

## Student Reporter



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## School Lunches in America Vs. Other Countries



A typical school lunch shows the struggles of cafeteria menus in American schools. [Source: Author, Erin Lee]

Imagine walking into a school cafeteria with the same old menu of fries, pizza, chicken nuggets, hamburgers, hard fruits and vegetables, and endless amounts of processed foods. Well, that's what most schools in America are currently feeding their students. American school lunches are often seen as lacking in nutrients and being overly processed, putting their students at high health risk. Is it a matter of cost, convenience, or cultural priorities for this quality of school lunches?

America, a country known as the "melting pot" containing various cultures and, therefore, foods, has seemed to struggle with serving healthy and nutritional lunches for its students. Compared to many school lunches in other parts of the world, the quality of the school meals in America often reflects the country's attitude towards food, showing how it is viewed and prioritized even in schools. According to Education Data, America spends nearly

\$13.3 billion annually on its "National School Lunch Program." This suggests that the issue with school lunches isn't just mainly about the cost but also the priorities of American schools.

Hamburgers, pizza, fries, and smoothies—these are foods typically labeled as "American foods," making them common in American schools. This cultural influence leads to unhealthy food options for students. In contrast, South Koreans generally emphasize the importance of eating a healthy and balanced meal. A typical dinner would consist of loads of healthy side dishes and a nourishing soup. This affects what is served in Korean schools, as there is already a high standard of providing fresh, hot meals every day with healthy side dishes. These differences in cultures, and therefore school lunches, impact the student's health and dietary habits.

School lunches in America are

time efficient, meaning they are designed to save time and money by using ready-to-make packaged and frozen foods. This helps American school districts save more on labor due to how easily these lunches are made. However, this efficiency comes at a cost: the quality of the food may suffer. Although other countries such as Japan, France, and South Korea tend to require lots of labor, the food quality tends to be more freshly made and cooked.

The state of school lunches in America reflects not only the economy but mainly the cultural attitudes toward food. Despite lots of funding for America's school lunch program, processed and unhealthy options suggest different priorities. This differs from countries like South Korea, where a cultural focus on balanced and nutritious meals leads to cooked and fresh lunches and a variety of student side dishes. Therefore, the main reason American schools serve what they do is heavily influenced by that country's food culture.

## Student Reporter



**James Lim**  
Grade 11  
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## Not Much To Do This Summer? Go For A Run!

Seen as a chore by many and exhilarating by a few, running seems to be one of those activities that you either hate or love. However, it seems to have a cult-like following among those who enjoy this hobby, which begs the question: why are so many people getting swept up by the running bug?

For one, running is great for long-term health and longevity. It promotes cardiovascular efficiency, aerobic capacity, mental health, and muscular endurance. In an era so deeply embedded in the stationary society, it is more likely that the average American sits and lays down longer than they walk or run. Stress from school, work, and other areas of life also easily pile up, leaving us distraught. However, running is an outlet to alleviate these burdens and take a mental break.



It doesn't take a lot to step outside and take a run! All that's required is a pair of shoes and shorts and a good spirit! [Source: Author, James Lim]

Additionally, running is a gratifying pastime. Aside from the physically rewarding aspects, there is a sense of accomplishment at the end of every run, and even more so for events like marathons and 10Ks. Progress is always apparent with adequate effort, and it's always satisfying to see growth.

There are also a plethora of external motivations to keep you pushing through to reach your goals. Running can indeed be strenuous and chore-like at times. However, running with others is a great solution to these discouragements. It's known that you get further with like-minded people than you do alone, and running is no exception. By having a friend tag along, you can share accountability and stay committed. Additionally, apps like Strava allow for socializing and challenges. There is a dedicated area on Strava where the user can pick and choose which groups they would like to take part in. Within these groups, in-person events are organized, running activities from other members are displayed, and users can give kudos to those activities for added encouragement. Within the organized events, members can meet up for group runs and

a coffee and chat afterward; it's great for meeting new people and relieving accumulated tensions. Users are also able to join challenges where they strive to reach certain milages for a digital trophy. All in all, external motivations play a big role in keeping runners engaged and eager to reach their distance and moving time quotas.

This summer is an opportunity to delve into running. Sure, it can also be a time to kick back and relax, but there's no better haven than the one that provides mental, physical, and social benefits. Instead of clicking away at a keyboard or scrolling mindlessly on a screen all summer, pick up a pair of shoes and have a change of pace. Running may be the nostrum you've been searching for and is the threshold between the same-old same-old and an enhanced lifestyle.

## Student Reporter



**Justin Kim**  
Grade 10  
St. Mark's School of Texas

## Korean American Youth Artists of Texas

In a rapidly globalizing world, understanding and appreciating diverse cultures has never been more crucial. That ties into the mission statement of the Korean American Youth Artists of Texas, also known as KAYAT: preserving Korean traditions, connecting Korean American youth to Korean culture, and sharing the beauty of Korean culture through traditional and contemporary art forms. KAYAT actively celebrates the vibrant aspects of Korean culture in a homogenizing world. KAYAT President Savannah Chun provides valuable insight into the nonprofit, having served for more than 3 years. "As a founding member, I had the privilege of being involved since our establishment," she said. "KAYAT's mission to preserve traditional Korean heritage inspired me to lean into the Korean side of my Korean-American culture and value areas of my heritage that I often previously overlooked."

