

ISSUE ONE

OCT 4, 2024

# PANTHER

## *Prints*



Overconsumption: How Social Media Drives Consumer Impulses

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All polls were conducted through Google Forms and shared through social media

## LETTERS FROM THE EDITORS

As a senior, this is my last first issue so it's a bittersweet beginning to an end. It's been an amazing experience seeing our talented new staff grow through the first issue. I want to sincerely thank Camille, Celine and Megan without whom none of this would be possible: I love you guys! I'd also like to thank Mr. Birnbaum for his continual support and guidance throughout the years. I hope everyone enjoys our first issue!

Working on this first issue as Copy Editor has been a rewarding experience. I have learned so much already that I hope to apply to future articles. To the staff: I've really enjoyed working with you all this first issue, and I know that your writing will only improve from here. To my fellow editors: You are all amazing editors and leaders, and I hope you know that the work you put in is greatly valued. Without each of you, this newspaper wouldn't be what it is today. To our readers: Thank you for your continued support of our paper. I wish you all a fantastic fall break and hope that you enjoy this issue!

This first issue has been such an incredible learning experience for me. To my fellow editors, I have truly loved working with you all, and there is no one else I would rather have navigated this journey with. Working with our new staff and watching them grow as reporters has been an honor. I am so proud of everything we accomplished this nine-weeks, and I'm excited for you all to read it!

Working on this first issue has truly been a rewarding experience. I'm so proud of our staff this year and their dedication to the paper. Even in these few short weeks I've seen immense growth in both our collaboration and the quality of our work. It makes me feel so grateful to be a part of this team. I'm excited to see how much more we will accomplish together throughout the rest of the year. Looking forward to what we will create alongside these brilliant minds!

## MISSION STATEMENT

At Panther Prints, our mission is to serve as a connection between the Plano East student body and surrounding communities. Through inspiration and high-quality content, Panther Prints offers diverse coverage passionate writing, relatable stories and a unique point of view. Our credible sources allow an in-depth experience that appeals to both the public and the individual. Our publication offers an informative and distinctive outlook on current interests.

## DIGITAL MEDIA POLICY

We at the Panther Prints commit to responsibly utilize all of our media platforms to unite and inform the student body. We strive to create original content and attribute credit to all sources. We require our staff to uphold these values and to accurately report the news to the student body and community.

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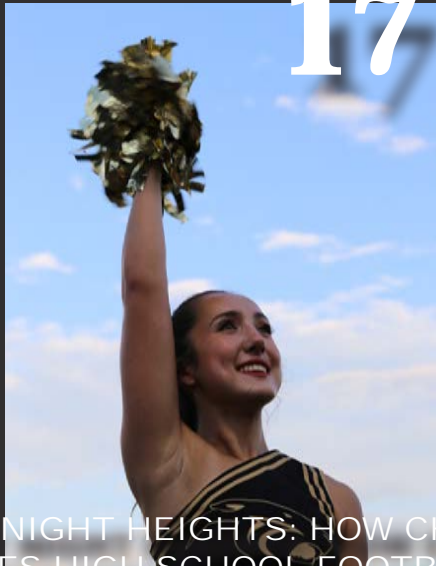
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# College Application Info

By Megan Glass

During the hectic academics and festivities of senior year, college applications can seem like just another daunting task. The application process is confusing, with terms like early decision, early action, and regular decision often creating a lot of uncertainty and confusion.

For the admissions, early decision is a binding agreement between a student and their preferred school that if they are accepted, they are required to attend. Even though not all schools provide it, it's a great option for students who are completely certain about pursuing their undergraduate studies at that particular school.

While early decision requires a binding commitment to enroll, early action does not mandate enrollment at a school. Depending on the college a student applies to, the deadline for early action differs. This process allows students to see if they were accepted to their schools between December 1st and January 31st and increases the likelihood of acceptance. Students also have a greater advantage in the realm of financial aid, as many schools serve students on a first-come, first-served basis.

Although early decision and early action are both excellent options, the majority of students opt for the traditional regular decision process. The deadline for this application is January 1-15, 2025, with acceptance letters coming out in the spring. This option gives students additional time to retake the SAT/ACT, strengthen their applications, visit schools, and get scholarships.

Rolling admission allows students much more time and flexibility when applying and guarantees a decision to be announced 4-6 weeks after the student applies. This application remains open until all seats are filled which truly extends the deadlines.

# Social Media's Growing Impact on Attention Span

PESHPRINTS.

By Aisha Ali and Aycen Koa Matsumoto Castro

A prominent issue in modern society is that teenagers aren't aware of how to manage addictions and properly divide their time. Social media isn't all fake, especially when it allows society to stay updated on relevant issues. Short-term content is a form of entertainment that provides both fast and efficient forms of social media to its users. This form of content has become prevalent in the 21st century, serving as both a source of entertainment and information. Instagram and TikTok are popular social media platforms that romanticize materialistic lifestyles through content. Social media oftentimes portrays an ideal lifestyle and connects with both teenagers and adults. An addiction to social media is overly time-consuming, so teenagers attempt to manage their time better by setting limits on screen time. "I always find out fashion trends from [Instagram] and I text and communicate with my friends," junior Soha Syed said. "I [set] an hour per each app for screen-time, like on Instagram and Tik-Tok, but honestly I don't really follow it." Social media, in recent years, is easily accessible for teenagers. It is common to interact on social media, especially since it's a great news and social outlet. Social media is no hassle, but hours of mindless scrolling is. Platforms like TikTok and Instagram are a few clicks away from any device. According to NCBI, social media and "its relationship with sleep quality, daily dysfunction, sleep duration and depression is worthy of issue awareness," proving that the effects can be detrimental. It's not uncommon for teenagers to stay up late and excessively use social media. Social media is endless, but time is limited. Social media addiction is a primary contributing factor to phone screen time for teenagers. Teens are often addicted to

social media because they have a customized feed, or a stream of content, that shortens their attention span through short-form

content.

"I probably spend like four hours a day [on social media]," Syed said. "I know how bad that sounds, but that's including all social media apps." Many ask why this form of social media gained popularity. A large factor was the introduction of YouTube Shorts in 2020 as a response to the rising popularity of short-form content. Despite being much younger than most short-form formats, Shorts gained popularity quickly. This rise in popularity in such a short amount of time may seem surprising, but based on statistics, it is completely expected. In a study by Wyzowl, it is found that 91% of businesses use video marketing, and within this, it is shown that they were most successful with videos ranging from 30-60 seconds. It's not just a matter of advertisement, but viewership as well. "As a teacher, sometimes I feel like I can't keep a student's attention," life science teacher Will Cozart said, "Maybe my content is longer to get through, and students are already ready to see something different, and they're used to that." As platforms such as TikTok and Instagram Reels rose in popularity, YouTube had to keep up with this evolving trend to keep their viewers from straying to other platforms, hence why YouTube added Shorts to their platform. Global Media Insight provided information on how YouTube intended to push its success; the company provided monetary incentives to Shorts creators and added it to YouTube TV. Within a span of 3 years, YouTube Shorts gained more than 70 billion daily views. The popularity of short-form content is no secret to anybody, which is why many businesses push to profit from this continuously growing source of entertainment. "They know how curious people are, and they know how easy it is to flash something in front of people's eyes and get their attention," Cozart said, "But they may not be actually giving them the right information, or controlling what audience they're targeting, so they just target anybody."



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# Implications of Possible First Female President

By Celine Tan

If Vice President Kamala Harris wins the upcoming election, she will become the first female president in the history of the United States. Harris officially became the Democratic nominee in Aug. after President Joe Biden dropped out of the election. According to ABC News, Harris is the first Black and South Asian woman to lead a major party ticket. The possibility of gaining a president who is not only a female but also of a minority race could have a variety of new implications for politics and society. Namely, many people look forward to seeing the diversification of this country's political system. "It would be great [to have a female president]," junior Siya Tripathi said. "When Obama, the first Black president of the United States, won, it kind of shifted the tone to where now Black people, or people of other races can run. I think having a female president [would] just open the door for more female representation in politics." This year's presidential election will not be the first with a major female candidate. In 2016, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton came close to becoming president, winning the popular vote but not the electoral votes. However, unlike Clinton, whose campaign motivated voters with her identity and gender, Harris chose to take a different approach. According to NPR, instead of centering her campaign on making history with her race or gender, she centered it on political issues, just as male candidates would. "The criticisms that have been lodged against female presidents are unwarranted, or at the very least, they're pretty sexist," Tripathi said. "The main valid criticism I've seen is that voters feel like if they vote in a female president, or if they vote in a female to run for their party, other

voters in America might not vote for her." While this was a problem with electing Harris in the primaries, recent polls show that people may think otherwise

now. According to national poll averages from BBC, Harris holds a small lead over former President Donald Trump, 48% to 45%. A study conducted by Pew Research Center found that 40% of people believe Harris' gender will be an asset, 30% believe it will hurt her chances, and the remaining 30% expect it will make little to no difference. "I think it's good that we're having this conversation about whether she wins or she doesn't win; she is a viable candidate and the front-running candidate currently, looking just at the average of the polls," American Studies teacher Joseph Russell said. "And the conversation isn't about the fact that she's a woman or a person of color, but whether she's qualified for the job. I think that's generally a positive direction." The "positive direction" mentioned relates to the normalization of diverse representation in politics. Initially, the Constitution only granted voting rights to white, land-owning men. According to National Geographic, this slowly spread to more diverse populations, allowing men of all economic statuses to vote by the 1820s and minority races to vote with



