

Editors Column

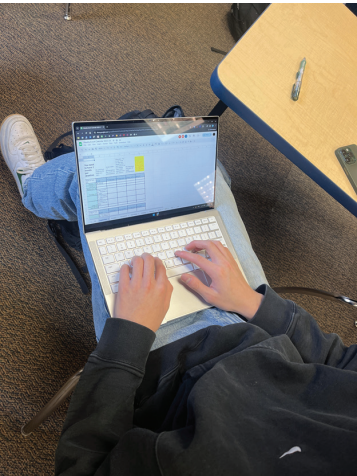
Finals Week Study Techniques: Sometimes New Things Work Better



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Grade 11  
Lake Oswego High School

In Portland, Oregon, finals week just happened, which put an end to semester one. This year, as a junior in high school, things were pretty rough leading up to grading day and report cards. I went into the week afraid of what my grades would be and stressed out with all of my classes, but I left the week with some realizations about myself and what study habits work best for me.

There are so many methods for studying that my friends and I have all tried, but something unique about school is that each person has their own methods of studying that work best for them. For my friend Anna Kim, “studying with friends works best for me. I like keeping each other accountable.” For me, on the other hand, studying with friends tempts me to start talking to them, leading to getting updates



Utilizing time to study during lunch is something that sophomore Noah Yutan does to help keep up with his classes. [Source: Ansley Kang]

on life instead of actually studying. I love my friends so much, but I decided that it’s best to stay by myself when I’m studying for important tests. The conversations can come later when I’m done.

I have a few tips and tricks for studying successfully. Some might resonate with you more than others, but trying new things isn’t always a bad idea. Speaking about trying new things, the way I studied during finals week was completely new from anything that I have ever tried before. First off, I made sure that my space was clean and comfortable. My chair before wasn’t the best to sit in, so I decided to put a cushion down to make something even as simple as sitting down comfortable and enjoyable. Having a clean desk with minimal distractions was also huge in helping me stay focused. There are simple things, like putting your phone somewhere else, but even something as little as putting another lamp by your desk can help you focus more on what work needs to be done in front of you.

I also tried out the Pomodoro study timer method, which was helpful in managing my time. I do 50 minutes with a 5-minute break, and when I’m on the clock, it feels like I get more done. I would recommend putting the timer somewhere else in your room so that you’re not tempted to constantly look at how much time there is left. You would be surprised how fast time moves when it’s not the focus. Counting the seconds won’t make them go faster!

A successful finals week has more than just studying. Ensure you’re taking breaks, staying active, drinking water, and, most importantly, getting enough sleep. Studying is useless if you’re going to fall asleep during a test. Make sure to take care of yourself while preparing, and treat yourself to a celebration when it’s all over.

Student Reporter

Accessing High School Experiences: The Role of Admission Interviews



Christine Baek  
Grade 10  
Western Reserve Academy

Admission Office—Stepping through the threshold of opportunities, high school applicants often face a pivotal moment in their application: the admission interview. Like a key fitting in a lock, this last step of the application process can potentially unlock the door to various academic opportunities and a desired high school experience.

At Western Reserve Academy, admission interviews are more than just a formality; they are the windows through which each applicant’s essence can be seen: their character, merit, and aspirations.

As one of the primary factors in high school admissions, interviews have always been a key determinant in the process, consistently serving as a source of stress among students. The pressure of presenting the best of yourself in less than 20 minutes can be quite a nerve-racking experience.

However, there is no need to worry too much about it.



Western Reserve Academy students find that although the interviewing process may seem intimidating, if they are just themselves, it won’t be that bad. [Source: Author, Christine Baek]

Mrs. Wingard, Associate Director of Admission, said, “For the most part, we try to make it a conversation.” The goal of interviews is to build relationships with the students and get a holistic view of them individually. We want students to feel comfortable sharing or asking any questions,” she added.

According to Mrs. Wingard, one thing to keep in mind is that high school interviews and college interviews are different. “It’s okay and natural to feel nervous,” she said. She mentioned that she understands that the students she is interviewing are only emerging adolescents in eighth grade, and she keeps that in mind. “I genuinely want to get to know who they are,” she said.

Delving deeper into the interview process, Mrs. Wingard outlined three important areas of inquiry during an interview: past school experience, extracurricular experiences, and personal inquiries.

To picture a student’s experience in school, interviewers often ask about their experience in their past school’s favorite and least favorite classes, as well as the methods they used to handle their rigorous class schedules. She seeks to understand how they navigate challenges and their academic passions, as well as assess if they

are suitable for the curriculum at WRA. She also asks specific questions about reading, like favorite books and interest in reading, as many classes at WRA require reading.

Regarding outside-of-school activities, she seeks to hear how students spend their free time and their passions. She also delves into any experience related to their areas of interest, seeking both their commitment and the potential need for support from WRA in these pursuits. Volunteer experiences are also often asked, portraying a student’s commitment to community engagement.