KAYAT engages with the community in a variety of ways, including community events, performances, free classes on traditional and modern Korean art forms, and

online activities such as blogs and posts about Korean culture or ongoing events. Members of KAYAT are given the opportunity to contribute outside of their locales as well. Savannah recalls a trip to Tulsa, Oklahoma, to perform and teach Korean adoptees at the Dillon International Heritage Camps. "There, we performed and taught traditional and modern Korean dances, games, and folktales to over 300 adoptees," she noted. "We enjoyed interacting with the campers, youth counselors, and their parents and teachers."

Organizing these cultural events, like those KAYAT participates in, can be incredibly rewarding. KAYAT members have the opportunity to learn a variety of traditional Korean art forms and grow closer to Korean culture. They are integrated into a group of friendly, hard-working youth dedicated to the KAYAT mission. "After learning art forms, we share them with our community by participating in heritage festivals, local school and library events, and larger symposiums such as the World Affairs Council event in collaboration with the Korea Founda-



A KAYAT member playing the guitar for seniors. [Source: Author, Justin Kim]

tion," Savannah said.

"In the future, we hope to expand our organization to include additional art forms," current KAYAT President Savannah Chun said. "Currently, KAYAT collaborates with our local communities by hosting Korean folk-tale storytimes and traditional painting, K-Pop, buchaechum (fan dance), talchum (mask dance), and traditional Korean drum lessons at local libraries, schools, and recreation centers. Moving forward, we hope, through various art forms, KAYAT can encourage cultural diversity, equity, and inclusion within the community."

KAYAT aims to leave a legacy of increased cultural awareness and strengthened connections in our community. "Our purpose is to preserve Korean traditions through art forms, to connect Korean American youth to Korean culture, and to advocate Korean culture to the community," Savannah stated. "In the near future, I plan to shift KAYAT towards a balance of traditional and modern Korean culture, preserving tradition while also embracing change."

In the distant future, once KAYAT members have mastered these arts, KAYAT will give back to the community through performances, free classes, and cultural events.

Student Reporter

## Harvard-Westlake's Multicultural Fair



**Erin Ryu**  
Grade 10  
Harvard-Westlake School



Asian Students in Action (ASiA) hosted a table full of traditional food and sweets at the Multicultural Fair. [Source: Harvard-Westlake]

One thing I've learned from attending high school is the fact that every student comes from a unique background and culture. Though attending a school that is predominantly white, Harvard-Westlake seeks ways to celebrate the different cultures at school. That's why when affinity groups in my school hosted their annual Multicultural Fair, I was excited to see numerous clubs sharing their food and culture with the student body.

Affinity groups in Harvard-Westlake are all part of the school's coalition, Student Leaders for Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity (SLIDE). Clubs that hosted booths included the Armenian Affinity Group, Asian Students in Action (ASiA), Black Leadership Awareness and Culture Club, Latin American Hispanic Student Organization (LAHSO), and the South Asian Student Association (SASA). Each booth was led by club leaders and shared food such as japchae from ASia, sa-

mosas and aloo gobi from SASA, and horchata from LAHSO. With loud music, a dance performance from students, and overall mirth throughout the campus, the school came alive in unity.

Harvard-Westlake Upper School Coordinator of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Mx. Limerick said the Multicultural Fair was an opportunity for SLIDE to highlight the various cultures at the school. "Through this annual event, SLIDE normalizes and celebrates proudly [by] sharing [culture] with peers through food, music, art, performance, games, and education, which can lead to a deeper understanding and respect of one another as multi-faceted humans with layered identities," Limerick explained.

Several club leaders also mentioned that they appreciated the opportunity the Multicultural Fair had given to the club. The student leader of the Middle Eastern Student Alliance (MESA) said the annual event allowed his club to present

positive aspects of Middle Eastern culture amid current tension in the region. "The fair is especially important to MESA due to the conflict and constant media attention the Middle East gets. By serving sweets, we can use the fair as a reminder of the amazing culture and food the Middle East has despite the turbulent times," he shared. It is evident that the fair not only allowed students to share information about their culture, but it also helped alleviate underrepresentation.

Walking around the school during the fair was extremely difficult at first because so many students were crowding around the booths, desperately trying to get a plate of whatever food was served. But, in retrospect, it was beautiful to see students coming together and bonding over each other's culture. In a matter of minutes, several booths had completely run out of food! The Multicultural Fair was a testament that no matter the background of an individual or the population size at school, they are seen.

