

Editors Column

Is It Possible to Pursue Hobbies As A Student?



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If you find yourself overwhelmed or getting burned out during the end of the school season, allow some time for a hobby. [Source: Pexels Stock Image]

For many students nationwide, the last few months of school can only mean one thing: summer break is almost here! But, along with summer break, another major event looms nearby – AP and finals season. With the pressure of AP exams and finals approaching, students begin to feel the pressure intensify as the days pass. Although it is important

to weave in time for hobbies and self-care, especially more so during stressful seasons, it's often difficult for students to find time to incorporate self-care and stick to a disciplined routine with that hobby. The greatest obstacle in engaging in hobbies as a student can also be not knowing where to start and how long and often one should devote their time to it.

As a sophomore in high school, I've had a wild journey with hobbies and self-care. At one point, I didn't think that I deserved a hobby or should allocate time for myself to do something I liked, mainly because I felt like I wasn't being productive if I wasn't actively studying or doing something academic. I had avoided confronting my issue of frequent burnout, which I noticed I felt often at test-heavy parts of the year, only with a poorly justified reason that I had come up with on my own: "I'm sure everyone feels this way. Why should I receive special treatment so my life feels

easier?" My thought processes soon became a feedback loop, with one negative thought leading to another and another. I kept thinking, "Surely, there has to be a way successful students could have a social life and amazing grades."

I was right. Although there isn't one exact solution that everyone can follow, the answer to that common question lies in what I had thought of as "special treatment," as mentioned above. Allowing yourself a set portion of time to do something you enjoy outside of the things you have to do as a student truly is the best form of self-care. And no, just because you're allowing yourself to relax, away from the pressures of school, isn't "special treatment." I've found that incorporating a hobby system into my lifestyle helps me get through the week and provides me with something to look forward to.

It is possible to pursue hobbies as a student, but there are a few

things to consider, including the duration, frequency, and effects of said hobby. First, consider the things you often tell yourself, "I would love to try that someday," and write them down, ranking them from least to most time and energy-consuming. As a student, you don't want to be spending all of your time doing this one thing just because "Self-care is necessary!" It is necessary, but the most essential thing to ask yourself is, "When I'm doing this activity, will I feel completely stress-free, or will I feel as if I am wasting time that I could be using to study?" If your answer isn't yes to the first half of that question, it may be easier to start engaging in a less time-consuming hobby from that list you wrote down. I've realized that the goal of partaking in hobbies as a student is not only to have fun but also to become comfortable with allowing yourself to relax, away from academics. So, if any of this sounds like you, I recommend giving it a shot!

Student Reporter

The Science Behind a Perfect Apology



Chloe Je
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A challenge that we, as humans, face on a day-to-day basis is apologizing to others. Whether it's for a small mistake or a large argument, saying a sincere 'sorry' can be the hardest thing to do. Why does it seem so difficult to apologize, and what can you do to create a good one?

Many people seem to have a hard time in general creating a good apology. This counts on the fact that we are social creatures and care about others' opinions. When we find ourselves in a position where we are at fault, usually our immediate reaction is to defend ourselves. We try to protect this good image we have built for the other person, and admitting fault can feel like you're tarnishing it. We often want to defend ourselves and disassociate from the problem. By doubling down, it can feel



Saying sorry is easy but creating a good and sincere apology is a whole other story. [Source: Author, Chloe Je]

like we are avoiding the possible shame that could follow.

Another thing is that we may be nervous about the outcome, especially if there is someone we care about involved. The possibility of punishment, embarrassment, or even just disappointing the other person can deter one from giving an apology. In these scenarios,

you have to remember that apologizing may not be easy, but it is the correct thing to do. However, even if you do apologize, you have to craft an appropriate apology, as just the words "I'm sorry" don't always address the whole situation.

The science of creating a perfect apology is not a single phrase or a certain sentence structure. Often, it is based on intuition and can change depending on the situation, the amount of harm done, and the person you are speaking to. Though there are many variables, thankfully, there are a couple of common threads between good apologies and bad ones.