Lastly, personal inquiries aim to understand the individual behind the application. Questions about how their friends would describe them and family relationships are common, providing insight into their personality and student life.

Mrs. Wingard ends with a piece of advice for future students, saying, “It’s a cliché, but just be yourself.”

Student Reporter

The Art of Soy Candle Making



Rianne Paek  
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Walter Reed Middle School

Over the last few years, there is no doubt that many people have converted and shifted towards using more eco-friendly and self-conscious methods of living and consuming. One of the items that got a noticeable amount of attention was soy candles, which are a much better alternative to the most commonly used wax, paraffin. Crafted from soybean oil, soy candles are considered much healthier, long-lasting, and sustainable, which is why I was glad to be able to experience the making of the candles myself.

Firstly, you need to understand how the soy wax is produced. The first of this multi-step process is to cultivate soybeans, which is an agricultural crop typically harvested in pods that turn yellow/brown. After these beans are harvested at the farms, they undergo extracting, cleaning, dehulling, and crushing to extract the oil. The oil will then go through a process of hydrogenation. This is an optional

yet notable step, which includes altering the molecular structure so that it can turn into a more solid state at room temperature by introducing hydrogen molecules when using catalysts like nickel. After this chemical transformation, the unsaturated fats will have turned saturated, making the oil more solid and stable. Based on the process of hydrogenation, the final characteristics of the wax will vary, such as the melting point, texture, and consistency.

Soy candles not only assure that you will be healthy but are also extremely fun to make. The process involves melting soy wax, adding fragrance, coloring it (optional), and adding it to a mold to top later or pour. With the help of a thermometer to measure the temperature, you can also be sure that candle-making is a safe activity where you won’t be at the risk of burning yourself because you do not have to work with wax while it is in its fully melted form. In my case,



The wide arrangement of the wax decorations made the activity of candle-making much more fun and allowed me to be creative while also learning how to be attentive and cautious. [Source: Author, Rianne Paek]

the teacher I was working with gave us full creative freedom, allowing me and my friends to add a variety of molds and flowers (which should be removed later due to fire hazards) and countless scents and colors. This sense of personalization adds a layer of uniqueness to the individual candles you are making, turning them into not just a commodity but also a reflection of your taste and creativity.

Soy candles emerge as a superior choice for those seeking a healthier,

more sustainable option that goes beyond environmental considerations. The unique experience of creating soy candles adds a personalized touch to their appeal, making them not only a practical choice but also an engaging and fulfilling activity. From their renewable source and cleaner burn to their contribution to sustainable agriculture and the joy of personalization, soy candles are one of the prime examples of environmentally conscious living.

Student Reporter

Festival of Human Abilities and UDLA



Aidan Bang  
Grade 11  
John Marshall  
High School



A portion of the members of UDLA who attend the Festival of Human Abilities at the Aquarium of the Pacific [Source: Jina Kim]

The Aquarium of the Pacific is a wonderful setting for dates, hang-outs, field trips, and taking breaks. On January 27, 2024, the Aquarium of the Pacific hosted its 21st annual Festival of Human Abilities. This special Saturday was one that all members of UDLA would remember.

For a while now, the volunteer organization of UDLA (Unification of Disabled Latin

Americans) has celebrated with the Aquarium of the Pacific every time they held their Festival of Human Abilities, and this visit marked my second participation in the festival. Both times, we enjoyed the festival and the aquarium to the fullest. Not only was it a trip to the aquarium, but it was one to tour the achievements of the disabled community.

As a volunteer organiza-

tion, UDLA usually hosts cleanup events, recycling events, and events that bring the community of Koreatown together. This particular event is different, however, as it is a festival to celebrate human abilities. At the aquarium, there are dances, songs, and art pieces that are all presented by those with disabilities. This allows the community to take note of these wonderful achievements and enjoy their time while appreciating these wonderful people. It was almost like a reward for the members of UDLA, as we were all able to relax and enjoy this visit through different music, visual arts, and other works presented by the disabled artists. Brian Jeon, a 10th grader who is a regular member of UDLA, had gone to this festival for the first time. He had joined the organization during the summer of 2023, and he had quite the words to say about this event. He stated, "I had a great time at the festival. The last time I went on a trip to the Aquarium of the Pacific was in elementary school, and I

didn't know that coming back to the aquarium would be this interesting. It was almost like a reward for the hard work all of us have put into this organization."

Not only were members of UDLA able to observe the variety of arts during this event, but we were able to bond with each other as well. It was not mandatory for us to stay in one place during our visit, so many of the members went off to do their own things with their peers. Observing all these aquatic animals and celebrating the achievements of the disabled alongside each other was a crucial experience for strengthening connections and coming together. This event was not only limited to UDLA, however, as any person could come and enjoy the festival. Hopefully, reading this will not only encourage you to visit the aquarium in the future but also to look more into UDLA and how you can become part of it.

