

Editors Column

Wearing Red, White, and Black



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Red, white, and black – three colors, two of which are commonly associated with the American flag. While these three colors may make you think of that flag, these are also the main colors of my school, Harvard-Westlake. Just like a flag, almost every school has a set of colors they are known for and helps represent in sports matches or social media pages. However, at my school, wearing red, white, and black doesn’t only apply to sports jerseys, but the colors of a student ambassador!

Harvard-Westlake School’s student ambassador program’s mission is to aid applicant students and their families during their application process into Harvard-Westlake, as well as assist in school events. Every year, hundreds, sometimes even thousands, of dedicated students apply to the school, a private institution that serves students in grades 7-12 with two campuses, one for 7th-9th graders in Beverly Hills and one for 10th-12th graders in Studio City. Students apply to begin their Harvard-Westlake journey in 7th grade, 9th grade, and sometimes 10th grade. About 280 to 300 stu-



When conducting Upper School tours, the tourists are often amazed by how pretty our campus is. This view of the Drama Lab and Rugby demonstrates why they think so!
[Source: Author, Isleen Lee]

dents are accepted in 7th grade, while only 90-ish students are accepted in 9th grade, although the latter statistic differs depending on how many students of that graduating class were initially accepted during 7th grade.

I remember being one of the students who were applying for admission to the ninth grade at Harvard-Westlake. The whole experience was utterly new to me, as I knew very little about what the process of applying to a private school would entail and also because it was amidst the era of COVID-19. When I was ac-

cepted, I learned how, that year, there were a record-breaking 1,260 students who had applied for the same spot at this prestigious school. During the introductory event the school hosted with other admitted students, I clearly remember hearing about the student ambassador program from upperclassmen. After learning about what it’s purpose was, I immediately knew I wanted to join to be of help to other students and families who may also feel intimidated by the application process.

I’ve been a student ambassador since I joined the school in the fall of

2023, as what new ninth-grade acceptees are called “new ninth graders.” At first, I found this title to be a bit weird – I felt like it alienated me from the other students who had been here since 7th grade. However, being a student ambassador changed my mindset on this label. As student ambassadors, we’re recommended to wear the school’s colors mentioned above to promote school spirit. In those colors, I’ve led numerous tours now, both of the lower and upper campus, and I realized how diverse the applicants are. I was able to talk to many parents and students; some were excited, curious, nervous, or bored – whatever emotion they were feeling; every interaction I had with each family felt like a healing process for me, as I could see the past versions of myself in them. It brought me to the conclusion that I, along with the other 90-ish acceptees, were contributors to the diversity of my class and the greatness the school possesses today. Being a student ambassador is always more than simply giving tours or answering frequently asked questions – it’s also a reaffirming way of finding one’s value within a diverse population.

Assistant Editor

74th Annual LA County Science & Engineering Fair



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The 74th annual LA County Science & Engineering Fair (LACSEF) will be hosted on March 10-11, 2024, at the Shrine Expo Hall in Los Angeles. Over 700 brilliant students come together yearly to showcase their research projects. Students undergo months of evaluation on their projects before they have the chance to advance to the International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF).

Participants begin the process in September, where projects that involve human subjects, vertebrates, microbes, or other hazardous materials require submission and preapproval from the fair. If denied, students have one more chance to revise their projects accordingly and resubmit by November. This accumulates in the



Save the date if you are interested in student science exhibitions!
[Source: Author, Hannah Lee]

final project submission – including presentations, papers, and any other supplements – for all students in February.

The first day of the actual fair, March 10, is a day for the public to see students’ projects in the interactive displays. If you and your family are looking for a fun and

educational event on the weekend, the LACSEF is an excellent free option! This year, this event will take place from 12:00 PM to 5:00 PM. The second day, which is closed to the public, will be the day of student interviews with judges, who determine if a project should earn distinctions, prizes, or even advance to the international level. Many students prepare profusely for this day and eagerly await to showcase what they have learned and found to the judges.

The fair is divided into two different levels: the junior and senior divisions. The junior division is dedicated to students in 6-8 grade, and the senior division is for high school students. 2-7 students from the latter may be selected to compete in ISEF, a highly esteemed

fair that awards \$5,000 cash grand prizes and up to \$75,000 in special awards and scholarships. It is only possible to participate in this fair through participation in a regional county-level fair, such as the LA County Fair. ISEF winners are highly distinguished and honored within the field of young researchers.

The LA County Science & Fair is an excellent opportunity for any student who wishes to showcase his or her projects and achievements in STEM. While it is too late to participate in the 2024 fair, the 2025 season will open up in April. Make sure to check in with your school to see if this is an option! If not, you can always be the first to introduce something new to your school.