Student Reporter

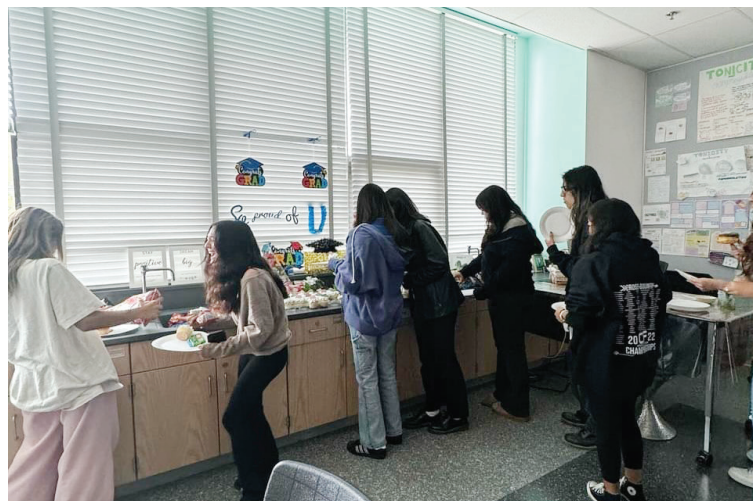
## Are We Finally Done Yet?



**Reanna Lee**  
Grade 9  
North Hollywood High School

The dreaded AP exam season is finally over, and summer is just around the corner. However, that also means finals are lurking nearby, and graduation is the last stage of the school year. The thought of having to say goodbye to senior friends is something that we will all be sentimental about, so let's especially cherish them for the remaining days.

With this being said, I now have one less class to worry about. As a freshman taking AP Biology, I was stressing over the AP exam while many of my classmates seemed surprisingly calm. Thankfully, my first AP was less difficult than I thought. Scattered sighs of relief could be heard when the exam proctor finally dismissed us. After exiting the building, I realized as I talked with a friend that all of these AP students, while not exactly very close with each other, are all alike with the pressure of



My AP Biology classmates are hanging out during the class party. [Source: Author, Reanna Lee]

getting their dream score. It was nice coming to know that we could all bond this way; it was a bit ironic considering the fact that we may see each other as competition for better scores.

The majority of my class is upperclassmen, which includes seniors. Only a handful were in my class,

but we underclassmen felt that it would be nice to do something for them before they graduate to fulfill their future plans. Thus, my teacher hosted a small party to celebrate their achievements. Each student had the option to bring a snack of their choice—there were cupcakes, donuts, chips, gummy bears, and more. It was an enjoy-

able experience, and it gave all students the chance to hang out and relax after months of studying for APs. Some of us, including myself, played games like Mafia and Liar as a group, and I felt that these activities have also made us grow closer throughout the semester as a class. Even our teacher was interactive with us—another thing that I enjoyed about it.

Although I am still a freshman, I have already found many good people around me. I know that I will definitely be having more AP classes to come, and while stressful at times, it is also quite fun when it comes to everyone involved. However, I also hope that my hard work will pay off and allow me to build confidence in the future so I will not have to worry so much about the exam part of classes. For now, I am glad that I was able to do well and have friends help along the way.

Student Reporter

## Guiding Lights: Crucial Role of a Role Model



**Kaylyn Wee**  
Grade 9  
Ayala High School

Many people have role models, and to them, they are powerful leaders and teachers who will provide guidance. Even celebrities have role models they think highly of. I myself know people in my life whom I admire and wish to continue to look up to. Having people like this is important in life. What really are good role models like, and how truly important are they?

Having a role model is crucial for several reasons. They provide a source of inspiration, motivation, and guidance. Confidence and skill building are essential for development, and having a role model can help. Having someone to look up to can also create a connection and a sense of belonging. Knowing someone understands similar challenges and has faced the same difficulties can be comforting. Overall, role models play

a crucial role in development because they are a blueprint for success, instill confidence, and stimulate positive values.

The best role models have characteristics that people can learn from for both personal development and achieving success. Some qualities can include resilience, commitment, passion, and humility. The greatest role models are usually able to persevere through setbacks, have dedication to goals, and are able to be humble even with all their accomplishments, with respect for all and a great work ethic. Role models look different to everyone but these are some common traits the greatest have.

Role models can be celebrities or people in your own life. To some, the person they look

up to can be their parents, teachers, or siblings. Some may look up to famous people in history or on social media, from Michelle Obama to Beyonce. For example, Kobe Bryant often stated that Michael Jordan was his role model. Rihanna, a pop star and entrepreneur, saw Madonna as her role model for her ability and impact on the music industry. I look up to my sister, my mom, and my dance teacher. To me, they are some of the greatest people, and I learn much from them.

Overall, role models are an important aspect of life and growing up. They serve as a real life example of what you would want to be, in a skill or as a person. Good role models would have good traits and would be good people, which would encourage the same behavior in others. Examples of



Family members can make great role models. [Source: Author, Kaylyn Wee]

role models can be well-known people or personal people, and even celebrities have role models they credit for their success. It is a positive thing for people to admire people and to try to become admired.