Student Reporter

What's the Fuss About Physical Copies of Music?



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Grade 11  
Orange County School of the Arts

Over the past couple of years, I and plenty of others have noticed the rise in popularity of physical copies of our favorite artists' albums, EPs, and even singles. From vinyl to cassette tapes and CDs, they have seen an unprecedented rise since their glory days in the 50s through the early 2000s. Although there are many reasons for their rise in popularity, such as the desire for a better sound quality listening experience or simply nostalgia for the medium, in my opinion, the most common reasons are due to their design/artwork and collectibility/value.

The first and arguably most important factor in their new popularity has to be the design and artwork of the physical releases. Many people nowadays extend the value of albums, EPs, and singles from artistically layered pieces of sound to the significance of their covers as separate pieces of art that



My personal physical music collection and all the players for said collection. [Source: Author, Sain Kim]

help complement the whole experience of listening to an album. Due to this, consumers actively desire to show off their favorite artists' albums and works physically like they would any other paintings, photos, or drawings. Not only are the covers important, but so are the actual vinyl and cassette.

Unlike how these items would all look relatively the same in the past, sporting a plain black vinyl or gray cassette with branding all over it, vinyl and cassettes have evolved to colored pressings and unique designs tailored to the album or EP they are recorded with. Apart from the fact these special colors and designs look so much more distinctive than the plain black that is normally used, they also add a sense of anticipation when opening up a new vinyl or cassette, as the pictures seen online aren't usually a perfect representation of the colors seen in person, unlike the covers usually are.

The second reason for their increase in sales is the large emergence of limited-run retailer-exclusive colorways. All these factors eventually cultivated a certain niche of consumers whose main objectives were to collect, hoard, or resell many physical copies of

music. For example, when Olivia Rodrigo dropped her debut album Sour, there were about four original pressings for the singular album, all with different colors. Fast forward to now, there are over 12 different pressings, all spread across many retailers such as Urban Outfitters, Target, and Walmart, containing different cover art and special "limited" colors. Although "limited" is usually used just as a buzzword, when they are truly limited, consumers go head over heels for them as most of them truly love the artist. However, very few are only purchasing them to resell at unreasonable prices.

I, as well as some of my friends, have a music collection containing cassettes, CDs, and vinyl records. They are something fun to collect as well as listen to, and I encourage you, if you haven't already, to check out some of these popular forms of music soon!

Student Reporter

AP Arms Race: Students Pushed to Brink for Top Colleges



Claire Lee  
Grade 10  
La Canada High School

In pursuing academic perfection, students find themselves in a race full of obstacles on the way to success.

All high school students are familiar with the academic stress that accompanies their everyday school lives. However, that stress is only mounted with the greater burden of AP classes that many are either obliged or choose to take in search of their interests and potential careers. Though college may seem far into the future for some students, it lies close ahead. As pressure from expectations and desires to be accepted to top colleges intensify throughout high school, students constantly seek to achieve all they can, whether that be through an abundance of AP classes or other academic activities. Whether students aspire to be at the top of their classes or solely wish to prepare for the challenges they may face in college, all, or at least the vast majority, seek to reach the same destination—a higher education.

Over the first two months of 2024,

The schedule for AP information sessions is stapled onto the walls of several classrooms. [Source: Author, Claire Lee]

La Canada High School held several AP information sessions where students could gain insight into certain AP classes they may be interested in taking next year. I attended a few of these and learned more about what to expect if I took these classes. It helped me plan out my year, particularly about the workload and the time and stress management skills I would have to develop.

The classrooms of each session I attended were nearly full, lacking chairs for the immense number of people who were willing to learn more about content for AP Biology, Chemistry, Lan-

guage, etc., subjects that once seemed greatly out of my range.

The toll these advanced classes have upon the mental health of students should not be undermined; the demanding burden requires a lot of attention and motivation, two of the many necessary skills to succeed in high school and college. A sophomore at La Canada High School, Dana Rhee, says that "many students take AP classes for college credit, to buffer their resumes, and to be on the same level as their peers and [often] not out of personal interest, which can

make them feel burnout/pressure from the rigorous workload." In my freshman year, I took one AP course; this year, the number has increased to two. In my personal experience, the workload and pressure were greater than those of average classes. In the next two years of junior and senior year, the number will have reached the tens, with the difficulty only rising and the stress of preparing for AP examinations overburdening students. As the years pass and classes get progressively more difficult and time-consuming, many students, like myself, lose time for their personal and social lives, having to center their focus on education.

Even though the journey through high school may be full of unexpected challenges, it ultimately brings students to a common goal and a firm sense of determination. Desire to prove their academic capability by taking AP classes and the passion for being accepted to prestigious colleges are shared among many, if not all, students in high school.