The main point in apologizing is to address what you did wrong. This can often also be the hardest thing as it directly puts you under the spotlight. However, admitting your mistake can help the other

person see that you understand the harm you have inflicted upon them. Another thing is not to defend yourself. By adding words like "but" and "although" it can change the conversation from an apology to just a defense. This is not recommended, as the apology now is directed at you when it should be addressing the victim. The last thing is the offer of repair. After addressing what you did wrong, you can now make amends and create plans to make sure you never hurt the person in such a way again.

Yes, it may be hard to admit your fault at times, but apologizing is a key part of maintaining a healthy relationship with your friends, family, and other acquaintances. Nobody is perfect, and mistakes always happen, but the important thing is to own up to your faults and make amends.

Student Reporter

Songdo, South Korea: Lessons in Sustainable Urban Planning



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Today, half of the world's population—just over four billion people—live in urban areas. By 2050, the United Nations estimates that this percentage will grow to 68%. This means that in the next twenty years, urban areas will have to expand to accommodate an additional 2.5 billion people. Constructed correctly, tomorrow's cities will be economically, ecologically, and culturally rich places in which to live. Constructed incorrectly, cities will quickly become polluted, overpopulated, and run down.

Songdo, South Korea—a 20-square-mile planned city on the Incheon waterfront—may hold several answers to achieving sustainable urban development. Its success in preserving the environment, providing affordable housing for residents, growing a vibrant local economy, and integrating AI and sensors to adapt to each day's infrastructural needs should inspire similar growth in countries around the world.

One of Songdo's foremost successes comes in its sustainable

practices or policies that help nature to continue to thrive in the urban setting. Songdo is nearly carbon-neutral, meaning that it produces almost none of the harmful CO₂ gases that contribute to global warming, while also having the highest concentration of LEED-certified (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) buildings in the world. Its apartments also deal with trash uniquely, using a system of pipes to connect homes to a central waste disposal center without the need for wasteful trucks or gas-producing landfills. For these accomplishments, Songdo was selected in 2012 to become the permanent base of the United Nations Green Climate Fund, a branch of the UN that lends money to developing nations to encourage climate change adaptation and mitigation. Songdo's very existence on reclaimed lands also gives hope to nations like Indonesia, whose urban centers are at increasing risk of flooding from rising sea levels.

Songdo has also experienced large economic growth, particularly in its influx of foreign invest-

ment enabled by its closeness to the Port of Incheon. Home to the first American-based international high school in South Korea and the first international college, Songdo has encouraged its increasing globalization, acting as a kind of "bridge" between experience abroad and in Korea. What's more, Songdo's centrally-planned design has enabled its construction of fairly low-cost housing in its central business district, bringing entrepreneurs directly to the city square. In this way, Songdo's integration of housing and market spaces—a design called "mixed-use planning"—previews a future of economically accessible cities.

Finally, Songdo has integrated AI and sensors throughout the city to most efficiently manage the city's developed infrastructure. Thousands of data points on traffic, water, waste, and electricity systems inform the city's "brain," which autonomously makes decisions to maximize resources. Homes through "New Songdo," around Songdo's Central Park, even integrate smartphone apps so home-



"Smart" high-rise buildings surround Songdo's Central Park. [Source: Daniel Robson]

owners can control their lights, air-conditioning, and waste through the touch of a finger. This technologically geared design brings additional growth to Songdo's economy, drawing tech professionals and researchers, such as at Samsung's Songdo base, to the area.

