

Student Reporter



Andrew Chung
Grade 10
Los Osos High School

My High School Sports Team Experience



The racket that I use to currently play tennis, to which I've adjusted to well and know how to use efficiently.
[Source: Author, Andrew Chung]

Getting involved with sports during high school is not what it may seem. Popularity, celebrations, and being one of the “cool kids” has been portrayed by sports

throughout the media. However, that is actually not the case at all, at least from my experience. Being on a sports team required nothing less than hard work and pure effort. It has definitely not been easy, but that does not mean that it hasn't been fun. Actually, it has been one of the most interesting and exciting high school experiences that I've had to this day.

I recently joined my school's boys tennis team, and I have to say that it has been a blast. I have been playing tennis for a little bit, and so passing tryouts to get on the team was a huge opportunity for me that I just could not pass up. I was excited and nervous before going into the season, and there were times when I doubted myself. I didn't think that I was

good enough, I saw many other players who were better than me, and I thought I wasn't fit enough to do well. However, all of those second thoughts immediately disappeared after my first day of practice. It was full of work, but it was so much fun. There were many running practices and tennis drills that I had to do, and it was tiring. However, not only did we do drills, but there were many activities that I got to do with my teammates that helped me bond with them. I made so many new friends, and I was having the time of my life. As of recently, I've only done practices, but the actual matches of the season do not start until March. It's something that I look forward to and use as my motivation to continue working as hard as I can in order to achieve

victory.

There are definitely times when I wanted to give up. I was getting really tired after practice, I had to commit to hours of tennis in school and after school, and I lost some free time. However, in the end, I realized that what I'm doing is worth it. Although there are many losses to being on a sports team, there are many benefits such as being able to exercise every day, learning more about a sport, and most importantly, having fun. I look forward to going to tennis every day after learning in all of my other classes, and it's almost a way for me to relieve my stress. It's a way that I'm able to do what I want to do, and to fully enjoy the high school experience and embrace the opportunities around me.

Student Reporter



Minseo Kwon
Grade 9
Portola High School

Aquaponics Building with Portola High School Students

Over the course of three months, Portola High School's 9th-grade students had the opportunity to construct their own aquaponics system. This system allows fish and plants to grow at the same time while recycling nutrients. Water infused with nitrates from the fish's feces leaves that tank to water the plants. The nitrates provide the plants with the nutrients they need to grow. Then, the water is recycled and filtered through clay pebbles into the fish tank. Initially, Portola's students were given the task to build a system that would benefit agricultural farming by conserving water and energy. Under the supervision of teachers, the 9th-graders constructed a working aquaponics system from scratch.

The first few weeks were dedicated to finding the right plants, fish, and materials for the aquaponics system. Ultimately, most groups decided to use the tilapia fish, as they could withstand the aquaponic environment better. After a lesson on safety with sharp tools, the students started to drill and attach wood parts. The fish

and germinated seeds were added to the system soon after.

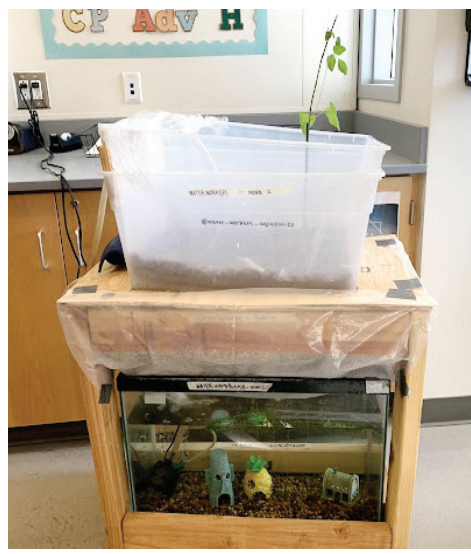
Another aspect of this project was that each group had to promote its aquaponics structure. The end goal was to successfully run the system and present the student's work at a showcase. Many teams decided to use Instagram as a method of reaching a wider audience. The students had the chance to be creative in their

promotion strategies by designing logos and posts.

