

Editors Column

My Experience at 2025 CIF Girls Wrestling Dual Meet



Joanne Kim
Grade 11
La Canada High School



Wrestlers start to warm up to prepare for their matches and the long day ahead of them. [Source: Author, Joanne Kim]

On February 1st, the California Interscholastic Federation (CIF) wrestling duals meets took place. CIF determines the official ranking of each sport at registered schools relative to the state, so it is the most important tournament of a high school student's athletic career within California. However, wrestling is unique in that it has both an individual and team component. An individual

tournament is what most think of when imagining a wrestling tournament, and though they have their similarities, dual meets are very different because athletes move as a team. Dual meets require two teams to line up on either side of the mat and wrestle off in weight order. The winning wrestler's team is awarded points after each match, and the team with the most points at the end

of all the matches gets to move on to the next round while the losing team gets eliminated from the bracket.

The meet for division two was held at Paloma Valley High School and included fifteen schools for the preliminary playoffs. Representing La Canada High School, my team and I prepared endlessly for the tournament. Upon arrival, we were met with the fierce and

daring aura of the tense environment. After weighing in, my team and I fueled up and started our intense warm-up, as we were up for the first round. Since wrestling is such a high-intensity sport, it is crucial that the athletes get a good warm-up in so they are ready for anything.

Our first match was against Schurr High School, who we beat by fifty-nine points. We were able to finish our matches early and decided to watch the those of the teams on the mat next to ours. Knowing the winning team would be our opponent, we carefully observed the matches to find patterns in the wrestling styles. Next up were the quarter finals where we faced Hemet High School. Although it started off as a close match, Hemet High School came out on top and advanced to the semi-finals, eliminating my team.

I, personally, was able to re-discover my passion for wrestling through this tournament. Being in my junior year of high school, wrestling became second to academics. However, this year's CIF duals reminded me of why I started the sport and fell in love with it.

Student Reporter

Beyond Borders: OCSA Celebrates Culture Through Art



Rachel Choi
Grade 9
Orange County School of the Arts

Orange County School of the Arts (OCSA) students recently brought Beyond Borders to life, on January 23rd and 24th. This groundbreaking, student-produced performance explored the intersection of culture, identity, and experience through a dynamic fusion of poetry, song, dance, and instrumental music. This immersive show featured talented performers from multiple conservatories who came together to examine what it means to be a modern, multi-ethnic American teenager.

Led by OCSA seniors Olivia Le and Maya Sano, Beyond Borders was a labor of love and creativity, shaped under the guidance of Creative Writing Conservatory Director Josh Wood. The performance provided a space where activism and art intertwined, amplifying diverse voices and perspectives. "Knowing that the stage is such a sacred place, being able to share it with artists from across campus who are all connected by a love for art and storytelling is truly awe-inspiring," Maya said. "The sense of unity and the stories we bring to life together create a magic that is unforgettable."



Dressed in vibrant costumes for their performance, the cast of Beyond Borders gathers for a photo, united like a family. [Source: Robin Kim]

As a dancer and poet, Olivia was particularly passionate about fostering collaboration across artistic disciplines. "We wanted to create a space where students could explore their identities and share their stories," she said. "Middle and high school students are navigating their roles in the world in new ways, and this performance highlighted their personal experiences, hopes, and aspirations for the future."

Beyond the performance, Beyond Borders also featured a Community Giving Fair, allowing

attendees to engage with local nonprofit organizations dedicated to uplifting and supporting diverse communities. The event included representatives from organizations such as Groundswell, the Orange County Asian Pacific Islander Community Alliance (OCAPICA), The Tiyya Foundation, Viet Rainbow of OC, and many more. These organizations provided resources, shared their missions, and encouraged community involvement.

For both performers and attendees, Beyond Borders was

more than just a show; the performance captured the nuances of cultural identity, the struggles of immigrant communities, and the beauty of intersectional narratives. Students used their art forms to express their personal journeys, allowing audiences to step into their shoes and experience their emotions firsthand.

