

Editors Column

The Power of Zen



Thomas Lee
Grade 12
Cleveland High School



A collaboration meeting between the Zen Club and BSU (Black Student Union) to promote racial equality and peace on campus. [Source: Author, Thomas Lee]

High School is stressful. One has to keep grades up in challenging courses, apply to colleges, keep good relationships with teachers, do community service, and so on. When do students have the time to relax?

In the first three years of high school, I was placed in an accelerated math course, took numerous AP classes, and kept up with my

passion projects and extracurricular activities. By putting myself on a cutthroat schedule, it was hard to keep up with my genuine passions and hobbies, such as painting and writing a journal. Earlier this year, my friend and I decided to make a space where students could relinquish all the pressure and act at their age again. Named ‘Zen Club,’ we were able to collaborate with the

school’s wellness program to focus on the student’s mental well-being.

In order to do so, the board members wrote down a list of activities that they have personally benefited from to release the stress of the college application process and maintain their grades. The list was extensive; we had various activities ranging from slime-making and coloring books to yoga and Just Dance. With a majority of the vote, we started our first meeting by making slime. Four gallons of Elmer’s glue, eight different food coloring, five different colors of foam beads, and a bowl. These few ingredients brought almost eighty students from all grades to enjoy lunchtime with their friends and be a kid again.

Our club quickly had a huge following due to its simple but impactful purpose. Slime, hand painting, and origami are activities we all enjoyed when we were younger. The happy memories we had during these activities are

still with us today, and the purpose of the club’s meetings are there to help students remember those joyful memories. Others often force high school students to look ahead and take responsibility for their entire future based on academics and the results of college admissions. As a result, high school students who are occupied with many responsibilities have difficulty releasing their stress. Many go through mental hardships, which sometimes lead them to bad decisions.

As a co-founder and president of the Cleveland Zen Club, I was able to feel the progress and happiness of our members throughout the semester. The smiles on people’s faces, rather than frowns, and people dancing carelessly instead of cramming in an assignment due next period, motivated me to plan a better meeting the next week. We plan to collaborate with many other clubs next semester, focusing on the mental health of the students at Cleveland High School and beyond.

Student Reporter

MMYO Performs Christmas Classics for Audiences during the Holiday Season



Aspen Lee
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Santa Fe Christian School

The holiday season is very busy for students and adults, but for many, it is a season of celebration, peace, and joy. A San Diego student orchestra, the Mainly Mozart Youth Orchestra (MMYO), put together well-known Christmas classics and winter seasonal songs to make the end of the 2023 year festive and bright. The performances consisted of a concert for an audience of family, friends, and guests, and a separate holiday show for a senior retired living facility in San Diego, The Glen.

Classical and pop music are commonly played throughout the holiday season, but often a mix of the genres are glanced over. The MMYO’s Advanced Orchestra conductor, Mr. Hernan Constantino, hand-picked 12 pieces for the high school students to perform. Over the course of three months, the group of musicians rehearsed every Saturday to perfect the music that would later bring smiles to



A view of the MMYO Advanced Orchestra’s festive Christmas program sound-check before the performance. [Source: Sophie Park]

those attending the concerts.

The start of the program began with an arranged version of the Christmas classic, “Deck the Halls,” and had those in their seats rocking to the upbeat song. Following the opening of the concert, high school guest singers, Vishaala and Sophia, continued the program by accompanying the orchestra to familiar pieces: “I’ll Be Home for Christmas,” “The Christmas Song,” “White Christmas,” and “Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas.” In ad-

dition to the typical Christmas performances, selections from Hanukkah classics were also included in the concert, such as “Festival of Lights” and “We Wish You a Klezmer Christmas.” After the performances by the vocalists, the audience enjoyed loved four movements from the “Nutcracker Suite” by Tchaikovsky. The particular articulations, visible musical line, and continuously animated musicality from the artists brought the long piece to life, and made those watching able to imagine the ballet and story of the dance.

One new member of the MMYO Advanced Orchestra, Alex T., has played the flute for many years prior to joining the orchestra, and said after the performances, “The way the audience reacted to our pieces made me so proud to be playing my instrument with such a talented group of students.” Many of the other performers agreed with his statement, stating that the experience of being on stage could not be described in any other way than that the performer could feel the appreciation and joy from the audience.

As a participant in this orchestra, this was an amazing opportunity to be a part of; to play music that I hear all the time during this season with all these other high school students that I never knew before. I think it’s incredible that each individual instrument can come together to make such delicate and rich sounds that can only be heard when played as one.

Student Reporter

Making the Most of Your Winter Break



Hannah Lee
Grade 11
West Ranch High School

The first couple weeks of January bring the end to a well-needed break and the start of a new school semester. Many people take this opportunity to spend time and catch up with family, go out and explore new places, or just relax at home. Let’s talk about how to wrap up this restful break and jump headfirst into the new semester!