Unfortunately, sustaining the aquaponics system was not an easy one for some groups. Leakage and pipe problems were the most common amongst teams. Water would spray outside the plant bucket or drip into the wood. This caused puddles of water next to the aquaponic tanks. Over the holidays, all groups faced the chal-

lenge of evaporation. Water levels were reduced by half over the two-week vacation. These issues posed as a test to see which teams could quickly find solutions. While many groups were able to fix the problems and continue to run their system, others had to cease their aquaponics journey.

In the end, many groups were successful, as some plants grew two feet tall. Most of the fish had endured the circumstances of aquaponics and survived. The students of Portola High School enjoyed the experience and were able to learn more about how farming worked. Most students concluded that aquaponics was better than traditional farming because of its water and energy conservation. Tiffany Kim, a participant of the aquaponics project, commented, “Aquaponics recycles nutrients and water, so little supervision and time is needed to maintain the system.” Overall, the students were able to experience maintaining and building a functioning farm. Biology class helped them connect to the real world and see how produce is made.



A group of students at Portola High School completed constructing their aquaponics system and added Spongebob houses for decoration.
[Source: Author, Minseo Kwon]

Student Reporter



Hannah Kim
Grade 10
Sunset High School

Sleep Walking; A Students Life

In a world where college is deemed as an event that will determine your entire life, high school students have a lot of pressure on their hands. This is because of the amount of emphasis on grades. Even with all of this pressure and stress, schools starting at early times lead to the lack of sleep. Sleep is how the human body “recharges” itself, and it is important that students receive enough sleep after their busy day of doing extracurriculars and homework. Unfortunately, because they are so busy, students use their valuable sleep time to do homework instead. For these reasons, high school starting times should be pushed back so that high school students can have a better chance at a brighter future.

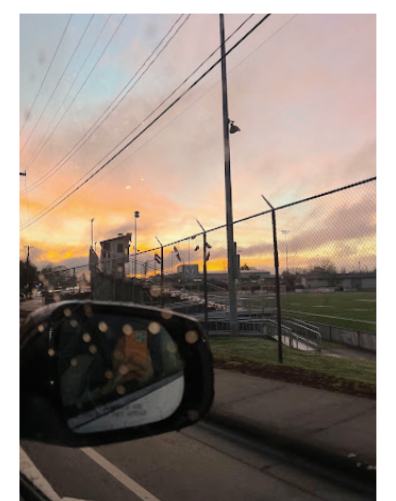
Most people do not realize how important and crucial sleep can be. Sleep foundation states that the lack of sleep can, “increase [the] likelihood for participating in risk-taking behaviors, [height-

en the] chance of unhealthy behaviors, [heighten] risk of athletic injury, increase of depressive symptoms and suicidal ideation, [and increase] risk of motor vehicle accidents”. This lack of sleep can lead to many consequences that can affect one's resume or future, as some acts can result in bad marks on one's transcript. Along with negatively impacting a student's grades, lack of sleep can significantly impact one's mental health.

To discover how students personally feel about their school's starting time, I interviewed my friend Ella about how she feels about starting class at 7:45 AM. She expressed her frustration by explaining that, “I have dance almost all day and when I head home I have to eat and do my school homework. Not only that, I have other tutoring homework to do and I usually get around 6 hours of sleep daily.” Ella stated that she feels that a lack of sleep prevents

her from doing the best she can at school. She has also expressed that when she does get enough sleep, she can really feel that she is alert and doing her best.

More sleep can result in better outcomes. For example, a University of Washington study compared the sleep behaviors of two separate groups of high school sophomores at Roosevelt and Franklin High School. Studies showed that, “Final grades were 4.5 percent higher for students who took the class after school start times were pushed back compared with students who took the class when school started earlier. . . number of tardies and first-period absences at Franklin dropped [after start times were pushed back]”. This further indicates that high school start times should be pushed back to prevent having tardies or absences, so that students can focus on their grades. In doing so, the quality of work and the attitude of high school students can



Taken at 7AM on the way to school, the sunrise shows how early students have to leave home for school to not be late.
[Source: Author, Hannah Kim]

be improved.