Reflecting on the experience, Maya shared that working on Beyond Borders deepened her appreciation for the raw talent of her peers. "I hope the audience walked away inspired, with a renewed sense of connection and understanding," she said. "My goal was for them to feel a deep sense of empathy, as if they had stepped into someone else's shoes for a moment. I want this performance to remind people of the beauty of our shared humanity and motivate them to create positive change in the world."

With its fusion of art, activism, and community engagement, Beyond Borders left a lasting impact. It celebrated multiethnic communities' voices, struggles, and triumphs while inspiring audiences to embrace diversity and unity.

Student Reporter

The Political Development of South Korea



Jiyong Kwak
Grade 10
Juniper Christian School

It was just another day when I woke up at four in the morning to study for finals. For me, it was finals week, but for Koreans, it was the week President Yoon declared martial law. When I left my room to get a drink, I saw my family members crowded around the television, which was broadcasting the chaos in the National Assembly building live in Korea. Confusion hit me as I took in the situation. I tried to avoid being updated on the goings-on in hopes of isolating myself from the political chaos I knew would unfold. But now, a month after the incident, it seems timely to share an insider's view of the political turmoil in South Korea.

On December 4, 2024, the day martial law ended, greetings turned into talk about the news. Two groups formed: those who slept and those who could not. Breaktime small talks didn't involve high school gossip, but were filled with opinions regarding the situation. Conversations about the effect on Korea's economy, confusion about what martial law entailed, and the motive for the declaration filled the hallway. The Korean capital was also heated as the President was impeached, hearings were scheduled, and investigations began.

The process was controversial inside Korea. The quorum for impeaching the president was not previously made due to delays. Debate on the acting president's authority to appoint constitutional court judges led him to reject the appointment. An impeachment motion was passed by the opposing party, for they constituted a majority. The motion was criticized as an abuse of the party's majority. Unprecedented speediness of the President's impeachment trial was criticized as a political move, as some judges' political neutrality were questioned.

The legality of the investigation of President Yoon was controversial regarding the boundary of jurisdictions of the Corruption Investigation Office for High-Ranking Officials (CIO) and the Prosecutor's Office. Further, the CIO's process of attaining the arrest warrant was not conventional, and the following investigation after the detainment of President Yoon was criticized as unprofessional.

Actions by the opposing party were also controversial. Other than the abuse of the impeachment motion or the push to appoint constitutional judges, their efforts to target fake news were seen as extreme and criticized as



The door to the Government Complex Seoul is shut after a recent protest that damaged a government building. Flowers from supporters of the prime minister can be seen. [Source: Author, Jiyong Kwak]

censorship. The opposing party portrayed the impeachment, arrest, and detainment of the President as an event that shows the resilience of Korea's democracy, as they pride themselves on protecting it. However, in a 'legal' frame, their reinterpretation of the law caused many citizens to turn away, making President Yoon's approval rate rise up to

50% in some surveys, compared to the 17% right after the declaration of martial law.

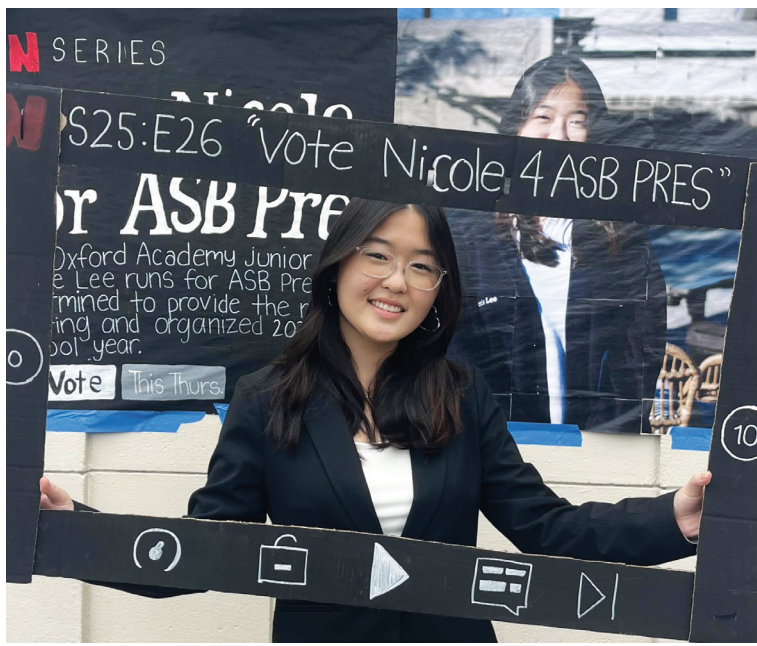
There still exist debates on whether martial law is justifiable. Different accounts of the events prior to and during martial law have not reached a clear conclusion. However the results might turn out, may this event lead Korea into a better future.