Photo from PBS

the 15th Amendment in 1870. Women were the last group to gain voting rights with the 19th Amendment in 1920. "I think what [having a female president] would change is the international aspect of the position the United States has in the world, especially because other countries have had female presidents," senior Natalia Hernandez said. "New Zealand has a female prime minister right now and I think it's just a new perspective. It goes against the belief that women can't run because they're too emotional." The country will have to wait until after Election Day on Nov. 5 to see whether Harris succeeds in making history as the first female president. Despite whether she or Trump becomes the next president, many people hope this country will continue to grow and transcend inherent societal norms. "I think most people can see it as a source of pride that we live in a country where a candidate, who happens to be a woman and a person of color, is the nominee," Russell said. "People like her or not based on her policies, not her gender or her ethnicity. I'm proud of the fact that we can be that kind of a country."

# Inflation: America's Uphill Battle

By Carter Fleming and Melanie Pinkerton

Although inflation only became a truly noticeable issue across America within the past few years, it has slowly affected the country for the past two decades. The prices of even the simplest products increased significantly over time, especially since the 2000s, causing customers to resort to cheaper options or even cut back on their intake of certain goods altogether. Inflation makes financial choices and the economy as a whole a more difficult beast to tackle. "Inflation causes everything to go up, so people have to spend more money on things like rent, gas and food," senior Avery Pitts said. "It should also increase wages to match the increase in prices. Personally, inflation has affected the gas that I pay for." Inflation causes problems in daily life for all adults and students, as shown by skyrocketing gasoline prices. The Energy Information Administration (EIA) states that in 2000, prices were at one dollar and 50 cents per gallon. Currently, on average, it costs around three dollars and 50 cents per gallon, but prices can get as high as four dollars. This price increase worries drivers, as they now have to think about distance, time, and how many gallons they get to the mile. In other words, people spend so much money on gasoline to get to one place that they are not able to save as much as they planned to for the future. This creates an endless cycle where people spend so much money on gasoline and cannot afford other life necessities. "Inflation going up doesn't mean our salary changes," economics teacher Tara Evans said. "It does feel like we're losing wages because you can't

afford as many goods, making you feel like your losing money. Inflation is primarily attacking the grocery prices, gas prices, and daily services like hair and nails." Inflation forces people to think more about their expenses, including housing. House prices are up 162 percent since 2000 and income is only up 78 percent. Houses and apartments are getting too expensive to pay for, and the average living wage

36.9% of students don't think the U.S. government will fix or solve inflation

26.7% are not sure if the U.S. government will fix or solve inflation

24.6% of students think the U.S. government will fix or solve inflation, but it will take a while

3% of students think the U.S. government will fix or solve inflation and it will be soon

8.7% of students chose not to comment

isn't equal to the minimum wage across any state, making it difficult to afford a place to live without living with others. The people of the U.S. are always thinking about the future and how they need to save for a place to live, but it is nearly impossible to pay for a place to live when housing prices are increasing faster than the average minimum income. "I would say we hear about the housing crisis a lot, people can't afford to buy a house,

because of all the expenses behind it," said Pitts "People are forced to end up renting houses or apartments because we can't buy to own anything. This is going to affect how I have to live coming out of high school, making it a struggle to find a place to live." In the coming years, inflation will rise the same it has for the past two decades, expected to rise about an average of three percent over the next ten years overall, producing a cumulative increase of 28.33 percent. This makes it harder to afford basic necessities like food, water or travel because of high gasoline and public transport prices, quality of life like haircuts and nails and even not being able to find a place to live. All these things will be harder to attain in the next few years if inflation increases and wages don't. "Let's say if I don't have a job, I go broke, I have no money, and prices go up," junior Kathlyn Herrera said. "It's going to be really hard for me to live life." Inflation causes detrimental issues for thousands of families and individuals in America, and it only continues to grow. According to the American Bureau of Labor Statistics, inflation is increasing at a rate of anywhere between 3 and 5 percent since the year 2000. As prices continue to climb, families and individuals face difficult choices in what they eat, how they travel and where they live. Assuming that the economy does not change, these rising prices will affect many more people in the future, and continue to influence the lives of those living in America. "Inflation is just a general rise in prices," Evans said "It makes you feel like you have less money."

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# School Without Honors: Reacting to Change

By Reece Yeamans

As of the 2024-25 school year, PISD plans to phase out honors courses at the high school level, and replace them with Advanced Placement (AP) courses. This came as a shock to many students who could not enroll in the honors courses they planned on taking. Many students feel that they aren't prepared for AP classes, but are also too advanced for on level classes. The district stated, however, that the intent is not for honors to supplement AP or dual credit classes. According to the Plano ISD Academic Guide, honors courses are intended to prepare students for advanced coursework provided in college-level classes such as AP and Dual Credit. Honors courses begin in 6th grade and exist where there are no college course options and taper off when AP and Dual Credit courses are offered." Some students, however, feel that the district did not handle this properly. "I was in a normal class and then I got bumped up to an AP class, and the class started too fast," junior Donovan Gramajoes said. "Everything was faster paced, I feel like I was just lacking behind all the work and projects we had to do." Many students too feel that the change was too rushed, and that they weren't given adequate time to prepare. "The change wouldn't have been so bad if I had more notice," Gramajoes said. "But, I finished my high school classes and got put straight to the AP classes." According to official course enrollment reports, the average number of students enrolled in honors courses

has not significantly changed over the past five years for any subject. From the records provided, enrollment increases in honors have been paired historically with decreases in AP enrollment. While increases in honors enrollment and decreases in AP enrollment have been seen from year to year, the same cannot be said for the reverse. It is worth noting as well that the alternatives to honors classes can come with a steep price tag. According to PISD, tuition at Collin College is \$67 per credit hour, often totalling \$201 per course and there may be additional fees depending on the course. In addition to the cost of dual credit classes, it is expected that for every AP class you take an AP test that costs \$98. This is only the finances on the student side, but there are financial questions on the district side as well. According to the 2024-2025 PISD Official Budget document, there has been a decrease in the grade 6-12 budget for general curriculum by \$158,473 and an instructional technology decrease of \$217,080. The district is still seeing increases in different budget areas, yet decreases in educational opportunities for the students are still the norm. "There's normal classes which are good for kids who still need that type of level," Gramajoes said. "But, taking the budget from the honors classes and just outright removing them, I don't think that was a good idea." Some believe, though, that the fault was in the way honors classes themselves were treated. "Honors classes were closer to

on level than they were anything resembling AP or IB in my opinion," senior Abrar Alam said. "Honors classes weren't advanced enough, they were basically on level classes with a bigger cushion for failing." The question arises whether or not the district ever achieved its goal of preparing students for college-level classes. If removing the honors classes left many stranded and unprepared, then the evidence points towards the program itself being an institutional failure. It was even suggested that the lax attitude found in many classrooms is to blame for the decline in enrollment for academically rigorous courses. "An academically successful student should be able to pass on level classes or get high grades in them in your sleep," Alam said. "It should be required that in a class you're studying and you're paying attention and you're not on your phone the whole class." Despite these differing opinions, one thing is clear; the abrupt dropping of honors courses was not appreciated by most students. "If I had known that there wouldn't be any honors classes, I would've improved and tried to become better," Gramajoes said. "The change wouldn't have been so bad." Even those who didn't care for the way honors classes were would've rather had honors classes restructured than dropped altogether. "I would've definitely kept them, I just would've had them a little different," Alam said. "The gap between on level and AP or IB is big, and a lot of students can't bridge that gap."



