules for their own classrooms.

“It is usually left to the departments to decide how they want to handle the infractions, within reason. I believe most departments have the students redo a summative in presence of the teacher with a minimal grade awarded,” Principal Jeff Wagner said.

The guidelines are still in the works, and there have been several committee meetings, the last being in October. The fact that staff are addressing the issue has been seen positively by some students.

“I think having a committee on academic dishonesty is good because if you cheat, you aren’t learning anything,” junior Katie Cunningham said. “There are students that cheat all the time, and they do it so easily and aren’t getting caught.”

Once students get into college, they face stricter consequences. Colleges in the area also have an academic integrity implemented into their programs.

University of Nebraska Lincoln and University of Nebraska Omaha have specific steps and guidelines defined on what happens when a student cheats. However, in the BPS handbook, there are not guidelines on what constitutes cheating. The committee will create the guidelines.

“The best solution is to take

ownership over your own learning. I have told my students that it can be very powerful to study and prepare for an exam and then see what the results of their labor will yield,” Raabe said.

Committee members are looking for ways to advertise the highlights of the framework through posters and social media coverage, so students can get involved and help the faculty in this new endeavor.

“The strength of our committee is the diversity of thought. The administration, teachers, and a group of students are involved in designing the framework,” Mink said.

The effectiveness of the committee remains uncertain. Other schools in the Bellevue Public Schools district do not currently have academic integrity committees.

Once guidelines are set, the hope is students will feel deterred from being academically dishonest. Raabe said that keeping conversations with students may be a way to help.

“There may be a certain amount of disagreement between students and their teachers about what defines cheating and that’s why it’s important to have these conversations. I try to keep the conversations open with my students,” Raabe said.

Wrestlers prepare for rest of season

Jacob Kriewald
Sports Editor

As the winter season quickly approached, the Chieftain wrestlers are ready and have been preparing for the season.

Sophomore Garrett Grice and junior Preston Welch are looking to have better and more successful seasons than in the past. But for reigning state champ Garrett, he’s looking to do it one more time.

“I practice at a place called MWC and competed all over the country over the summer,” Grice said.

Grice was state champ for the 113 weight class last school year and is looking to repeat his success. Although he is the one getting it done on the mat, he gives credit to the behind the scenes. Todd Porter, varsity head wrestling coach, has been more to Grice than just a coach.

“I think Porter knows me better now. He understands how I wrestle,” Grice said. “Also, he’s good for being there for me when I’m down on myself and knows what to say and when to say it.”

But Grice is not the only athlete coming into the season ready to mix things up. Junior Preston Welch is prepared to take the season by storm.

“I myself am looking to place this season. I’m currently preseason ranked 4th in the state for heavyweight, but I’m shooting for top 3,” Welch said.

Welch has also been getting ready for the season, but feels that the best way to help is by “keeping the team motivated.”

“[Motivation] is a very useful thing because without motivation you start to see



Chatting it up with some teammates, junior Preston Welch prepares to start practice in his third year as a Chieftain wrestler. “Last year’s season was pretty good; we had 3 state medalist two of which were state champions and this year we are looking to build on that,” Welch said. *Photo by Jacob Kriewald.*

guys not show up or not work as hard so keeping motivated is very important,” Welch said.

For Grice, wrestling has played a big role in his life and has played the role as the connection between him and his brother. Tradition has also been a huge part of why

he has continued to do the sport.

“I’ve been wrestling since I was 5 years old and I got into because I was always at my older brothers meets and I wanted to start,” said Grice.

As for Welch, being a multiple sport athlete playing football, track and field and

wrestling, and being constantly in some sort of activity, he has helped him stay conditioned and ready to compete.

“Over the offseason I worked to keep myself in good condition by lifting hard in the weight room and running,” Welch said.

East unified bowling end their season with a strike

Madie Ybay
Co-Editor and Chief

Lining themselves up for the strike, the East unified bowling team ready themselves to knock down all ten pins and rack up their score to beat the competition.