Student Reporter

Type With Your Preference, Whatever That May Be



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Whether you are an office worker or a video game enthusiast, most people use a keyboard when on a computer. However, not everyone uses the same type of keyboard. There is a vast variety of that come in all different forms. In the end, all keyboards serve the same purpose of inputting symbols or commands. Despite this, there are reasons as to why you should care about what kind of keyboard you type with.

Before explaining why, you should have a general knowledge of keyboards. There are many keyboards out there, but most fall into two categories: membrane or mechanical. In brief, a membrane keyboard uses soft layers of plastic to create inputs, while mechanical keyboards use switches that use a mechanism to create inputs. This difference in creating an input comes with its advantages and

disadvantages. Membrane keyboards are cheap, quiet, and easily compact but are often not durable or easy to repair. Mechanical keyboards are durable, stable, and more responsive but cost more, are louder, and heavier.

The pros and cons of both keyboards are a factor in why everyone has different preferences, as one may fit one’s requirements and budget more. Typists and gamers prefer mechanical keyboards due to their durability and responsiveness, while the average person uses a membrane keyboard due to a lower budget, easier access, and use.

Another factor is the person’s personal preference. Even with the same type of keyboard, everyone will have a unique style of keyboard, unless they have the same product. This is because key-



Common keyboards help people get tasks done without needing to have a large budget.
[Source: Author, Sander Im]

boards cater to preferences. This is most obvious with mechanical keyboards. People can buy or even create ones that suit them. You can choose what kind of switches you want, allowing you to decide how your keyboard sounds and feels. Whether it is a keyboard that makes loud clicks or soft, smooth presses, the variety of switches available on the market allows people to find their ideal experience. In addition, people can choose how their keyboards look



You can choose how your keyboard looks, feel, and sound through various means.
[Source: Author, Sander Im]

as well as how large they are.

In a world where many are worried about what is considered the best, there is comfort in seeing that there is an entire market where your preferences and necessities are more important. Whether it is budget, sound, feel, durability, responsiveness, or look, there is always a keyboard that suits someone. There is no right or wrong regarding keyboards, only ones that make your experience feel the best.

Student Reporter

My First LA Kings Hockey Game



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The LA Kings and Nashville players fighting to get to the puck.
[Source: Author, Olivia Shin]

I was so excited for my first hockey game. The LA Kings and The Nashville Predators were playing, and I couldn't wait to get into the stadium. My siblings had already gone to a Kings game, but this was my first time. After my family and

I walked around for about 10 minutes trying to find the right gate to our seats, we finally sat down, waiting for the game to start.

"NOW THE LA KINGS!" the speakers blasted. As the lights and

sounds surrounded the arena, the Kings players started to pour out onto the ice rink. There were cheers from all around, and I couldn't even hear my own voice. Being in that stadium was a whole different experience from any other sports game I had been to. As I watched eagerly, the opposing team made their way into the rink as well. The match started with both teams fighting off for the puck.

From the beginning, the Kings were struggling to score on the other side with Nashville keeping their defense strong. After the first intermission, the Kings started to go at it and made the first score. The crowd went wild, and all I could hear were the drums and cheers from left to right. For this game, we were really lucky and were able to get pretty decent seats. We were close enough to the arena to see the action of the players struggling to get the puck on the other side. I was loving every moment and rooting for the Kings to make another goal.

The Kings fought their way through, but eventually, Nashville scored. Until the second intermission, both teams put their best into scoring and defending their goal. The LA Kings and Nashville were neck to neck trying to score on each other. Right before the second intermission, Nashville scored again. The Kings fans were cheering and rooting for their team to pick it up again and score, which would tie up the points. During the second intermission, everyone was still holding on and cheering for their team.

In the end, Nashville did win, but it was not all bad for my first hockey game. Even though the team I was rooting for didn't win, I still had a lot of fun and exciting memories there. Hockey is a really fun and enjoyable sport to watch. It is unlike other sports and will make you very competitive with your team. Seeing how this unique sport works really got me interested even more.

Student Reporter

It's Been a Long Time Coming But ...



Alison Hwang
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A mirrorball, a gold rush, a bejeweled superstar, and I sat electrified in Sofi Stadium in Los Angeles, alongside 70,000 other personified Swift songs and inside jokes. It's been six months since we first clutched our Willy Wonka Golden Eras Tour tickets—six months of watching countless TikTok clips from this very tour to try to live it before it was here. Six months of devastating FaceTimes with my Swifties every weekend to predict which two surprise songs she would play from her song vault and never sing again. One weekend, I cried because she played my all-time favorite song, "Daylight," in Minneapolis, which meant she would not sing it for me. I awoke to gazillions of texts from my friends, who all wanted to know how I was handling it.