# Education Around Earth

By Redding Van Sickel

Education is a cornerstone of society, yet, depending on the country, the approach to education is sometimes strikingly different. While some systems emphasize standardized testing and rigorous discipline, others focus on creativity, student well-being and flexible learning. “In the US, the education system is more practical; most of the stuff that you learn at school, you can also apply that to real life,” Pakistani exchange student Abdullah Farid said. “Also, there is a lot of emphasis on critical thinking, while in Pakistan it is more of just learning the theory, not the practical work--most of the time it’s just memorization.” One of the defining features of American education is its flexibility. High school students often have a wide variety of electives, allowing them to tailor their education to personal interests. “The thing that surprised me the most about the U.S. education system were indeed the flexibility and freedom the students get freedom and flexibility to choose subjects, extracurriculars and other stuff,” Farid said. “It was different from what I was used to in Pakistan, where the curriculum is more strict and you don’t get many options.” Standardized testing, such as the SAT and ACT, play a significant role in determining college admissions. But, debates continue about how these tests fairly assess student potential. In recent years, there is a growing focus on holistic approaches to education, emphasizing critical thinking, and emotional intelligence. However, this is not always the case, as education conforms to many different shapes and structures across the globe. Across the Atlantic, the United Kingdom balances structure and flexibility in its education system. Students in the UK begin with primary

education, followed by secondary education, or they take important exams like the GCSE around age 16. Unlike the US, where students have a broad curriculum through high school, UK students specialize earlier, choosing subjects for their A levels that shape their future academic and career paths. This early specialization develops new interests. Furthermore, universities in the UK are often more focused on depth rather than breadth, with most degrees requiring students to concentrate on a single subject from the start. China’s education system is often characterized by its rigor and emphasis on memorization and discipline. The gaokao, a national college entrance exam, is infamous for the intense pressure it places on students. Chinese students face long school hours, additional tutoring, and a heavy workload. The government recently tried to reduce stress by limiting after-school tutoring and encouraging a more balanced approach to education. South Korea follows a similar educational and social structure, with a strong focus on academic achievement. South Korean students spend long hours in school and after-school academies called “hagwons,” all in preparation for the suneung, a high-stakes college entrance exam. “I think there is a huge difference in the way standardized test scores are approached in the US versus the rest of the world,” Farid said. “In the US, SAT or ACT scores are not the only part of the admission process and not the only factors the admission committee looks for. They evaluate different aspects of your applications: not only your grades, but essays, extracurricular and test scores. Together, all these factors make up the admission

process. While in some countries, exams are important and the only factor used to evaluate your admission or entrance to a college or university. If you pass it, you will go to college and if you fail it then you don’t. These exams are the only determining factor in university admissions, making it stressful and hard for the students, focusing on specific areas and limiting learning in other areas.” South Africa’s education system faces different challenges, largely shaped by the legacy of apartheid. Wealthier regions often have better infrastructure, more experienced teachers and greater access to resources, while schools in disadvantaged areas struggle with overcrowded classrooms, outdated materials, and a lack of basic amenities. The government made it a point to prioritize addressing these inequalities, but progress is slow. South Africa’s curriculum also places a strong emphasis on language and cultural education, reflecting the country’s diversity. Efforts are also underway to bridge the digital divide by introducing more technology into schools, giving students the tools they need to succeed in a global economy. Global education varies widely, reflecting each country’s values and priorities. However, a shifting educational landscape could see more and more countries adopt modern education styles and propel forward on the educational plane.



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# Making History In Politics

By Jewel Jeffery

Photo from Politico

The 2024 election is fast approaching and there have been many events that have happened. These spans of events have greatly impacted voters on their decisions and point of views on these widely known politicians. On June 28, current President Joe Biden and former President Donald Trump engaged in a debate where there were many opinions, insults, and facts distributed between the two. During the debate, President Biden wanted to ease the worries for voters concerning his age but failed as, according to critics, he stumbled over his words frequently and seemed confused while answering certain questions. Voters felt he put on a poor performance and wondered if he should step aside from office. In July, Biden announced that he would be dropping out of the running for office and not try for a second term. "Definitely a good decision," IB History of the Americas teacher Richard Sklar said. "First of all, I think he would have not beaten Trump. Politics is a rough business and anybody in politics knows that, so the fact that he could not possibly beat Trump was enough for me to maybe do something. Secondly, it became obvious due to his decline. Besides what seems to be declining mental capabilities, I don't see how physically in two years he could do the job." Aside from Trump's age, there were some issues on his behalf that were addressed that might affect

his votes. Trump is a convicted felon, with 34 felonies. Trump is guilty of falsifying business records in the first degree. In these records, Trump agreed to conceal \$130,000 worth of hush money. These charges made against Trump affected his voters in many different dynamics. There were two assassination attempts on Trump less than three months apart this past year. Both attempts Trump survived but has the nation in shock due to the shootings being continuously. "Political violence is never acceptable and it is bad," Sklar said. "The fact that it has happened twice in like a month or two months or whatever is kind of crazy. Under any circumstances, no matter how bad a candidate is, or how much people dislike a politician, no absolutely not." Trump's new opponent is current Vice President Kamala Harris, the first woman to have this position. Because she is a woman, there is a lot of controversy surrounding her current position and her potential new position. "I think by having Harris as a female president it would definitely for a lot of people be a big thing," senior Tanvi Nerukar said. "A lot of people would view it as a very positive thing. I think overall as a nation it should be viewed as a good thing the same way that when Barack Obama was voted in as the first black president. But I do think the same way Obama had people not appreciating him being the first black

president there's gonna be people who are hesitant with a woman being president." Harris's father is Jamaican and her mother is Indian, this causes a tremendous uproar in her identity and what she identifies as. On Sep 10, the second presidential debate occurred. By the end of the debate in the average of polls, Harris had a slight national lead, according to CNN. Trump's original numbers were higher than Biden's however now that Harris is running, his numbers have slightly declined. It is clear that a majority of Democrats believe that Harris has the mental sharpness to deal with challenges. Harris' polling margin in late July was up two points, in late Aug, it was up by four points and post debate the margin went up by one point. Some voters also say Harris did not truly answer where she stands on a lot of issues. This debate, some found unserious, for some it gave them clarity and some it left them titled as an undecided voter. "It did not change my vote but what I did say was the big unknown was Harris." Sklar said "I think what she did show whether you support Harris or not, she was very prepared. She hit Trump in the areas he was most vulnerable. And what showed me whether I'm for Harris or not for Harris is that she, whether it's her or her advisors, will be very prepared as president."

\*information updated as of Sep 26

# We Teach for East: Shaping Tomorrow's Teachers Today

By Megan Glass

Elementary classrooms supported by We Teach for East are alive with excited chatter, colorful doodles, and contagious laughter. Students who are part of Instructional Practices/Practicum in Education and Training create a vibrant atmosphere that not only creates a joyful and engaging learning experience for the students but also fosters a sense of positivity and upliftment. Teachers inspire students academically and personally by shaping the minds of future generations and establishing a long-term influence. “There have been so many kids I’ve taught so far [through this program] that I want to make a difference for,” senior Anderson Yanelli said. “There are going to be plenty more kids that need help, and I just want to make a difference in at least one kid’s life by guiding them. I wish I was a teacher already.” In this program, students are not bound to one school. They can intern at various feeder schools from preschool to high school.

They rotate every nine weeks to explore different educational settings. As they observe the classrooms and aid in group activities, the student interns glimpse the teacher’s life. “Our kids come to Plano East, they learn all the things about being a teacher, and then they get to go out to our cluster feeder schools, and intern/student teach on their campus, two to three times a week,” Child Development teacher and advisor Laura Peterson said. “They get in-class experience, and then they get actual teaching experience.” Through the Panther Preschool, which is connected to the high school, students

have easy access to younger minds and gain practical experience. Having the preschool so close by creates a golden opportunity to watch students’ progression from a very young age. “On campus, we have Panther Preschool, which is lab experience and a field sight for our kids too, so they get to work with three, four, and five-year-olds on cam-



Photo from Laura Peterson

pus where they can plan lessons and do different centers for them,” Peterson said. “They have four rotations a year; [for] my students in Intro to Teaching, [the preschool] is one of the rotations they can take.” The students also grasp the hard realities of being a teacher.

They learn that the training to become a teacher is far more intense than many realize. In addition, they see first-hand how teachers spend countless hours before and after school, often without pay or recognition, and how their role encompasses many responsibilities beyond just teaching. Their selfless acts are apparent when decorations

heavily fill a classroom, fully stocked with supplies and meticulously organized. “Teachers deserve so much more recognition than they are given,” senior Avery Ragsdale said. “[They] give so much more time and energy than what they get in return. Seeing the differences between faculty-funded classrooms compared to a teacher-funded classroom highlights how they go above and beyond.” This class is another guiding factor that aids teenagers in learning how to lesson plan and manage a classroom—starting this process while in high school can often allow for many opportunities to arise where these students would gain great support from the district. “The PISD has something called the Quest Program which allows our students to work for the district as paraprofessionals,” Peterson said. “They get their college paid for, and they are guaranteed a job in the district for two years after they graduate college. There were seven kids who were accepted into the program last year, and of those seven, five came from my class.” Not only does student teaching

allow opportunities to arise, but it also provides experience for any job that works with children. We Teach for East gives students direct experience with children and their behavior, development, and the science behind it all. “If anybody is interested in being a teacher, a child psychologist, working with kids in any capacity, being an amazing aunt or uncle, or just being a parent one day, this class is beneficial for anyone that wants to work with kids,” Peterson said. “I took this program in high school, and that’s when it really solidified to me that I wanted to be a teacher, and it was something that I wanted to do.”