Unified Bowling is a collaboration between the Nebraska School Activities Association (NSAA) and the Special

Olympics Nebraska where special needs students and general education students work together to compete against other schools in competition. Unified Bowling became a NSAA sanctioned sport around five years go and that was also the time that Unified Bowling came to East.

“Actually, I was a little caught off guard five years ago when I was approached by an administrator asking if I would be interested.

I guess they knew that I have long been involved in the game, bowling in leagues and periodic tournaments,” bowling coach Kent Crossley said.

There is a varsity, jv, purple and white team at East. The teams at East compete in a Baker Format which is when the bowlers must rotate players in a specific order so each bowler will be able to play.

“I love practicing with my team because

we just bowl and try to get better,” sophomore Isabella Maldonado said. “It doesn’t feel very pressured to improve; it just feels like bowling with my friends.”

When preparing for competition, students practiced on Tuesdays. Although they compete in a Baker Format, when students practiced they would focus individually on different styles of bowling. They also made sure practices were fun and had a welcoming environment as Crossley and the bowlers believe that their positive attitudes have big impact on their bowling.

“My personal goals for this season is that I would make a new friend and beat my score of 114,” junior Lindsey Vance said.

Crossley could only bring five students to the district tournament. At the beginning of the season Crossy had to determine what specific goals he wanted to achieve. He wanted students who wanted to represent the school well and be able to work with other students. At the end of the year, Crossley had a decision to make.

“We had quite a few bowlers this year with even abilities, so there were some periodic changes of teaming when I thought someone was showing improvement, so I took those that I thought were peaking, although it was not an easy decision,” Crossley said.

Unified Bowling’s season ended on December 9 when they had competed at state. During the season they competed in a tournament and a triangular as well as competing one-on-one with other schools. At Districts the East team came third out of eight and ended the season with ten wins and nine losses.

“I had a lot of fun the past two years and I liked how it’s not super competitive, but you are always trying to get a better score every time you play,” Vance said.



Senior Alec Welte gets into his bowling stance. The unified bowling team practiced Tuesdays after school at Leopard Lanes. “It’s just something I like to do for fun; it isn’t that challenging. I have been doing it for quite a while now,” Welte said. *Photo by Cora Bennet*

Smashing and bashing their way to victory

Emily Nelson
News Editor

Knee pads up, skates on, and helmets buckled, the young women of Omaha Junior Roller Derby (OJRD) began their race around the track.

Coach Emma Hauenstein, who's derby name is Elle on Wheels, manages the league of 30 players ranging from 8 to 17 years old. According to their website, the league is co-ed, skater owned and operated, and volunteer ran. It is also part of the adult league, the Omaha Roller Girl and is non profit, with any money going back to the program.

"Consisting of a diverse group of athletes, the members of Omaha Roller Derby [adults] are comprised of two teams, The Omaha Roller Derby All-Stars, a seasoned team of skaters that represents the league in international sanctioned game play, and The Omaha Roller Derby AAA, which competes regionally and whose focus is to refine skills and strategy while still competing competitively," Omaha Roller Derby's website states.

Hauenstein started coaching the junior roller derby team last August. She played roller derby with OJRD for all four years of high school and during that time, she skated as a blocker and jammer. She said blocking was her favorite position.

"The mission of OJRD is to establish a program that will help develop character, confidence, leadership, and provide a positive social interaction in youths through sports," Hauenstein said. "Our goal is to nurture and develop both skilled athletes and

those who have not yet realized the champion inside them."

Senior Trinity Hettinger, Toxic, and freshman Caroline Boucher, Sour Caroline, started roller derby six years ago. As a captain, Hettinger uses roller derby to release inner anger and said the sport taught her to be a better teammate and player. Boucher said she wanted to play at 4 years old, ever since she saw her mom skate.

"The first thing I said to my coach when I first joined was actually I have waited four years for this day," Boucher said.