I believe that high school start times should be pushed back because of the proven mental, physical, and academic benefits. There are so many advantages that can follow from students getting even just an hour more to sleep.

Student Reporter

To Be or Not to Be..., Satisfied with English Courses



Jeffrey Kwon
Grade 12
North Hollywood High School



One assignment for the AP English class was to create a "50 Things" figure with important topics, quotes, and symbols. I chose to read Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury, shown here. [Source: Author, Jeffrey Kwon]

From what I've seen, a high school English class can be a hit-or-miss. For avid humanities enthusiasts, the course can be a wonderful opportunity to explore the ambiguities of life, filled with enigmas leading to more than one answer. But for those identifying with the natural sciences, English can be a difficult course to admire, with the equivocal nature of analyzing literature, for example, ostracizing by-the-book students. Though I long identified with the latter, I have shifted in my academic tendencies; high school has been a period of ex-

ploration for me to immerse myself in subjects that I now appreciate more. One such subject has been the study of English language and literature, made more exciting by the creative assignments given by my English teachers.

Though I may still be young, I feel that I've been in school long enough to recognize the general changes in the teaching of English that have occurred since I began elementary school more than a decade ago. In particular, the digitization of academia has

accompanied a greater flexibility in teachers, allowing them to look past traditional methods of teaching the English language.

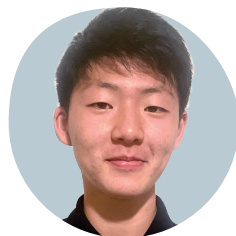
My AP English Literature class, for example, has been characterized by several creative assignments. Recently, each student completed reading a work within the speculative fiction genre. Rather than merely completing a traditional book review, we were to create a "50 Things" assignment, including symbols, drawings, quotes, topics, and anything of the sorts that summarized key points of the book. I was able to visualize what I viewed as the theme for Ray Bradbury's dystopian fiction novel Fahrenheit 451 — the suppression of critical thinking enables the loss of the humanistic aspects of life that make mankind normally unique — as a result of the assignment, connecting different topics and pieces of dialogue to this much needed message. But the creative assignments haven't only been limited to visual arts; we have created a podcast analyzing poetic struc-

tures, created individual poems expressing the woes of high school life, and added humorous stage directions to plays for understanding subtext, the implicit messages writers try to convey to readers. And the "creative" assignments haven't been limited to art either. In particular, my English class has been emphasizing the importance of independent reading, and thus, our class sets one day of the week to merely peruse books we enjoy, something my classmates and I always look forward to.

The flexibility and a degree of unconventionality in our English curriculum, the successes of which are evident in my personal satisfaction, has enabled me to appreciate the study of my native tongue much more. I would often tell myself I would never be a good writer, merely hoping that my English grades would be just enough to get into college. Now that I've gained confidence in my knowledge of the language, I am emboldened enough to say; Shakespeare watch out, because I'm coming for you!

Student Reporter

My Experience Learning Guitar



Sean Kim
Grade 10
Los Alamitos High School

Growing up playing the piano, I have always loved music. Playing since kindergarten, I climbed the levels and reached Certificate of Merit level six before I quit playing in seventh grade. I have no regrets, but it was a shame that my other extracurriculars superseded my lessons. Recently, I have been reflecting on my past and decided I should enter the music world once more. These are my first days of learning guitar!