# California Dreaming: Students Attend International Science Fair in LA

## PANTHER PROFILE

By Melanie Pinkerton

Budding scientists from around the globe gathered in Los Angeles, CA, to share their projects and passion for science during a world-renowned science competition. Not only did they show off their skills and research, but they met students from different countries and made memories worth a lifetime. The school was lucky enough to have several students qualify for such an event. This past May, a handful of East students, including junior Arya Gurumukhi and senior Chloe Lee, qualified for and took a trip to the Regeneron International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF) for their advanced projects and designs. ISEF, first established in 1950, brings young engineers and scientists from 75 different countries together every year to celebrate and honor their work. “You’re competing with so many more people at ISEF, coming from all different types of backgrounds,” Gurumukhi said. “It was just a really fun opportunity overall, being with my friends and seeing everyone.” The students worked incredibly hard for a spot in the fair, as they spent hours preparing their projects. This work included reading several scientific papers to narrow down their topics, selecting a certain problem, collaborating with labs to conduct trials and research, and finalizing their findings to present in front of an audience. “The journey honestly started with reading a lot of different papers,” Lee said. “I created a plan for the [research], and I contacted a lab that I previously did a day camp at. After that, I just kept changing up my experiment whenever I encountered a problem.” Those who qualified went on an all-expenses paid trip to Los Angeles, California, where the fair took place from May 7 to 11. While students stressed over AP exams,

these qualifiers spent most of the week at a convention center showing off their projects. However, it wasn’t all work and no play; students had time to sight-see and even got a night at Universal Studios Hollywood all to themselves. “It was really cool to take a school trip by plane all the way to LA,” Lee said.

“We got to basically experience the city, and we stayed in a hotel near there as well.” Many different types of projects qualified for the event, ranging from innovative prototypes to months of collected research to lab test diagnostics on display. Gurumukhi’s project looked at new and unique types of energy storage and fuel sources. “I tried to create a new type of fuel using water, bacteria, and sunlight,” Gurumukhi said. “Using these three tools and trying to mimic photosynthesis, I tried to create a renewable source of fuel.” Lee’s project tackled how lethal acetaminophen, or tylenol, can be, especially in an elderly home setting. She worked to reconfigure the compound and make it safer. “When you overdose on [acetaminophen], it can cause liver toxicity,” Lee said. “I wanted to modify how the compound looks, in order to change how it binds to different molecules in your body.” The feeling of qualifying for ISEF alone sparked feelings of excitement in the competitors. Lee was especially surprised that she advanced, as she hadn’t competed in science fairs as long as many of her peers had. “I was honestly really surprised



Photo from Megan Glass

and humbled,” Lee said. “I honestly didn’t have that high of expectations. It was really motivating, too.” One of the most interesting components of going to ISEF is meeting kids from around the world. Competitors spent hours on the convention floor, surrounded by booths full of kids from countries with incredibly unique cultures and a variety of ethnic backgrounds. While the students met those who shared the same background and found a sense of community, they were also exposed to new people and ideas. “With other science fairs, they all happen in the United States, so a lot of the same people,” Gurumukhi said. “With ISEF, it’s just this immersive experience where you’re collaborating with more people and you’re seeing people from all different countries.” Getting the opportunity to compete with unique students in shared interests opened doors for these young scientists here at East. The competition truly gave them once-in-a-lifetime memories and experiences. “It was really this experience that you don’t get a lot of times as a high schooler,” Gurumukhi said. “How often do you really get to see people from across the world?”



# Overconsumption: How Social Media Drives Consumer Impulses

*Photo from LinkedIn*

By Varsha Jhanak, Celine Tan and Camille Wright

In 2023, consumer spending in the United States made up over 70% of the country's GDP. This is mostly spent on material goods like apparel, gadgets and home furnishings. The United States' retail sales exceeded \$7 trillion in 2022, reflecting a growing trend of overconsumption. Social media further influences overconsumption and has, in recent years, portrayed "over" or "under" consumption as a trend. As this trend continues, many wonder about the implications of overconsumption and what factors influence consumers to overconsume. "Overconsumption to me means excessive use or acquisition of goods and resources, far beyond what is necessary for sustenance or comfort," environmental sciences teacher Micheal Crowe said. "I feel that people buy or use way more stuff than they really need. This can be things like clothes, toys, or even food. When we use too much, it can hurt the planet because nature can't keep up with how fast we're using up resources. The more we

see, the more we want, even if we don't really need it. This can cause overconsumption because people start buying things just because they saw it online, not because they really need it."

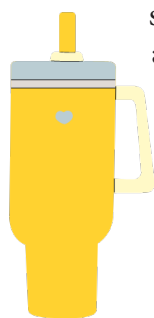
## Caught in Never-Ending Cycle: How TikTok Shop Feeds Overconsumption

Following its launch in 2023, TikTok Shop inspired entrepreneurship, served as an effective platform for growing business and transformed how consumers discover and purchase products. TikTok's short-form algorithm-based content directly leads to changing microtrends and impulse buying on the platform, quickly turning daily scrolling into a regular pattern of overconsumption. "The use of technology makes it more accessible and easier to overspend," social media marketing teacher Nate Collins said. "You can buy something like that and it's delivered the next day. Having that resource, I

think, definitely feeds into the ego of an overconsumer." Most consumers feel some sense of pressure to keep up with TikTok and other social media trends despite their fleeting nature. TikTok Shop integrates product recommendations into users' feeds, making impulse buying easier. The app's biggest voices, influencers, only further fuel overconsumption. Whether it's viral beauty products or must-have accessories, content creators are a major driving force behind buying trends. "I see some ads and reviews from some of the influencers I follow," an anonymous student said. "I think [transparency] depends on the influencer and how big they are. If they're smaller, they usually seem more honest, but the bigger influencers are kinda just in it for the money." Influencer-driven content propels the rapid rise and fall of microtrends. These trends quickly cycle through the introduction, rise, peak, decline and obsolescence stages, forcing consumers to buy quickly before the trend becomes irrelevant. Products

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like claw clips or specific clothing patterns can become popular almost overnight. Still, just as quickly, these trends fade away, leaving consumers to wonder why they fell for the hype. “I think everyone’s just consuming so much,” senior Kripa Chaudhry said. “There are a lot of microtrends that will just die down in a couple of months. There are certain T-shirts and patterns, like, lately, jaguar [and] cheetah print have been trending. But in five months or so, everyone’s going to be like, ‘why did I buy this?’” In an effort to combat overconsumption, a recent stream of “deinfluencers” took to the app with the goal of encouraging people to consider the impact and realities of overconsumption. This new wave of consumers are reshaping consumer attitudes and encouraging more thoughtful purchasing decisions by calling out trending items as overpriced and overhyped. “Deinfluencers” are also responsible for new trends like the rule of five, which encourages consumers to limit fashion purchases to five items, or the Joyful Closet Consumption Challenge, which studies consumers’ habits for a year to gather important data on how best to declutter their closets. “Look, what we see on social media—people throwing money everywhere, everything’s superficial, it’s all about more, more, more,” Collins



said. “It’s our job as adults to recognize that this isn’t sustainable.” The constant turnover of trends greatly impacts the purchases of a

wide variety of products; however, social media most significantly impacts fashion. A UNiDAYS survey revealed that 49% of the 20 million respondents made fashion purchases due to social media pressure. TikTok, in particular, emerged as a dominant platform driving these purchasing decisions through its seamless integration of shopping features and viral product endorsements. “I would say that [TikTok] is a prominent shopping source that people use,” economics teacher Michael Ford said. “Any time that social media is popular and they have an associated, like, some sort of way to purchase things, then usually that weighs the sales.” Trend-driven shopping behavior presents itself in the rise of certain products that dominate the market for a time before being replaced by the next big thing. As new products take over, they push old ones out, trapping consumers in a never-ending cycle of overconsumption. “Ever since 2019, we’ve had Hydro Flasks, we’ve had the Yetis, we’ve had the Stanleys, and the Owalas,” Chaudhry said. “I think that every year there’s just going to be a new product that people like using in day-to-day life. Generally, everyone’s just going to start liking a new thing every two years because it kind of just gets boring to see the same water bottle after two years.”