Boucher said she adores roller derby and for people interested, the skill of skating is not needed as that is taught in a boot camp that she helps with, which is a mini session where they teach the basics of skating, falling, and hitting.

"I would like people to know that it is not a violent sport," Boucher said. "People hear hitting and assume we punch each other or push each other on skates. While we do hit, they are safe hits and the game is mostly fun and a bit of strategy. You do not need to be strong in order to be a good derby player."

Breaking down game play, Hauenstein said roller derby is a team skating sport on a flat track. The game itself starts with two teams consisting of five players per team, four blockers and one jammer. She said both team's blockers are required to stay within ten feet of each other, forming a pack.

"The point of the game is to out score the opposing team," Hauenstein said. "This is done by jammers skating through the other team's blockers. Jammers score one point for each opposing blocker they pass. The



Freshman Caroline Boucher blocks senior Trinity Hettinger from trying to get around her and score a point. "I've always loved skating and thought it looked like a great way to take my anger out," Hettinger said. *Photo by McKenzie Gandy.*

jammers try to get as many points as possible in one jam, the game consists of two 30-minute periods."

Hettinger and Boucher share a love for the sport. From very young, they took an in-

terest in roller derby and stuck with it.

"Roller derby is a tough but amazingly fun sport," Hettinger said. "Whether you're competitive or not it's fun to knock your friends on their butts."

Swim gets ready to dive into new season

Jacob Kriewald
Sports Editor

Pull on your swimming cap and put on your goggles because it's time for swim season. There have been a lot of changes to the team since last year, the more notable being changes in the coaching staff. As of last year, Spanish teacher and now head swim and dive coach Taylor Schultz has taken over the title of head coach.

"The difference between Schultz and coach last year is she is pushing us more and getting us ready for state sooner than our old coach did. She is definitely working us out more," sophomore Maiah Tomsu said.

With any coaching change, there is always a question on whether or not they will succeed. Although they started their season

off with a 248-96 loss at Bellevue West, there is still hope with 12 more guaranteed meets. But the one attribute you cannot question is her excitement to be there as head coach.

"It has been a nice chance. There's a lot more behind the scenes work that I wasn't used to before, but I still get to do the fun part, the actual coaching," Schultz said. "I enjoy overseeing the swimming part of the team because I used to spend majority of my time with the divers and now I can watch the swimmers grow stronger and faster, everyday."

Coming into the season, players are hoping to be successful. Expectations are high and the athletes have been working harder than ever to achieve the goals they set last year.

"I expect that a lot of us swimmers will be

way more competitive and work harder than before to get into conference and or state," sophomore Kyra Piper said.

With a lot of new faces on the team, there is hope that these swimmers will work hard and achieve their full potential for the season.

"This year we have a lot of new swimmers with a lot of potential and a lot of hard workers. I'm confident that it will be a good year and have swimmers make it to state this year," Tomsu said.

Shultz has also made the letter policy more strict. Getting a letter in a sport or activity is an honor and should be earned. She has implemented a new system of academic and attendance requirements to make sure athletes are earning this honor. In the past, athletes who participated in the sport were gifted a letter for participating.

"I think earning a varsity letter is something you need to work for and have pride in what you have accomplished. Also, all athletes must be passing every class in order to compete in a meet," Schultz said. "Academics is a priority. Everyone is a student first and then an athlete."

Overall, the team is ready and prepared to compete all season long and are expected to have fun. The coaches also hope that the athletes can reach their best potential through the rest of the season.

"I know we will have a lot of personal bests throughout the season as new swimmers master their stroke and returnees guide them through," Schultz said. "I have a very knowledgeable group of assistant coaches that are going to help move the team in a great direction."



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Technology brings negatives



McKenzie Gandy
Photography Editor

Around the globe, schools have added technology into their classrooms for new learning tools. In adding these new additions, parents have expressed their feelings about iPads being used

in the students every day learning. The problem is kids nowadays are getting way too attached to their devices, causing their social lives to go down, as well as their grades by using these devices that are supposedly “beneficial.”