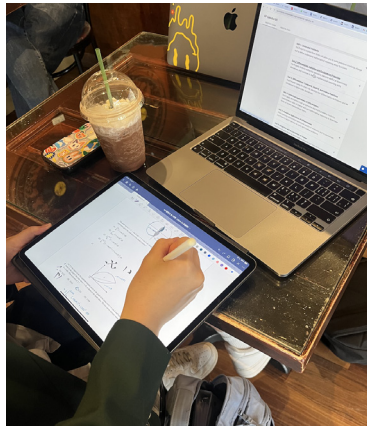
As urban areas continue to expand around the world, they should turn to Songdo as an example of responsible urban growth. Via ecological awareness, mixed-use planning, and centrally-planned, adaptive technology, tomorrow's cities can allow their citizens to prosper.

Student Reporter

Preparing for AP Exams sans AP Courses



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Even though they are not taking AP classes, students prepare for their AP exams at local cafes.

[Source: Author, Christine Baek]

May arrives with bursts of colors and flowery scents in that fine line between spring and summer. Amidst the anticipation of sunny days and the upcoming summer break, there's one more thing May brings: AP exams.

Advanced Placement exams (AP) are standardized assessments designed by the College Board to evaluate students' proficiency in advanced materials covered throughout the year. Offering the opportunity to earn college credits and delve into college-level material, AP exams hold considerable value for high school students. Thus, most high schools integrate AP classes into their curriculum to prepare their students for these exams. My school is one of the few that does not do this.

Because of this, when I mention my preparations for AP exams to friends, their responses vary. Some even question, why even take the AP exam? Others urge me to enjoy life beyond academics. Meanwhile, some relate to my struggles, regretting their deci-

sion to sign up for the exams.

Unlike many other schools, Western Reserve Academy, WRA, opts for College-Level (CL) courses in place of AP courses. This provides teachers with flexibility in exploring diverse subjects more in-depth and taking different teaching approaches; WRA seeks to foster an environment away from "teaching for the test."

Even with the emphasis on CL courses, AP exams remain popular among the student body. Jessica Wu, class of 2026, a student preparing for AP Calculus BC and AP Physics 1, said, "I think AP exams definitely have long-term benefits in receiving college credits, and it also adds to my resume." As such, some view AP exams as an addition to the CL courses and a pathway to enhance their resume.

On the other hand, individuals like Andrea Zhang, class of 2026, a student preparing for AP Economics and Mandarin, express discontent with the status quo. "It's ironic - I feel that I am forced to take the AP exams. Although the CL courses intend to divert students' attention from standardized results to deeper understandings of course materials, societal stigmas pressure students into printing fives all over their resumes."

Despite the absence of official AP preparation courses, students at WRA continue to demonstrate their determination in preparing for these exams. Though there is controversy surrounding the AP exams and CL courses, this reflects on students' commitment to academic excellence and growth.

Student Reporter

Human Impacts Cause Polarization of Weather



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Human-led activities have resulted in worldwide climate change and an ultimate transformation of the Earth at a surprising rate. One of the most significant consequences is the polarization of two weather conditions, Summer and Winter seasons, resulting from various climate change impacts. This article will analyze the reason and the background behind polarized weather conditions and how they will affect the environment.

As a result of climate change, summer weather conditions are becoming more intense, as with the high frequency of hot weather. Due to pollution from human-led activities, global warming has led to the intense change of summer. The recent highest temperature in the world was approximately 48 degrees Celsius, which has increased significantly over the past 10 years. Long exposure to this



Polarizing weather conditions are being seen due to human-caused impacts on Earth.

[Source: Getty Images]

type of summer heat can result in detrimental health effects; humans and all living species have to be aware of burns and dehydration. Furthermore, rising temperatures also contribute to the increase in droughts and wildfires that will negatively affect the economy and geographic well-being of the environment. Moreover, the polarized summer weather will also result in changes to the overall production of precipitation. Some locations, depending on the country, might experience more fre-

quent and intense rainfall events, leading to flooding-related weather catastrophes. In contrast, other regions will face a long period of drought, impacting agriculture, water availability, and ecosystems.