Undoubtedly, more than a few of us have stayed up well into the night during winter break. Whether it be because of video games, texting friends, or watching a new show, this sleep schedule deviates from that typical back-to-school one. As it is important to be as alert and attentive as possible at school, instead of dozing off, make sure to set aside the last week or days of winter break to catch up on your sleep. It is recommended that teenagers get an average of 8-10 hours of sleep a night. Beyond just having better

performance in school, sleep also relieves stress, improves mood, maintains a healthy weight, regulates blood sugar, and has various other health benefits. So, make sure you are always getting a healthy amount of sleep!

With the resumption of school comes a load of homework and studying, and you may have limited time left to spend time with those closest to you. Take advantage of the end of winter break to spend time with your family, such as eating out together, going shopping, or watching a movie. This might just help you relax and improve your mood heading into school. These extra moments spent together will surely be noticed and appreciated by everybody in your family. It’s always good to be able to recall some fond memories of how you spent your winter break with your loved ones.

Finally, make sure your living and working space is organized. If you’re anything like me, winter break is a time to wrap presents, make cards, go shopping, and do many other activities that cause a mess on my desk and in my room. Oftentimes, this clearing keeps getting pushed aside until you find yourself in the last week of winter break. Take the time to tidy up your room and house! Future-you will appreciate having a clean and organized place to work in, without having to worry about taking time from your busy day to sort out the mess. An organized space will enhance your productivity, give you a sense of control, and reduce stress. However tedious it may feel, be sure to set aside some time in your break to make sure that that little pile of mess in your room doesn’t spiral out of control.

It’s hard to believe that time



My family and I visited Sequoia National Park over winter break! [Source: Author, Hannah Lee]

passes by so quickly and that it is already the start of a new school semester in a new year. With these outlined tips, you can make the most out of your winter break to ensure that you have the smoothest transition out of your break possible!

Editors Column



Alexis Choi
Grade 11
South High School

Webtoons: Like K-Dramas, But Better



Webtoons are digital comics designed in a vertically scrolling format for the convenience of readers.
[Source: Author, Alexis Choi]

The surge in Korean television in the U.S. is impossible for anyone with a Netflix account to ignore. Popular shows and dramas such as All of Us Are Dead, Business Proposal, and Sweet Home have become global phenomenons. However, most viewers are unaware that these popular shows have very different origins: Webtoons.

Webtoons are manhwas, or comics on the platform Webtoon, developed to be vertically

scrolled (though some have the traditional horizontal format) on mobile devices. Similar to Korean dramas, these webcomics are serialized stories doled out in briefer episodes. Each episode takes the form of a long vertical strip of art that is sometimes accompanied by background music; with vibrant stories and beautiful illustrations, webtoons have enraptured audiences, and many popular works have built up enormous fan bases. First launched in the early 2000s and backed by huge South Korean corporations like Naver Corp. and Kakao Corp., webtoons have swept Korea and are rapidly spreading overseas, with over 80 million monthly active viewers.

Platforms like Webtoon make it easier for artists to gain a wide audience and create and release content that may not fit into the standards of traditional publishing. Many

previously unknown artists have made their debut through the platform and have opened doors to various other opportunities, whether it be partnering with companies and gaining sponsorships, or even reimagining their work into movies and TV shows.

Naver Webtoon, one of the largest platforms for webtoon, offers an extensive range of genres and content—romance, slice-of-life, mystery, crime, sci-fi, fantasy, and more. Despite popular trends and tropes that circulate, each webtoon has distinct art styles and plots, which offer readers practically unlimited options of stories. There are over one million published titles in over 100 countries and 10 languages. Webtoons are written in Korean, but the English version of Webtoon, through the company Line, offers translated versions of Korean works, as well as English webtoons.

Due to the popularity and quality of webtoons, a staggering number of them have been the source material for Korean dramas and shows, many of which have garnered global success. For instance, webtoon-based titles like True Beauty, Yumi's Cells, and What's Wrong with Secretary Kim all ranked Global Top 10 lists of popular streaming services like Viki, with some even reaching number one.

For anyone who enjoys comics or K-dramas, webtoons are the perfect combination that contains the best of both worlds. For those who are new to the medium, it can be helpful to begin by reading popular works such as Romance 101, Seasons of Blossom, or Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint and slowly narrowing down to other comics based on favorite genres and tropes. As yet another medium that spreads Korea's prominence overseas, webtoons offer limitless opportunities for storytelling and experiencing the beauties of Korean culture.

Student Reporter

Asian Skincare Deserves the Hype



Ansley Kang
Grade 11
Lake Oswego High School

Ever since I was in fourth grade, I have used a skincare routine religiously. I still remember my first skincare routine; it consisted of the new Glossier milky jelly cleanser that all of my friends were obsessed with, the Kiehl's cucumber toner, moisturizer, and midnight serum every other day, as well as the Innisfree sunscreen in the morning. Looking back on it, my still baby fourth-grade skin probably did not need that much product on it, let alone such expensive products, but I fell into a hardcore "ride or die" mentality with my skincare routine.