I am very grateful to my aunt, who gifted me a guitar for my tenth birthday. At the time, I did not have any interest in the instrument, and the guitar found a home in the dusty corner of my closet. A week ago, I finally picked up the ignored instrument with hopes of learning my first chord. On the first day, I headed my way downstairs to the piano. By strumming the strings, I could tell the guitar was severely out of



After years of dormancy, the guitar was off-tune, dusty, and creaky. The piano was a perfect way to tune and have all six strings sound great once again! [Source: Author, Sean Kim]

tune and needed some work. I replaced the wonky noises from my six strings with a crisp EADGBE with the piano's help. Tuned guitar in hand, I looked for advice around the house. My mother, who had played guitar as a child, recommended finding an easy song to start my guitar journey. She herself had used songs off the internet to learn the chords

and advised me to do the same. With a quick google search, I found the perfect piece: Youth, by Troye Sivan. All that was required were four simple chords; G major, D major, E minor, and C major. Excited, I quickly looked up a tutorial on Youtube, and my hands eagerly gripped the guitar with gusto. Following the virtual teacher, I clumsily placed my fingers in the G major position with first, second, and third fingers pressing on the first, second, and sixth strings of the second fret. As I fumbled with the foreign instrument, the video interrupted me with a perfectly clear G major chord. I pursued the note, trying hard to replicate the same perfect G my teacher had. But, as expected, I could not, and my fingers were starting to ache. As I listened with awe, I felt my excitement grow. One day I would play the song just as well as the video, although it would not be in the

first days of training.

The next day, I winced with pain as I attempted an E chord. The session from the previous day had weakened my fingers more than I had expected. Overcoming my discouragement, I set the guitar down and made plans for my next practice. To my joy, the following day went smoothly. I accomplished all the notes with my newly calloused fingers, and I was able to play a shaky rendition of Youth. My guitar experience was coming along nicely.

Although it was difficult, I loved my first days learning guitar, and I could not have chosen a better way to venture back into music. After learning only one song, I have gained respect and admiration for the talented musicians who have mastered the instrument. These few days have truly inspired me, and I look forward to learning more songs in the future.

Student Reporter

An Unforgettable Memory in New York



Jaemin Kwak
Grade 10
Torrey Pines High School

As a violinist who has been playing for 10 years, I felt like I was ready for something special. 2 years ago, I auditioned for an honors orchestra performance, held by World Strides, as recommended by my teacher. If selected, I would be given the opportunity to practice for 5 days with completely new people from around the entire world and perform at Carnegie Hall on the last day. Although it was canceled 2 years in a row, due to COVID 19, I was given the honor to join the honors string orchestra in this program.

After I arrived in New York, I got to the hotel where we would rehearse for the next 5 days. We were already given our pieces 2 months prior to this program, and we were all practicing the basics of the pieces during this time, and now we had to fit all of our music together into one in 5 days with our com-

poser "Jason Seber," who currently conducts the Kansas City symphony orchestra. We had 9 hours of rehearsal everyday, which was very tiring, but it was also a great experience to learn from such a talented conductor and the other fellow musicians around us. This group of students were all very talented, and the experience inside the rehearsal room was something I've never experienced in other orchestras before. Everyone was focused and tried very hard to follow every suggestion our conductor gave us. Our rehearsals were magnificent, and in the 5 days we were ready to perform the best possible music on the best stage in the world, Carnegie Hall.

On the final day, we got on the bus to get to Carnegie Hall, and I could feel the nervousness and the excitement of everyone on the



Playing at Carnegie with such an amazing group of students and such a perfect composer was an honor. [Source: Author, Jaemin Kwak]

bus. As we arrived at Carnegie Hall, I still couldn't believe that I was about to perform on the famous stage. I walked on and had never seen something so majestic. I could see why this hall was called one of the best performing centers in the world. We all knew we were ready to show our audience that we were prepared and ready to play some beautiful music. From the start of the first piece to the end

of the last we played our hardest, and as we finished, we were greeted with the biggest applause ever.

My experience in New York was one of the greatest I've had in my life, since not only did I get to play in one of the best performing centers, but was allowed to work with such talented musicians and conductor which helped to grow in my music career.