**How Advertisements Revolutionize Consumer Habits**

When scrolling on TikTok, users frequently come across a plethora of advertisements. While people harbor mixed feelings about these ads, it comes as no surprise that they are effective. From influencer videos with a more subtle “paid partnership” tag in the corner of the caption to a more blunt and fullscreen advertisement, TikTok promotes businesses to over one billion users every day. It is now easier than ever for brands to engage new customers with such a popular social media platform. “[Users see] those TikTok trends where [influencers] give the codes to different SHEIN items and it’d be like 20 items for \$20,” senior Chinmayee Jeyapriya said. “At the time, it was so exciting to get that many things at one time. I guess it gave us a false sense of happiness.” Brands like SHEIN often utilize the advertising principle of scarcity to create a sense of urgency amongst consumers. Promotions and coupons that last for “a limited time only” persuade them that they need to buy a specific product right away. Psychologically, this comes from the fear of missing out on rewarding goods or services that are highly desirable in society. According to CXL, ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle described this concept as the pleasure of rarity. With the TikTok Creator Marketplace, collaborations between brands



and content creators utilize the scarcity technique to continue pushing out more products. “I used TikTok Shop once before [to buy] stuff for my car,” Chaudhry said. “[I bought it] because there was a sale, so [that made me want it], and there was also a free shipping coupon. The thing about TikTok Shop is they have a lot of those free shipping coupons so it makes you want to buy everything.” Advertising styles underwent significant transformations in the past century to become what they are today. The Golden Age of billboard advertising occurred during the early to mid-1900s. The mid-20th century also popularized television advertising with commercials, allowing brands to reach consumers in their own homes. Finally, apps such as YouTube and Instagram introduced the idea of influencer brand deals in the early 2010s. “In my generation, adults were very concerned that children wouldn’t be able to tell the difference between a commercial and a TV



show,” Ford said. “So there were laws that you couldn’t have ads that looked like cartoons and things like that. This generation likes ads to look identical to social media posts, just like somebody posting [about how they found a cool thing].” Collaborating with influencers allows brands to build up their credibility with consumers, which is also known as ethos, or a brand’s ethical appeal. Many people are familiar with the concept of ethos through celebrity endorsements. According to Sportico, former NBA player Michael B. Jordan’s ‘Air Jordan’ line with Nike is its most popular division, with a \$7 billion brand revenue this year. Similarly, TikTok influencers are like smaller-scale celebrities who endorse products on TikTok Shop. “I think [influencers promoting brands on TikTok] helps [sell products], but I personally don’t buy something unless I already wanted it,” an anonymous student said. “But, it’s nice to hear someone’s opinion or review before you buy [something].” In an increasingly technology-centered world, brands can connect with potential consumers throughout multiple of their daily activities. The relatively young user demographic and the convenience of TikTok Shop make the app a prime location for ad-

verts, paving the way for widescale overconsumption. “I feel like [social media] plays a huge role [in selling products],” Collins said. “I mean if you look at all the formulas and the methods and the techniques used to gain the attention of young people, it’s incredible. The wording that’s used, the images, they’re selling this dream to kids and it’s highly effective.”

### Future Fears From Overconsumption

It’s no secret that overconsumption brings environmental implications. In recent years, many discussed the environmental issues fast fashion brings. Due to its poorer quality, many fast fashion items end up being discarded and in landfills. The EPA estimates that because a large portion of this clothing is only worn a few times before being thrown away, the US contributes roughly 11.3 million tons of textile waste yearly. “[Overconsumption] creates a lot of trash and pollution, which is bad for the environment,” Crowe said. “I think the main thing that people should keep in mind is that overconsumption means using more resources than we really need, and it can be really bad for the environment.

36.3% of **students see brands and influencers** advertising on Tiktok

27% of students don’t see advertisements on Tiktok

16.2% of students see **influencers** advertising a product they claim to use on Tiktok



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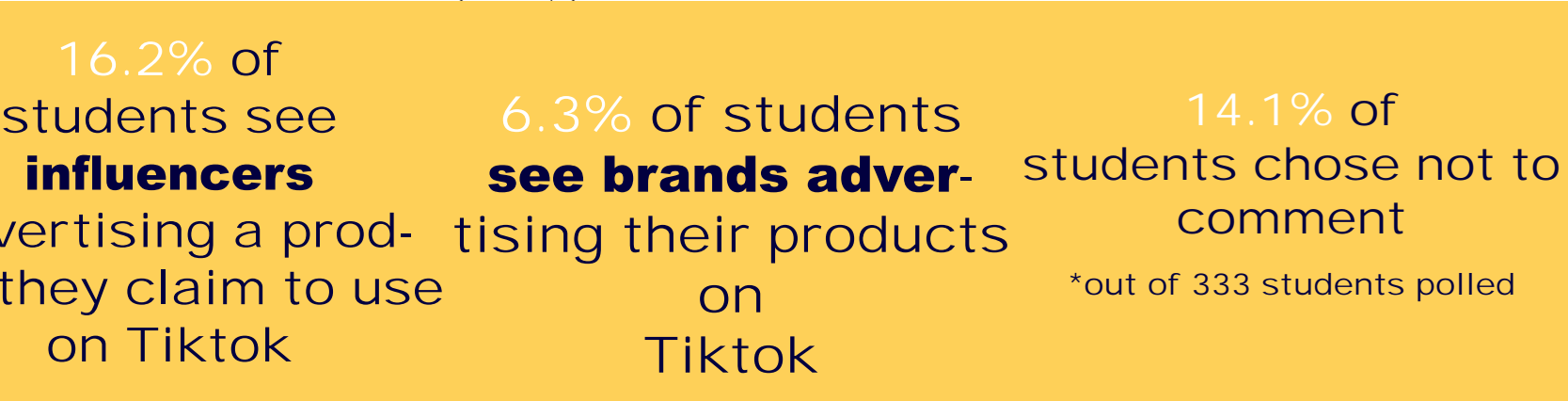
And the reason is simple: When we buy too much stuff, we end up throwing a lot away.

That waste usually ends up in landfills, where it takes years to break down. Things like plastic never fully go away, and they can pollute the land and oceans.” A recent trend in so-called “Sephora kids” brought the question of overconsumption’s effect on future generations. “[Younger generations are] being exposed to so much,” Jeyapriya said. “I don’t blame the kids at all; I blame the marketing. Of course if a kid is scrolling through TikTok and they see [desirable products], that appeals to kids. I think [younger kids] have no impulse control. They’re at that age where everything is attractive to them. At some point, you stifle that urge to get every single thing you want. My worry is with this constant viewing of material items, that’s going to be what [younger generations] primarily care about rather than life experiences. My neighbor’s children are obsessed with those water bottles, Stanleys, to the

point where it’s not a water bottle to them, it’s a status symbol and it makes you cool. I’m just worried about how that will play out when they get older.” According to the American Psychiatric Association, hoarding disorder affects nearly six to 19 million Americans. Overconsumption encourages the excessive acquisition of material goods, which can contribute to clutter and emotional attachment to items. This leads to a vicious cycle of purchasing and holding onto material goods, ultimately leading to an excess of items. “I feel like hoarding is the number one [effect of overconsumption],” Jeyapriya said. “I have so many things where the sentiment seems a bit silly. I definitely feel like hoarding is something that no matter how much money you have, it’s still a very dangerous mindset. You don’t ever want to get in that mindset of hoarding things, especially cheap things. I think that’s a pretty bad effect on the mind.” Overconsumption and overspending associate with each other. As one desires to buy more, they end up spending more. As the youth tends to overspend and overconsume, the question of financial literacy comes up. “[Money is] part of this overconsumption,” Collins said. “It’s having the power to spend. If you’re broke and you

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don’t have any money to spend, then overconsumption is not an issue. If we as adults are reckless with our money, then we’re not going to pay our mortgage, then we lose our house. Those are valuable life lessons and it’s never too early to start thinking in that mind frame. I don’t know how much kids are learning about how to manage money. So if they’re overconsuming and they’re spending, how much are they being taught the true value of money? That’s my fear.” As Generation Z approaches and reaches adulthood, overconsumption becomes a concern. Recently, trends of “deinfluencing” arose, but it is important for the youth to remember how significant trends and material goods will be in the future. “[Overconsumption] definitely creates a big waste,” Chaudhry said. “Micro-trends, they come and go so fast, and people spend so much money to fit into the trend. I think in the future, there’s going to be more trends that come and go, and people are going to look back on this and be like, ‘why was I wearing that? It’s not that cute, but it was just trending at the time.’ I think that overconsumption [will] catch up to people and they’re going to realize [they] should probably stop.”