In school, especially elementary, they have given iPads in a majority of the classrooms for kids to get better “connected.” The truth is in some high school classes they are not even being used for any purpose at all, so in the end it just ends up being a big waste of money for the district.

In some other states the school districts have made changes to where every student gets their own iPads in and out of school. iPads in school can cause many problems for everyone, including problems to students’ brain, health, and social lives.

The article “Five Negative Impacts of Technology in Children”

states that “Kids are using mobile devices more and more, and they can become addicted to this, not spending enough time with their family and/or friends.” In adding iPads to classes it worsens the students’ social skills to where they might not even communicate a lot anymore to their families. Health problems re also a leading cause of children being connected to technology on the daily. Basically, you cannot be a good writer if every day students are using iPads for classes and not getting any pencil to paper action to write all of their essays or stories.

Notability is also a big resource that students use on iPads while at school for their schoolwork. The downside is this app costs \$9 and people do not want to spend that much money on a school work app. The district does pay for some of the apps used, though, and that would most likely work well.

iPads are not beneficial for the growth of students in their everyday lives while at school or even outside.

I would rather learning activities remain using pencil and paper because it is simple and teaches students how to do everything manually while also becoming a better writer. To me it is way more complicated to do school work on iPads because there is always difficulties or something goes wrong and then student cannot do their work because of problems with the technology or the school WiFi.

The overall solution should be limiting iPad usage to certain classes where it shows purpose. Even then, when students are given assignments on iPads, they are more likely to be distracted. Giving students iPads does not teach them writing skills and causes distractions during instruction.

Change in schedule affects students

Tom Tom Staff
Editorial

East administration has recently been working on finalizing a new school day schedule for all students. Among these changes comes the implementation of advisory three times a week (Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday) which gives the opportunity for the junior class to take ACT preparation courses twice a week.

While the usefulness of the ACT prep courses cannot be denied, we believe that there are other alternatives that should have been considered when deciding to change the schedule of all of the students.

The first thing that needs to be considered is the impact that such a change will have on other students. For example, students of all grades currently utilize Guided Personal Study (GPS) time every day except for Wednesdays to seek help from their teachers, work on their homework, or catch up on their missing work or tests.

Limiting this time down to only two times a week will significantly decrease the amount of time that students have to keep themselves on top of their grades which can potentially negatively impact the students’ grades.

If we approximate the current GPS time to 30 minutes and it is offered four times a week, then that gives a student currently 120 minutes (two hours) of in-school time per week that they can use in many ways to help themselves improve.

Under the system that will be implemented next semester, a student would get 45 minutes of GPS time twice a week, which only equals 90 minutes. A student would have approximately a half an hour less time a week to work on their school work.

Many students are in after school activities or have other responsibilities that take up much of their time outside of school,

so they may not have any other time outside of school to be able to adequately work on their homework.

Limiting the amount of time a student has to work on their class work can significantly hinder them compared to their peers. A study by the Journal of Experimental Education reports that the average student has three hours of homework a night.

By decreasing the amount of time a student has in school to work on their homework, it just makes a student spend more time at home on their work - time that they may not have.

Another change that could drastically affect students has to do with the students that have early out. Some students are excused for 6th or 7th hour, which means that with the adjusted schedule and class periods being shorter, these students would just be let out of school sooner.

Deciding to limit some students’ educational time in favor of allowing only some students to have an advantage on a standardized test seems like favoring one class of students over others.

Additionally, giving students less actual instruction time is counter-productive to the goal of school as a whole.

Even if the schedules of other students were in consideration when these decisions were made, a problem still exists regarding the teachers that are junior advisory teachers.

With the new changes to come, the teachers that are in charge of junior class advisories now will still have junior advisories next semester.

While this is great for the junior class because they most likely will not have to adapt to a new advisory class and teacher, unfortunately for other students, most of the teachers that are in charge of junior advisories also teach other grade levels.