Student Reporter

Campaigning, Voting, and More Voting



Nicole Lee
Grade 11
Oxford Academy



By running as a candidate for ASB President, I felt a great amount of excitement, anticipation, and hope. Instead of feeling pressured, I had lots of fun utilizing my own creativity and ideas into my campaign, which its theme, if you could guess, was Netflix! [Source: Author, Nicole Lee]

As the new semester gets rolling, one school is specifically seen as bustling and vibrant, both on campus and through media: it is the final election week for Oxford Academy's Associated Student Body's Executive Board, and the running candidates are busy and

nervous. Colorful posters are pasted on the hallway walls of the school with the words "Vote for..." and digital flyers are posted all over the media for every student to see. Personally, as a candidate running for the 2025-2026 ASB President position, I

can truly say it was an intense week full of determination and ambition. I found myself interacting with younger students, who were curious about what I would offer if I were to obtain this position. I would notice students observing my posters and wonder what they would think. Needless to say, my high school election was an ongoing week of anticipation, hope, and slight worry, but it was definitely a worthwhile experience for which I am truly grateful.

I find that there are a great amount of benefits that come from running as a candidate. Although final results do matter, I believe the ways in which one expresses oneself through their campaigning process is most important. In my school, every student running is allowed to pick their own theme that they believe defines them the most. This led to a diverse week, with one's theme being the Hungry Caterpillar, and another the Lorax who saves the trees. Then, there was mine: Netflix. Through such unique themes, each candidate had their own ways in which they stood out through their campaign. I based mine off of a Netflix show, which I named,

"Vote Nicole for ASB President." Additionally, having the opportunity to run allows one to interact with a diverse group of students, faculty, and administrators. A highlight of my election week was going around campus and taking photos with students from all grades, and although I was nervous, it was also exciting. As I met many younger students, I found myself being more motivated to get the chance to influence my school's policies and activities, ensuring they align with the student's interests and needs.

Therefore, at this time, although the results have not been revealed, I come out of this experience with no disappointment. I am extremely glad for such an opportunity, as running in a high school election is a wonderful way to come out of one's shell and show the student body who you are. I am proud of myself for coming out of my comfort zone and guiding my passion towards ASB a step further. It was a rewarding endeavor that offered countless opportunities for personal development, leadership experience, and the ability to make a positive impact on one's school community.

Student Reporter

Cafeteria Food: The Untold Truth



Grace Song
Grade 7
Lexington Junior High School

Cafeteria food has long sparked conversations among students. For some, it is an opportunity to grab a quick lunch during a busy day. For others, it is a frustrating experience filled with bland, repetitive options. With students depending on these meals for energy and focus, it is important to ask: Are cafeteria lunches truly serving their purpose?

One of the main benefits of cafeteria food is its convenience. In the middle of a busy school day, cafeteria food provides an easy, accessible option for lunch. Students who don't have time to prepare meals at home can turn to these simple solutions. Furthermore, cafeteria food ensures that all students, regardless of their home situation, can access a meal. Carlee Fouty, a 7th grader at Lexington Junior High, explained, "When my parents don't have time to pack me lunch, cafeteria food provides a nice alternative." For many, knowing there will always be a school meal available, offers a sense of security.