# Marching Band: From Sunrise to Sundown

Photo from Ross Cornell

By Carter Fleming

Exhausted and sweaty, marching band students are up at the break of dawn when the sun rises and staying late until the sun sets. Marching back and forth, replaying song after song, marching band members drain their water bottles over the hours. The marching band put forth a lot of work and effort to be the best for games and competitions. “These kids work incredibly hard, it takes a lot of time, a lot of effort, it takes a lot of practice both individually and as a group,” assistant director Ryan Albert said. “They care a lot and it takes all of us. Marching band is like a big machine. As a director, I make sure these kids learn the material, but at games and performances us directors don’t do much. But, we all have our part.” Band students pursue an instrument all the way from middle school to the end of high school, practicing different songs. Every day, band students spend hours of their free time practicing their instruments before performances and at practice. After time spent practicing at school or playing at football games, students feel this constant exercise every night before bed. “In the sense we are televised, marching band is not a sport,” section leader Kai Winter said. “But, there is tons of physical activity we are required to do, games we have

to go play at and competitions we have to spend time on. In this sense, we are a sport.” Marching band directors spend lots of time behind the scenes on factors like cost, props and other logistics that factor into a performance. The directors spend months planning for competitions they have to fit and buy outfits or new instruments. Then they determine the amount of money going to buses and meals for competitions. Next they plan new music and choreography and get the props that have to be bought or made. The band also hires people to help with the music and choreography, then the section leaders spend time making preparations week by week. These are all tasks directors and staff of marching bands do. “We hire a drill arranger and a music arranger to put the show together,” Albert said. “We have to make themes and props. We make props and parents help us with props and then as the year starts our leadership team helps get the show going. We get fit into uniforms, assign instruments, assign marching spots, bus requests, meals. There is a ton of stuff. I would say behind the scenes is 75% of the work.” Marching band isn’t all physical. Mentally preparing for games so a student can play at their peak performance is a must. The students in the

marching band go in and perform in front of hundreds, sometimes thousands of people at football games. There ends up being a lot of pressure behind it, and makes performances a mentally draining experience. “When we go into games, we have one shot every time. We cannot adapt midgame like a football player or basketball player: we have to get it right,” Winter said. “We have to go in physically and mentally prepared knowing that we can not mess up.” These students spend so much time on an extracurricular class: what is their reasoning? They do it for their friends and the experience. A community where they spend time practicing their songs and their steps. They help each other out when needed, it’s like a sports team, a place for all to practice something they enjoy. It’s a place that teaches students how to balance their life and commitment. It’s a learning experience that will stick with students forever. “At the end of the day the students get an immediate support network with each other,” Albert said. “They spend a lot of time with each other, they learn how to manage and establish relationships with each other and the social connections is just one big benefit that brings them together.”

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# Friday Night Heights: How Cheer Elevates High School Football

By Redding Van Sickel and Reece Yeamans

Football is synonymous with the American high school culture. The game-day experience for high school football is one of charm, passion, and energy. But, what makes Friday night football so special? There's the marching band, the guard, and the drill team, but above the rest, is the cheer squad's voices punching through the ambient noise. Led by captains Bella Fuentes, Taylor Clemons, Anna Clark, and Chloe Taylor, cheer is the pride and passion of the school. The cheer squad proudly represented the Panthers for 43 years, and whether it be football or basketball, they show up. They come together every game, and every practice, in full, unwavering support, making an impact that will be heard for years to come. "The football games are kind of our thing," cheer squad member Areli Loza said. "The football players do what they do because of us and the student section in my opinion." The strong sense of community that the cheer squad creates drives panther pride and pushes our players to be the best they can be. But, being a cheerleader is not easy. "We just do so much that people don't realize," Loza said. "During summer we do cheer camp, a bunch of other practices and clinics, also we have been practicing everyday of August except weekends, and sometimes weekends." The at school practices for cheerleaders can be very intensive, but hard work is required for them to

be great at what they do. "On Friday, we start with a little prep during sixth period. We'll drive to the school and go over the routines again, then we'll leave to go get ready," cheerleader Naya Lopez said. "After that, we meet back up, practice a little more, and finally, we drive to the football stadium. The work doesn't stop there. Once at the stadium, the cheerleaders work

this year for more opportunities to integrate the lower schools. "Interacting with the community, the little kids, who aspire to be us and end up at Plano East, it's a big deal," Loza said "We're actually doing a clinic for the youngsters that's going to encourage new generations and movements." Besides involving the youth in their programs and activities, cheer has

made great strides to unify itself under one banner. "Now everyone is PESH," Taylor said. "We all wear Plano East uniforms instead of some people wearing McMullen or Williams uniforms." The unification of the cheerleaders did much to strengthen the team, as everyone now comes together to push each other further. "It helps to have more people practicing together with you," Taylor said. "You have more people correcting you and helping you and everyone just gets better." When the cheer squad is strong they can do their best not only at performing, but at improving the games they attend as well. "We get the crowd's energy up, which helps the players do better too," Lopez said. "It creates a good atmosphere for everyone."

The cheerleaders have dedicated themselves to what they do, so that they may be the heart and soul of the athletics program. The cheerleaders have the drive to push themselves, not only for themselves but for everyone else as well. "We all have the motivation to keep going, to keep pushing forward, to keep leading with class," Loza said. "That's our motto and our motivation."

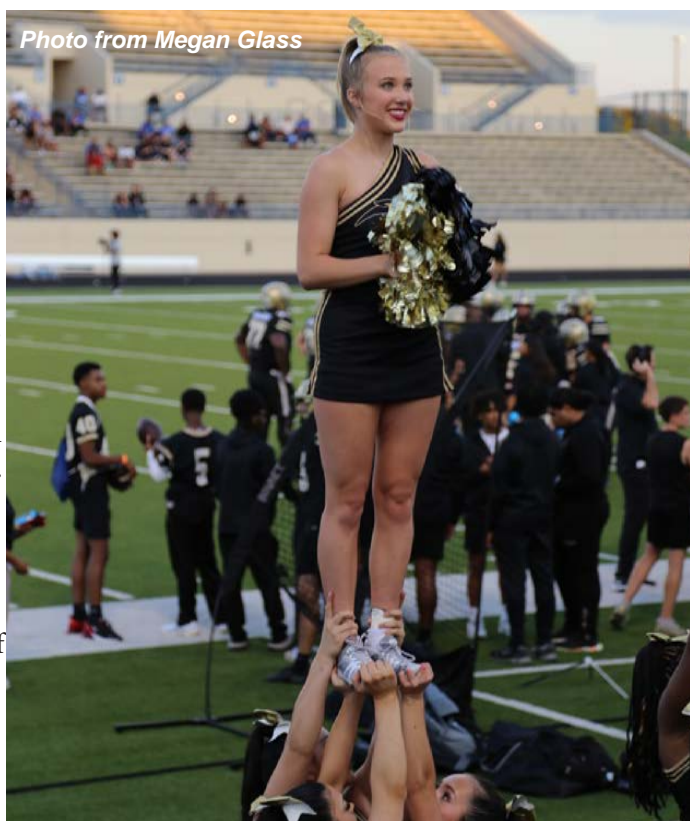


Photo from Megan Glass

before, during and after the game to make sure that there is spectacle that motivates the players and engages the fans. "We set up the flags and the runthrough, we set up our signs, we throw shirts, we do cheers and we do the dances," Taylor said. "We just get hyped." Beyond just their practices and games, the cheer squad is working to bring up the next generation of cheerleaders. They have pushed

themselves to what they do, so that they may be the heart and soul of the athletics program. The cheerleaders have the drive to push themselves, not only for themselves but for everyone else as well. "We all have the motivation to keep going, to keep pushing forward, to keep leading with class," Loza said. "That's our motto and our motivation."

# High Hopes For Future Women's

By Jewel Jeffery

Women first competed in professional sports in the early 1900's Paris Summer Olympics. A total of 997 athletes competed, 22 of them being women. Over time, women's sports gained more recognition, providing a professional platform for female athletes and upcoming generations. "Sha'Carri Richardson is my main female role model in sports," senior track athlete Richae Howell said. "I look up to her because she came from Dallas and coming from Dallas to the Olympics is really big. Most people don't even get a chance to have that big of a moment that she did. [It] means anything is really possible at that point as long as you are working hard and getting to it." Several famous female athletes come from different parts of the world and diverse backgrounds. This factor gives women another reason to sometimes be doubted in their sport. For some, it is used as a motivation to achieve any goal they have and allow it to be a part of their story of making it to the top. "When girls show out, we come to show out," Howell said. "It's not really different to me its just I feel like sometimes it can get overlooked that women aren't as equal than men in sports." There are many strengths and weaknesses when comparing men and women. One big comparison is sports. Success is not determined by gender but based on skills, determination, and many other expertise. Women's sports do not get the



**55.9% of students believe it is unfair for a woman's salary to be less than a man's salary in professional sports as they should be paid equally**

**23.7% of students believe it is fair for a woman's salary to be less than a man's salary in professional sports as men's sports are more popular than women's sports**

**24.6% of students believe it is unfair for a woman's salary to be less than a man's salary in professional sports but only for certain sports**

**0.9% of students believe it is fair for a woman's salary to be less than a man's salary in professional sports**

10.5% of students chose not to comment

same amount of attention as men because of the stereotypical physical aspect and the entertainment part as well. Some viewers claim women's sports games are too slow, less exciting, and have fewer instant replays. "I feel like a lot of people in time are starting to realize how entertaining women's sports can be just as men," Goodness Dikeocha said. "I feel like as the years go on women's sports are going to get more and more views because they realize you're not getting anything less compared to men's sports. It's the same work ethic, the skills are there, they're playing dirty, and the entertainment is there." Unfortunately for women in professional sports, there are many aspects of women's sports that are unequal in comparison to men. There are several reasons and theories on why this is, however, the main reason is that people think men are more well-built for athletics than women so it is assumed that they also play a better game. "As a female, I think it is challenging in my sport that I play," senior soccer and track

athlete Payten Cooper said. "I think that competitive nature causes me to overthink sometimes which leads me to not be completely hone in on on my emotions and focused in the moment. So I would say it is more challenging for me." Several female student-athletes and known female athletes take so much pride in playing their sport. Along with the pride they carry, theres also many stereotype as well. This puts so much pressure on the female athletes and puts them on a pedestal. Considering the uprise, there are high hopes for the womens sports industry. "I believe women's sports will become more successful than what it is today." Cooper said. "I think that we've come such a long way from ten years ago to now, we are becoming one of the most viewed. I'm not going to say an association but we've become so highly influential as women and it is amazing to see that we are what people like to see now. People come to sell out Venus [Williams], come to arenas and courts, and love to come watch us. As a woman I think it is so inspirational."