This means that those teachers will be unavailable on the Tuesdays and Thursdays that their non-junior students might want to use to receive help or make up work.

Giving students less time with their teachers actually significantly disadvantages all students in the building. Even though juniors will be having the time to prepare for taking the ACT, this just gives them less time that they would be able to use to do their work for their classes.

Additional things that need to be considered when deciding to change the schedule of all the students is the impact that the ACT preparation classes might have on the students.

For students that actually want to get a better score on the ACT, the course could definitely benefit them. According to the ACT webiste, students that take a preparation course tend to be more successful on the ACT than those that do not.

While this would seem to support the idea that the implementation of the ACT test preparation program at East would benefit students, the only benefit would really come to the students that were interested in receiving a higher score. Forcing students to learn the techniques and to actually apply the techniques on a future test simply is not possible, and could potentially result in the program seeming ineffective.

In addition to the students that do not want to learn and improve, there are going to be the students that have gone above and beyond what is expected of them and received a very high score. With the students that have achieved scores of 30 or above, spending 90 minutes a week in an ACT prep course is not going to help them too much.

If a student gets to a point where they are scoring way above average on the ACT, then test preparation courses are going to be functionally useless. At that point, it is clear that the student does not

need much, if any, additional help. It is also doubtful that the level of help they need is the same as a student that is scoring much lower than them.

There are also many students at East that are not planning on attending college after high school, so is there a justification for making students who are going straight into the workforce or the military attend the ACT preparation sessions? Outside of the college academic world, or even courses for trade certifications, the ACT is functionally useless. If a student is not planning on furthering their education, then scoring well on the ACT is not a high priority to them.

While it has been mentioned of splitting up students into various sessions based on their ACT score, whatever preparation they can be given will most likely not be as helpful to them as it would be to other students that have more room to improve.

Finally, putting this much emphasis on a standardized tests like the ACT seems counterproductive to how the college world is moving. Many colleges are beginning to become “test optional” which means that it is not required that a student would send their standardized test score.

Even local colleges like Creighton have adapted the “test optional” status, which can draw into question how important the ACT actually is to colleges. If many colleges are beginning to not require that a student send a standardized test score, then putting such an emphasis on all students taking an ACT preparation course could be unnecessary.

Overall, even though the opportunity for students to take ACT preparation classes at no expense to students is a benefit, the inconveniences it will cause to other students and even teachers, in addition to real world application of such tests, should have been taken into more consideration when making this decision.

Disney+ stands against competition

Jacob Kriewald
Sports Editor

Imagine your childhood bundled up into one app - all the movies and shows you watched as a kid at your fingertips, this is Disney+.

Disney+ has taken the world by storm and is continuing to be mentioned on a daily basis by most of my classmates. Disney+ is Walt Disney productions independent streaming service with movies, shows, and short films all owned by Disney - from childhood favorite Disney original movies, to the Marvel and Star Wars series.

Starting with Disney+, the initial cost according to Business Insider is “A month-by-month subscription that will cost \$6.99/month. The yearly subscription is a little cheaper and will cost \$69.99/year (\$5.83/month)”. Just the monthly subscription alone is about the cost of one Disney movie. With this price, you’re paying for hundreds of movies and shows.

The features have developed since the app

was first released. When the app was first introduced, many believed it was going to be a Netflix copy and paste format, but with the material of Disney, there was a surprise. The formats are similar, but they have their differences.

Netflix has categories such as recently watched, continue watching, etc. But upon release, Disney+ had none of these. There was a watch list and that was it. If you were to start watching a show, you would not be able to access it from your home page.

You would have had to add it to your watchlist and on top of that, you would need to remember what episode you were on otherwise you would have had to skip through all the previous episodes until you came across one that was not started yet or had been partially watched.

Since then, updates have rolled out to fix these issues. There is now a “continue watching” feature that brings you to the last remembered point of which you were watching. The categories are now easier to navigate which gets two thumbs up from me

and improves upon their old design.