Climate change is also polarizing upon winter weather conditions, with significant implications for cold regions. Rising temperatures due to global warming have led to less severe winter weather, resulting in reduced snowfall and melting glaciers from the poles. This has severe consequences for the environment and also living species that heavily rely on cold temperatures, such as polar bear habitats and alpine regions. It will eventually destroy almost all the natural cycles of plants and animals, affecting their survival and forcing migration. Additionally, the decrease in snowfall will ultimately affect extracting water resources, as

snow can act as a natural resource as it can release water during the warmer months. Similar to the summer weather conditions, reduced snowfall will impact water availability for agriculture, human consumption, and hydro-power generation. The polarization of winter also leads to changes in weather patterns. Extreme winter weather events, such as heavy snowstorms and blizzards, can occur as a consequence of increased moisture in the atmosphere due to warmer temperatures.

The polarization of summer and winter globally, due to climate change, presents significant challenges for the Earth to handle. Adapting to and resolving these consequences is important for a sustainable future. Efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and pollutants are vital in addressing the consequences of these polarized weather conditions.

Student Reporter

The Elusive Cloak of Tuberculosis



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Tuberculosis, the White Plague, or that one disease that writers and painters seem to catch throughout history, has taken itself as this oddly elusive issue that is passed off as just another deadly disease that an unlucky few experience. However, tuberculosis has persisted throughout humans for longer than most can imagine.

Tuberculosis belongs to the genus of Mycobacterium, with some of its distant relatives being another deadly disease, leprosy. Unlike most, around three-fourths of all known diseases that have come when domestication of animals began, tuberculosis appears to have instead come from a mycobacterium ancestor by the name of M. africanum. At first, tuberculosis was indeed speculated, with reasonable evidence, to have come from Mycobacterium Bovis, or M. bovis, a pathogen that mainly infects cows and is then transmitted to humans through consumption of their milk or meat, or when the cows cough out the bacteria, making it completely plausible in

a typical farming environment for M. Bovis, somewhere, to have taken advantage of the oxygen-abundant lungs of humans and adapt to become M. tuberculosis. This, however, a recent study reveals to not necessarily be the case, as the mycobacterium appears to have branched off of M. africanum as stated before, and is actually an older descendant than M. bovis. This means that although M. tuberculosis existed with humans for around 20,000-30,000 years ago, this type of lung-related disease has existed with us for far longer than scientists previously estimated.

How exactly, does this practically ancient pathogen infect us? Well, most might know, as I have stated earlier, that M. tuberculosis is generally associated with lung-related complications/illnesses. While this is true in most cases, tuberculosis is actually not that simple and narrow of a pathogen that only occurs in one's lungs. In fact, the mycobacterium actually can occur in other body parts such as the spine, kidney, or brain, and

when inside the human body, has a relatively high chance of being inactive. Most Mycobacterium tuberculosis that enters the human body is actually completely inactive for a nearly indefinite amount of time, meaning that a surprising amount of those infected will not show any symptoms of tuberculosis until the day that they die, which is approximately 90-95% of those infected. Many cases of tuberculosis are completely inactive, or being wiped out by your immune system even if they do try to proliferate, which may make tuberculosis a bit less threatening than people have made it up to be. However, tuberculosis, unlike most severely deadly or crippling diseases, is a type of air-borne disease and thrives in humid areas and comparably immunocompromised victims, which coincidentally happens to be the lifestyle of artists or writers throughout history. In the present, however, those such as the homeless, elderly, and immunocompromising AIDS/HIV victims, fall prey to this opportunity-taking patho-



Tuberculosis is a deadly disease that can be life-threatening, especially to those with compromised immune systems or in certain humid areas.

[Source: Getty Images]

gen, and although the developed hygienes and medicines of most societies can combat this pathogen and prevent it from causing the above symptoms, in countries where developed anti-biotics and hygiene are unfortunately not around, such as North Korea, people are basically helpless to this mycobacterial outbreak.

Despite the technological advancements that have made us stand our very own ground against pathogenic diseases, alongside many life-threatening illnesses, tuberculosis is a rather deadly reminder that these diseases are not to be underestimated and can strike at any moment.