# Volleyball Team Prepares to End Their Season Off Victoriously

By Aycen Koa Matsumoto Castro

As their season draws near its end, the varsity volleyball team prepares themselves for victory in the district. With each player, coach and trainer focused on improving themselves in any way they can, the team only has one goal in mind: winning. The volleyball team continues to train hard for each game they've had this season. As the end draws near, the team will push themselves even further for a well-earned victory. The team's head coach, Sarah Perez, voices her enthusiasm towards how much the team has improved, and how she plans to ensure that they continue on this path. "We've had a really, really good pre-season" Perez said, "We're playing as a team, we're playing very cohesively. We have a lot of good energy, so far we've had a really good season." The team continues to make their marks in the tournaments they compete in, placing 4th in the Allen tournament, and winning the Garland tournament. Not only this, but the team has also placed 7th in Volleypalooza, a tournament which holds 68 different teams from across the country. The team is currently 6-1 in Districts, earning them the spot of 2nd place. But, this

doesn't mean that they don't plan to change that. They continue to strive towards success in each and every game, and Perez ensures that. "I think with every team, there's strengths, and there's things you need to work on, and we're improving everyday," Perez said, "We know the things that we have to work on, the girls are coming in, locked in, ready to work every single practice. We have a lot of skills that we need to improve on, and that just comes with repetition, giving people the opportunity to practice, and going over those fundamentals." The team's players also have their own goals in mind when it comes to playing this season. Each player makes sure to use their strengths, and fix their weaknesses, so that not just them, but their team as a whole can improve. "I feel like we've been doing pretty good," Volleyball Player Simone Heard said, "We've been more of an underdog this year, people weren't really expecting when we came out here, beating teams that no one would expect us to beat. I feel like we're honestly progressing every single game." With others within the sport having initially low expectations of the team at the beginning of

the season, they have exceeded these beliefs, playing their way through each game with the determination and heart to prove just how much their hard work has improved each of and every one of them. With a current record of 21-7 this season, they continue to compete with every team they face with focus, and will power. This of course doesn't mean that they haven't faced any challenges this year, having struggled against teams such as Allen or Plano West. "I feel like something that we could work on is probably more trust and communication," Heard said, "Once we break that communication, and talk to each other more on the court, I feel like we'll play more as a team, and that would help us in our games better." But through the sweat they shed during practice and the challenges they face with every game, what truly makes this team special is the bond share with each other. The players in the team don't just care about their own improvements, but also try to help their fellow teammates better their game as well, viewing themselves as something much more than just a sports team. "I've really just loved the girls and the coach, and stuff," Heard said, "I like a big family, so I love that energy, and how we're able to be ourselves around each other." The varsity volleyball team experienced a fantastic season this year. Starting in early August, the team has faced off against multiple schools. but through trial and error, they continued to work hard and show just how dedicated they are towards their passion. "We have a really fun team," Perez said, "They're locked in, they wanna be successful, they have strong goals for themselves, and so everyday we're pushing to get a little bit better, and be able to accomplish those goals."

\*information updated as of Sep 26, 2024



Photo from Aycen Castro

# Celebrity Craze: Idolization of Cultural Icons

By Aisha Ali

It's not a surprise that celebrities hold a heavy influence on today's society. Even in past years, celebrities are seen as practically perfect—they reflect beauty standards and set trends throughout social media. It's easy to look up to these celebrities as role models and even easier to mistake them for flawless. Celebrity worship culture is normalized and integrated into society, so an issue among fans is idolizing them. Pop culture has set unrealistic expectations and trends that affect both fans and celebrities, therefore, celebrities are flawed individuals who are incapable of being idolized. Idolizing celebrities is a continuous trend throughout pop culture, however this trend shouldn't glorify celebrities. K-pop and Bollywood both shape conventional beauty standards for celebrities to make them seem unrealistically perfect—like idols. An industry that commonly depicts over-investment in celebrity lives is Korean Pop culture, or K-pop. According to BBC News, K-pop star Moonbin's "death renews concerns over the immense stress K-pop stars face and brings to mind other high-profile music deaths in recent years. Police said it appeared he had taken his own life", this death shook the industry with both surprise and heartbreak. Obviously, humans are judgemental, but ever since the pop culture industrial revolution, society continuously uses critiques as a disguise for extreme criticism and judgment. According to EchoNews, this can "contribute to cancel culture, which has become more and more toxic for those who participate in it. When a celebrity responds to a situation in a way that is not desirable for the masses, they are scrutinized by strangers online," furthermore pressuring celebrities to try and uphold unattainable strict

social expectations. While it is true that celebrities set unrealistic expectations, fans also do the same. The unfortunate reality is that harsh expectations, beauty standards, eating disorders and celebrity obsession is prominent in this industry, this often causes celebrities to get canceled and replaced. Ideal perceptions of beauty in entertainment are continuous issues in both K-pop and Bollywood. This gives the opportunity to tie in one of Bollywood's highest-grossing, most popular, and obviously most successful films – Chennai Express. Villains are typically cast with darker skin tones and the heroes always tend to have fair skin and perfectly match the beauty standards. The protagonist, one of the most iconic actors in the entire industry, and the hero of Chennai Express is none other than Shah Rukh Khan (SRK). The film depicts "dark-skinned South Indians as buffoonish, easily duped thugs and coding them as 'ugly' when juxtaposed against light-skinned Shah Rukh Khan", who fits the ideal beauty standards portrayed throughout Bollywood. They repulsed SRK's character and this was masked and played off as simple humor. The film and music industry has played prominent roles in pop culture, primarily by influencing beauty standards by encouraging rampant colorism in Bollywood. Beauty standards change throughout the years, and celebrities are living proof of that. According to Newport Academy, celebrities "portray unrealistic and unattainable ideals of beauty. There are also celebrities who normalize, even glorify, substance use with their social media posts, song lyrics, or music videos" and this further emphasizes how celebrities are human. Idolizing celebrities is typical and un-

derstandable for adolescents, however idolizing them causes significant damage. Celebrities will inevitably disappoint others by either not fitting into a box of expectations crafted by modern society, or by crafting the same conventional parameters of beauty that eventually go viral. According to SubStack, society integrates "illogical ideals we chase: hairless bodies, wrinkle-free skin, [and] sunless tans [in society]. All [ideals] require full rejection of the human body via constant product intervention. And beauty standards have always been physical manifestations of systems of oppression", since the industries' only concern is to generate money. It's no surprise that capitalist values benefit greatly from constant changes of pop culture's beauty standards. Although celebrities can be considered role models, idolizing them is unrealistic and can be straight-up invasive. Celebrities don't always have the best influence, whether it's struggling with drugs, alcohol or romanticizing addictions. Celebrity obsession shouldn't be glorified in pop culture because it is harmful for both fans and celebrities. There is a difference between role-models and idols, but society has blurred the line that defines it. Celebrities are human too, so despite their status, they deserve to be held by the same standards. Pop culture was never just crafted by celebrities, fans also gave it the reputation it holds today. Pop culture reflects beauty standards, social norms, and addresses relevant issues of society. Although it's a common misconception that celebrities dictate popular culture, both fans and celebrities hold significant influence in the industry by establishing harsh standards. It is intrusive to pressure strangers, or celebrities, to fall into