This is the kind of love Taylor Swift inspires. In a world where God has less of a public presence, we have replaced Him with Her—the icon we so adore and admire. Does she deserve it? Taylor performed 44 songs without taking a



Friendship bracelets: made, exchanged, and worn outside of Sofi Stadium before seeing Taylor Swift.
[Source: Author, Alison Hwang]

break. The Eras Tour was a journey down Memory Lane for us as Taylor performed songs from nine of her ten eras. Each "era" represents an album she has released, and each album embodies an important theme. From the media's harsh criticism to revenge, hope, love, and resilience, Taylor has constantly been producing music that enchants her listeners. The fact that a 33-year-old can have ten eras is in itself amazing. Most 33-year-olds are



Taylor Swift singing "The Archer" during her Lover Era set.
[Source: Author, Alison Hwang]

just trying to figure out life.

I love that Taylor turns misfortune into luck. The fact that 13 is her favorite number is a symbol of how Taylor does not let the way other people think dictate her actions. Swift was born on the 13th. She turned 13 on Friday the 13th. And, as we sat electrified, a giant clock bloomed into existence to count down 13 seconds to Taylor's apparating like a magical goddess coming into our lives.

13, 12, 11...
I can't believe I am finally going to see Her in the flesh.
10, 9, 8...
Am I dreaming?
7, 6, 5...
I think my soul is stepping into an alternate universe.
4, 3, 2, 1...
"It's been a long time coming but... it's you and me—that's my whole world!"

Taylor blooms from giant silk petals like a modern Botticelli muse. As I scream the lyrics I so love, I feel myself ensconced in a private world with just me and Taylor. Throughout the three hours given, we make sure our eyes capture every moment—the stage, the props, the dancers, and Taylor.

Perhaps this is Taylor's magic—that her lyrics, her presence, and her empathy make each fan feel like each song is just for her. As each song swells, I feel myself transported and understood.

For us, it's the Second Coming.

Student Reporter

The Secrets of Persistent Workouts and Resolutions



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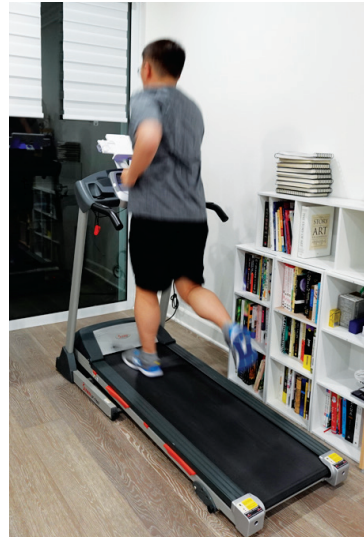
Exercising, despite its obvious benefits to your health, proves to be quite burdensome and tiring. Most people seem to have a habit of creating a New Year's resolution to exercise more, then end up completely abandoning this goal a week later. But why is it that athletes can take on this tiresome routine so consistently? Some even run during rain or a storm, and nothing seems to prevent them from going to the gym or running outside. Other than the possibility of them being extremely determined, your good friend dopamine seems to play a part in this. Wait, what? How does this chemical play a role in motivating people?

Most may think that dopamine is just a chemical that is released when you involve yourself in pleasurable experiences, like playing video games or eating food. However, some may also be aware that af-

ter getting this spike in dopamine, once this effect wears off, you fall into a state of seeming depression. Why, though? According to Anna Lembke, a professor of psychiatry at Stanford University, in the book "Dopamine Nation: Finding Balance in the Age of Indulgence," your brain tries its best to remain in an equilibrium of dopamine levels, balancing pain and pleasure to make sure you are not plunged into an abnormally long state of pleasure, nor pain.

Unfortunately, to make sure you are not in this state of eternal euphoria is to inflict a sort of "pain" or "depression," and most times, this pain and/or depression last longer than the chemical dopamine remains in your brain, which explains the gloomy mornings after an intense party. Returning to the discussion of the determination athletes possess, in

the same book, Anna also elaborates how the brain's attempts at maintaining internal constancy can also bring you dopamine. By giving your body some sort of pain, be it an extremely cold shower or a tiring workout, your brain will try to balance this pain and aid in an influx of dopamine levels. Your body tries to make you feel a little better from this pain, so what's the big deal? It is also important to know that any activity that "feels good" or releases dopamine has the potential to be addictive, and it just so happens that this tiresome workout convinces your body to release dopamine by itself. Hence, many athletes get hooked on this dopamine-releasing, initially tiring activity, and it becomes one of their allies to their consistent workout routes. The effort needed to try out new things is vast, but if one were to persevere, not only will you be able to adapt it



Me running on a treadmill, which helps me to get my dopamine fix.
[Source: Minjoon Choi]

mentally, but your own body will hook you on this normally detrimental enemy that is turned into a valuable tool. Ultimately, the key takeaway is to have hope and faith in exercise or any difficult work, as your body itself will try its best to adapt and aid you in your journey.