However, cafeteria food also comes with its share of drawbacks. One of the most consistent criticisms is the lack of variety. Many students eat the same



Students navigate the busy lunch line for a simple lunch, often faced with limited meal options and low-quality food. [Source: Author, Grace Song]

meals week after week, which can quickly become tedious. Standard options like pizza, chicken, and a basic salad, consistently dominate the lunch menus, leaving little room for new dishes. Erin Park, a 7th grader at Lexington, explained, "I started bringing

my own lunch recently because I was getting tired of the repetitive lunch menus." The constant reoccurrence of lunches brings down the excitement students feel for lunch breaks, resulting in some skipping meals altogether.

In addition to the lack of varie-

ty, another common issue among students is the quality of cafeteria food. While many meals are quick and convenient, they often lack freshness and taste. Processed ingredients, mass production, and the overall lack of attention to food can result in overcooked lunches that feel bland and tasteless. Tiraya Suwansirisilp, a 7th grader at Lexington, noted, "The food quality doesn't seem to be the best. I wish the pizza tasted fresh and the burgers were less dry." This common dissatisfaction with cafeteria food leaves many students feeling unmotivated to eat, which in turn impacts their overall school day.

While cafeteria food provides a much-needed solution for students seeking quick and easy meals, it still falls short in terms of consistency and quality. While it offers a basic solution to hunger, many students find the options repetitive and uninspiring. To truly fulfill the purpose of cafeteria food, improvements in variety, condition, and overall flavor are needed. By offering more choices, cafeteria food could transform into something students eagerly anticipate while also enhancing the overall school experience for students.

Student Reporter

Working Towards a Green Community



Eun Soo Esther Shin
Grade 11
New Covenant Academy

If you live in Koreatown, California, you might have noticed the lack of green space in the community. From where I live in Koreatown, I see at least three construction projects as soon as I step out of the house. The canopy cover in Koreatown is actually one of the lowest in Los Angeles. In fact, satellite images show a clear line where green areas near Beverly Hills fade into a sea of gray around Koreatown. This part of Los Angeles has only two public parks: Seoul International Park and Shatto Recreation Center. Together, they take up less than 1% of the neighborhood.

This shortage of green space is a consequence of high population density and rapid urban development. As someone who's lived in this area most of my life, I felt the need to take the initiative for positive changes. While organizations like Koreatown Youth Community Center (KYCC) and CityPlants actively work to improve the situation by offering free trees and tree planting services, I knew that I wanted to contribute to the cause too. That's why I decided to start a gardening "Green City" club at my school this year to inspire other students

to adopt green and sustainable practices.

The goal of my gardening club is to plant produce like vegetables, fruits, and herbs to donate to local food banks and help support our community. To promote the club, my friend and I are creating flyers to post around the school in hopes of recruiting more members. So far, a few of my friends have joined and a few others expressed their interest.

In addition to planting produce, I have more ideas for the club. At school, I noticed that some students were throwing away large portions of the lunch they didn't eat. One thought I had was to use this leftover food to make compost for our garden. However, there are potential drawbacks, like attracting unwanted pests, so this is a topic I plan to discuss with the club. Another idea is to donate first aid kits to local community gardens. They'll be named "Gardening Aids." Gardening can lead to minor injuries, and the supplies in the kit can help keep volunteers safe while supporting existing green spaces.

To keep students engaged, I'm also planning on running experiments with different gardening



Chives growing in the club garden to donate to local food banks. [Source: Author, Eun Soo Esther Shin]

techniques, like changing the pH of the soil or different watering techniques. These hands-on projects will help members learn more about sustainable practices and gardening while having fun. Gardening offers a unique opportunity, especially for students who live in apartments or areas where there's no opportunity for

gardening. I encourage you to adopt more green practices in your daily life. Whether it's growing your own plants, composting, or volunteering at community gardens, small actions can have a big impact. Working together, we can help communities like ours become greener and better places to live.