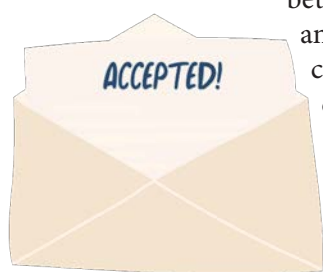
Photo from Unsplash

# Disparity In College Preparation System

STAFF EDITORIAL

By Varsha Jhanak

According to Flowing Data, college admissions for students nowadays is more difficult than before. This isn't due to colleges accepting less students, rather due to an increase in students applying. In this competitive atmosphere, many students invest in different resources or classes to make their college application appear competitive. These can include AP exams, Dual Credit classes or outside resources such as test preparation and college counseling. All these can help a student, but at a cost. Unfortunately, not everyone may be able to afford high fees for exams or preparation resources. This poses the question: is the current college preparation system creating an unequal playing field for students from different socioeconomic backgrounds? The modern college preparation system, including AP, Dual Credit, test and college preparation, does not allow equal opportunities for students of different socioeconomic backgrounds. This is due to the fact that many students cannot afford these resources which boost the college application of a student. Each of the different academic resources or coursework poses a different benefit. AP and Dual Credit classes allow students to show challenging coursework; ACT and SAT preparation resources allow for students to prepare



better for an exam; college counseling allows for im-

proved essays and someone to guide students through the application process. Access to these types of resources indirectly better a students chances into getting into schools. Through ACT and SAT scores are not required for admission into college, according to College Board, these scores strengthen a student's application and may better chances for admission. By accessing preparation resources, thus possibly increasing scores, students indirectly gain a higher playing field for admissions. Registering for AP exams and Dual Credit allow for students to gain a possible GPA boost and show colleges that they can challenge themselves. According to the Princeton Review, college counselors help come up with the best admissions strategy, but they also make sure a student stay on track. Together, these pose an indirect advantage and give students a better chance at college admissions. Students who cannot afford these resources are not given the fair chance to gain the guidance and boost provided through college preparation resources. These resources or classes come with a large price tag. According to College Vine, students aiming for Ivy Leagues and other top 30 schools should take 8-12 or more AP classes and for top 30-50 schools 5-8 AP classes. Each AP exam costs \$98 to register for. For most students, this would cost anywhere from \$500-\$1200 to register for exams through their academic career. According to PISD, dual credit registration costs \$67 per credit hour, not including technology fees. According to Amy Pritchett, student success manager at

Preply, "Prices for college test prep vary widely but one can expect to spend anywhere from \$50 to \$3,000 preparing for college tests depending on the type of course. For example, 20 hours of test prep in person could cost anywhere from \$1,000 to \$2,500. Per year, some students may not be able to afford these types of fees, especially when they may be saving for college tuitions. Many may argue that these paid resources aren't necessary for a students success in college. While there are many of free online resources available, such as YouTube and Khan Academy, they frequently fall short of the depth, individualization, and assistance that paid services offer. This discrepancy creates a system in which students who can afford it can improve their applications, while others find it difficult to keep up. Because they can afford expensive tools like AP exams, dual credit courses, test prep, and college counseling, children from wealthy families are disproportionately favored by the existing system of college preparation. Despite their advantages, these technologies tilt the playing field in favor of those who can afford them. While there are free alternatives, they sometimes don't offer the depth and individualized support required to compete on an equal footing. Educational institutions must address these financial disparities to offer fair chances for all students, regardless of socioeconomic level, as the difference between admissions and acceptance rates widens.

The Panther Prints staff voted 12-0 believing that college prep resources create an unequal playing field for admis-

# Sunrise and Savor in Plano

By Jade Chu

Teens look forward to weekends after a long week of school. Brunches are a great combination of delectable meals, the perfect in-between of breakfast and lunch. Plano has a wide variety of Instagrammable brunch places that are soaring in popularity.

The Bloom Lounge opened in Plano this year with floral designs and a modern hint of elegant decor. The open space in the front and the seating with flowers in the background provide the space to take the perfect picture. The walls are with beautiful white flowers to enhance the decorations, but the food is so beautiful. Pancakes and french toast are a brunch favorite. Alongside the sweet dishes, there is a wide range of savory options, including eggs and avocado, and lunch options, including different types of pasta. For those looking for a delicious, pretty pink mocktail, they offer numerous indulging non-alcoholic drinks that are perfect for teens. Walking into The Bloom Lounge feels like walking into



Photo from The Bloom Lounge



Photo from Dine Naperville

First Watch is an all-around classic American breakfast with an old-fashioned feel but a modern twist on a homecooked meal in the morning. Teens are constantly there for a homey feeling as the breakfast is predominantly classic and the decor is mostly wood. There is a huge variety of healthy, refreshing options in the morning with fresh juices, power bowls, salads, and sugar-free syrup. They also have a juice bar where everything is naturally made and freshly squeezed. First Watch is a family-friendly brunch place with a country feel and perfect lighting as a clear wall surrounds the restaurant. It is a very chill restaurant that's great for a refreshing meal and a casual photo op.

Honey Berry Pancakes are the perfect mixture of pancakes and serve a wide variety of flavors ranging from pumpkin to Oreo. For a sweet dish during lunchtime, pancakes are served at all times. Founded by Matt Ahmetti in Chicago in 2019, The environment is nature-based, with pink flowers on the wall, giving it cute scenery and everything is predominantly white in color. The plants and bright colors make it a chic place to take cute pictures. The place has plants and bright colors. Honey Berry Pancakes Cafe is known for its famous pancakes and can start the day on a high note.



Photo from Yelp



Photo from Scrambler's Cafe

Scrambler Cafe is known for its delicious classic eggs and home-cooked meals. A traditional family owns it and its decor features a modern twist. One can't miss the cafe because of its bright lights, tall buildings, and welcoming atmosphere. The staff is friendly and quick, and there is no long wait time due to the large number of accessible tables. A whole menu is dedicated to different types of eggs and there's a country-style section as well. It is surrounded by wooden tables and benches and huge windows surround the area -- an all-around classic American brunch place.

# Staff Picks: Favorite Reality TV Shows

By Camille Wright

The tribe has spoken, and the people have been granted the latest installment of Survivor. Streaming every Wednesday from 8 to 10 P.M., Season 47 is expected to deliver the show's usual high-stakes drama, featuring castaways who attempt to outwit, outplay, and outlast for a million-dollar prize in brutal conditions. In episode one, chaos ensued as Andrew "Andy" Rueda had a public meltdown, almost costing him his spot, but he survived over fellow Gata tribe member Jon Lovett. Episode two brought even more intensity with its unexpected betrayals and continually shifting alliances. Though TK Foster's exit from the show should have been the episode's emotional peak, it was the reaction of his ally Kyle, devastated by the blindside, who stole the spotlight. The episode also had chaotic moments, like Rachel LaMont's bold attempt to smuggle rice during the immunity challenge, pushing the boundaries of what players will do to survive. The Tuku tribe's loss in the challenge sent them to the Tribal Council, where Gabe Ortis played a safety idol, but it wasn't enough to save TK. His exit marked the second major surprise exit of the season, leaving alliances unstable and setting the stage for more chaos.

Photo from Survivor Wiki

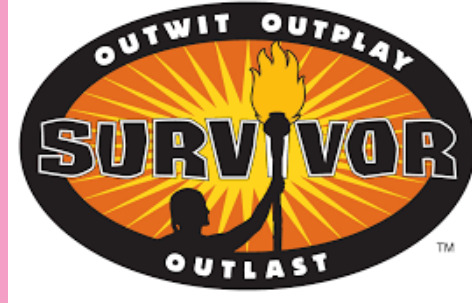


Photo from Google Play

A brand new bombshell hit the viewing charts in June of 2024 in Love Island USA season six. Season six's cast was bursting with personality, fit 'Islanders' and representation of all backgrounds. Vanderpump Rules royalty Arianna Maddix hosted the show and led the 'Islanders' on their journey for love. The season was filled with chaotic recouplings, stunning bombshells and competitive challenges that only added to the excitement of the show. Returning season five Casa Amor Boy Robert 'Rob' Rausch made a splash and was consistently a favorite pick for female bombshells, most of which ended up being dumped only a few short days after being coupled with him. Los Angeles native Leah Kateb quickly became a fan favorite with her iconic one-liners and facial expressions. Kateb was one of the three girls in the PPG (Power Puff Girl) trio, and her friendship with fellow Islanders Jana Craig and Serena Page was a season highlight. Love Island fandom dominated TikTok during the season's run as fans rushed to make edits and give commentary on their favorite moments. The obsession was only spurred by dumped Islanders using the app as a platform to "tell all" and give their perspective on the show. Season six crowned day one couple Serena Page and Kordell Beckham as its winners as they were America's favorite couple despite their relationship's ups and downs.

The Great British Baking Bake Off returned to Netflix in 2024 with its latest installment: series 15. In episode one, the tent buzzed with excitement as the bakers faced their first challenge: an elevated loaf cake. Norfolk baker Illiyin's cinnamon roll loaf earned her high praises from Paul Hollywood, while John's chocolate cherry creation was equally impressive. The series brings together an entertaining group of bakers, including Mike, a farmer who used his farm's eggs for his lemon-and-linseed loaf cake. There is also Sumayah, an 18-year-old baker who incorporated delicious flavors with her halwa-filled cake. This season's unique twist is the first-ever "taste and bake" technical challenge. The bakers were tasked with recreating a Battenburg cake based solely on its taste and without the help of a recipe. The showstopper challenge took creativity to new heights as bakers created hyperrealistic cakes portraying various items, including a handbag, a stack of books and even a sewing machine. Another memorable creation included Dylan's sesame-flavored Egyptian Canopic jar which the judges found both 'unusual' and 'delicious'. Cameos by celebrities like Ryan Reynolds and Blake Lively are rumored, adding even more excitement to the tent, and viewers can expect even more complex challenges and mindblowing bakes.

Photo from Wikipedia



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