The next biggest point of interest for anyone who is looking to make the commitment and purchase Disney+ would be the content. The content can please anyone in the family, from the 5 year old just starting kindergarten, to the mom and dad on a date night.

The new streaming platform has “more than 500 movies and 7,500 TV episodes. That’s expected to grow to 620 movies and 10,000 episodes in five years,” according to the Boston Globe. Some of the big name companies that Disney owns as of now is the entire Star Wars franchise and Marvel as well, which means there are many options for everyone, regardless of their interest.

In addition to the movies and shows that already exist that are on the streaming service, Disney is also rolling out a ton of original content that is released on the app only.

Disney is now looking to add to their arsenal of content in the near future. For some movies and shows, if you click on



them, they will ask if you would like to see the trailer but will then have a release date next to it.

So overall, Disney+ has been a huge success and I think it will only continue to grow in popularity. It started with flaws, but as most things, it will get better with time. I truly believe that this will eventually become as popular if not more than its elders Hulu and Netflix. Disney+ is the streaming service of the future.

Hallmark Christmas movies fight for top spot

Emily Nelson
News Editor

No one asked me, but for scientific purposes I binged Hallmark’s Christmas movie premiers. I know what you are thinking, how did I manage to sit through ten plus movies with the exact same storyline and ending? It was not easy, but I trudged on and have to say, I found some diamonds in the rough, based on: meet cutes, acting, storyline, and watchability. Meet cutes, or the story of how and when two people meet and instantly fall in love, shape the lovers’ story for the rest of the movie. We all know

Hallmark storylines are roughly the same, but I watched for ones that stood out, which ties into whether or not I could sit through the whole thing.

Coming in at a solid number one, “Write Before Christmas.” The main character, Jessica is in love with the magic of Christmas, but not in love with her boyfriend. She is dumped days before Christmas, dampening her Christmas spirit. Later on in the story, not to anyone’s surprise, she meets a guy and falls in love (shocker, I know). Before I spoil it too much, other than your typical dumping then magically stumbling upon a true love agenda, “Write Before Christmas”

is not your typical Hallmark movie and that is why it sits at number one.

In a very close race to number one, “Cherished Memories: A Gift to Remember 2” ranks at number two. What really got me in this movie is the twist end that no one saw coming. It truly strengthens the magic of Christmas in a way I have not seen a Hallmark movie do before.

“Christmas Under the Stars” showcases a heartbreaking story of a widowed mother, Julie, and son, Matt, who visit a Christmas tree lot every year and stumble into Julie’s new love of her life. This movie comes in at number three because of its heartwarming

appearance of the cutest old man, Clem.

“Check Inn to Christmas” is the story of two rival inns that, you guessed it, come together in the end for the sake of Christmas. It was not a terrible movie, but the predictability of it all made it a tad boring which is why it sits at number four.

Last and least, “Christmas at Graceland.” The acting. That is it, that is why it is last. Not to mention, the storyline. I mean come on, girl visits her small town home then picks up a side job as a nanny for some rich guy and, with no surprise to literally anyone ever, they hate each other at first, then fall in love. Hallmark, you lost me at the first scene.

1

WRITE BEFORE CHRISTMAS

MEET CUTE: 4
ACTING: 5
STORYLINE: 4
WATCHABILITY: 5
TOTAL: 18

2

A CHRISTMAS LOVE STORY

MEET CUTE: 3
ACTING: 4
STORYLINE: 5
WATCHABILITY: 5
TOTAL: 17

3

CHRISTMAS UNDER THE STARS

MEET CUTE: 3
ACTING: 4
STORYLINE: 4
WATCHABILITY: 4
TOTAL: 15

4

CHECK INN TO CHRISTMAS

MEET CUTE: 2
ACTING: 4
STORYLINE: 3
WATCHABILITY: 4
TOTAL: 13

5

CHRISTMAS AT GRACELAND

MEET CUTE: 1
ACTING: 2
STORYLINE: 2
WATCHABILITY: 2
TOTAL: 7

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