Over the years I've evolved my skincare routine to perfectly fit my dry skin type. Currently, I use all Asian products, as I actually believe that Asian skincare products are the best as well as cheapest on the market. I was in a testing period for a while where I used 12 products on my face, but I managed to narrow it down



Anua, Korea's skincare brand, which I use often.

[Source: Getty Images]

to seven, sometimes eight at night and five in the morning. For my nighttime routine, I use the Manyo oil cleanser, Goodall vita C foam cleanser, Anua 77 percent toner, Goodall vitamin C serum, Anua 77 percent lotion, Goodall vitamin C under eye patches, Kahi multi balm, and once a week I use a sheet mask. In the morning, I do the same thing except for the under-eye patches and the oil cleanser, which I replace with the Innisfree tone-up sunscreen.

Asian Skincare has recently taken the internet by storm, with the most popular brands being Innisfree, Dr. Jart+, and Laneige. Ever since I've switched to a mainly Asian-based skincare routine, I've found that my skin has been much better, and my skin type has even changed a little bit, going from combination skin to more of a dry skin type.

Western skincare still has a lot to catch up on compared to Asian skin-

care. There are great brands out there that I have used and enjoyed, but ultimately, I've found that Western skincare is formulated with high concentrations of ingredients that can irritate the skin, even with just one use. Western skincare also tends to be focused on certain skin types, and there aren't many products out there that are great for just normal or combination skin. I also have found that Asian skincare is more user-friendly, even in its packaging, and they just come in more fun ways to use them.

Because they have gained so much popularity, Asian skincare brands can be found at a lot of beauty stores and online shops. Sephora carries one of the most popular brands, Innisfree, and Amazon has a wide selection of brands from Asia. Both Asian and American skincare have great brands that fall under each culture, but if you're looking for something that is more gentle as well as cheaper, I would consider taking a look at some Asian skincare brands.

Student Reporter

How 4 Squares Can Make Your Year



Audrey Park
Grade 10
Northwood High School

This year is coming close to an end, with the uncertainties of the next few months piling up. However, what if I said that the unpredictability of 2024 could be assuaged through 4 simple boxes?

Really, it's simple once one understands the physical and mental benefits of using 4 quadrant models to visually map out the solutions to issues.

The best example of putting these 4 quadrant models into work is Stephen Covey's Time Management Matrix, which visually maps how one should prioritize goals and assignments. Using two main units, "urgency" and "importance," the matrix provides the first quadrant for "urgent and important" tasks, the second quadrant for "not urgent but important" tasks, the third for "urgent but not important" tasks, and the fourth for tasks that are neither "urgent nor important." Being the most favorable for the use of students and workers, the matrix reveals how prioritization can be reduced to a few measurements in order to maximize

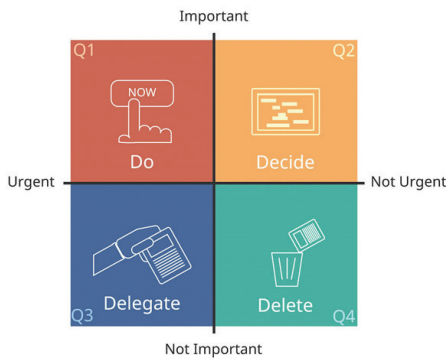
the productivity of the user. Personally, this method has proved to be so effective that I have used it to the point where I can map my goals without the visual indicator. Another student, Julie Kim, has used similar models to map out a "to-do list" for daily tasks and states, "Recently, I have rarely been in a time crunch for completing schoolwork and progressing towards goals because I got used to so much of this prioritization!"

Another model that is not used often but has proved helpful to some students is James Russell's Circumplex Model of Emotions. Organized into a diagram with 4 quadrants, an array of words to describe emotions are categorized based on their positive or negative connotations and the level of activity they inspire in an individual. On its horizontal axis, words can be organized into whether or not they are characterized to be pleasant or unpleasant traits, with the right end being more positive while the left end is negative. The vertical axis demonstrates if the characteristics influence one to act actively or passively,

with the action being described as more "active" as one goes up the model. For example, the word "lethargic" would be placed in the third quadrant of the Circumplex Model of Emotions because it has a negative connotation and does not inspire an immediate action in an individual. Furthermore, this tool can be used by students when discussing literary topics or class work concerning character analysis. Because novels and general worldbuilding rely on the interactions between characters' emotions, being aware of the subtle differences in negative and positive characteristics can reveal a character's motives, issues, and scope of surroundings. Similarly, this model can be helpful when an individual

wants to map out or improve their current mood, as placing an emotion on the quadrants can provide a visual guide to how one can change it. This tool visually demonstrates how subtle changes in one's emotions could ignite productivity or demoralization.

Perhaps the most important reason why visual tools such as these 4 quadrant models are so helpful is because they help an individual understand the parameters of goals. In both models, the units help foster a better understanding for increasing productivity or scope towards analysis. Now that the new year is coming, it may be beneficial to map out goals through quadrant models!



The Time Management Matrix encourages an individual to visually map out tasks. [Source: Behrooz M.]