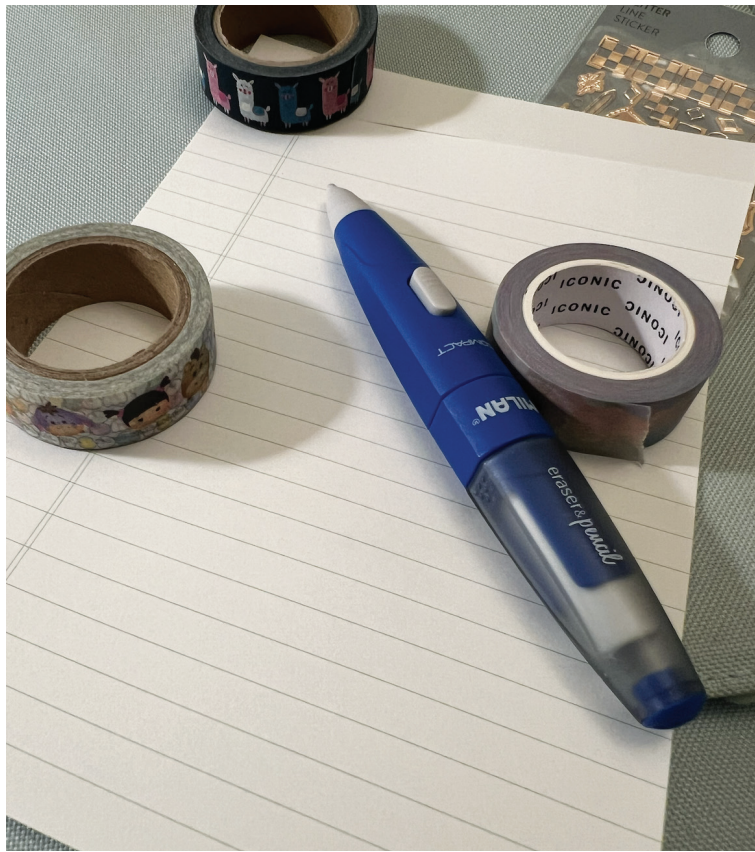


Editors Column



Hannah Lee
Grade 12
South High School

A Mental Health Day Has Surprising Benefits



Decorating, journaling, and scrapbooking are all good hobbies to adopt when wanting even a short mental health break from the daily stress of being a student!
[Source: Author, Hannah Lee]

Inevitably, school is stressful—with the combination of difficult classes pushing constant homework and frequent tests, long

hours of extracurriculars, and trying to squeeze in time to sleep, it's a difficult cycle. As students, we've all been there. After years

of having days filled with multiple activities, as a senior, it's odd having hours of free time after college applications as a senior. And through experiencing even a couple hours of free time, I found myself feeling lighter and motivated to perform better.

Taking a mental health day is incredibly crucial—whether that includes taking a complete day away from the textbooks to taking a shopping trip with friends, giving yourself a moment to breathe and spend quality time with others and yourself provides many benefits.

One of the easiest methods when needing to take a break may be to take a run outside, clearing away your thoughts all while giving yourself a chance to exercise. There's no cost except for the time spent going out for a run, and it can be done around the neighborhood, keeping you in close proximity to home. There have been times when students have been overwhelmed by the gigantic piles of work that they have waiting for them. It's difficult to manage different assignments, but it's even harder when there are a multitude of thoughts swarming our heads. Exercise can help clear your mind and relax you at the same time.

My motto is to play hard, study hard. I have found that

when hanging out with friends and family, it is better to attempt not to imagine the work waiting for you, and instead have enough worthwhile fun to make you smile, laugh, and be carefree. After taking a full day for a long day of a much-needed break, the work piled up on the desk may be frustrating and profuse, but you will find yourself moving through the work faster than normal after your mental health day.

When stressed, one of the best ways to find a way to take a break is to establish a clear hobby that you would be interested in continuing or participating in. Personally, as an avid writer, I often find myself sitting down at my computer to type down ideas and stories—while in front of the computer may be a seat I often take when completing homework, I consistently encourage myself to let my mind run loose with thoughts and plans. So regardless of your location, doing what makes you relaxed and happy is what counts.

You may be thinking: I don't have time to take a mental health day. But in the long run, there is always time for the long-lasting benefits of your actions. A mental health day is bound to reciprocate enough benefits to provide a more healthy lifestyle, and isn't that what we are aiming for?

Student Reporter

Jazz Pianist, Jason Moran, Plays Duke Ellington



Summer Park
Grade 10
Harvard-Westlake School

On February 13, 2025, renowned Jazz pianist and composer Jason Moran took center stage at The Soraya at California State University, Northridge (CSUN), delivering a mesmerizing tribute to the legendary jazz legend, Duke Ellington. The event was part of a year-long celebration of Duke Ellington's 125th birthday.

Moran opened the evening by playing solo piano. He performed Duke Ellington's song with his own modern interpretations. Later, Moran was joined by CSUN's Jazz "A" Band, providing a great opportunity for the student musicians to perform alongside one of today's leading jazz artists. The collaboration showcased a mix of mentorship and co-construction of music. During intermission one fan stated, "I can feel the energy so far. And it seems like the student performers are having fun. I love that!" The Soraya was filled with music enthusiasts as well as CSUN students and families of musicians.

During the second half of the performance, the audience members were treated to a Jazz singer



Jazz Concert at CSUN Pays Tribute to Legend Duke Ellington.
[Source: Author, Summer Park]

decked out in a lovely sparkling gown. Her voice was powerful yet soft. Her performance paired with piano and the big band jazz was one of the highlights of the night.

Moran took the mic to share with the audience members how playing Duke Ellington's music is always an important experience for jazz students. He thanked

Tina Raymond, director of CSUN's jazz studies program, for instilling in her students the legends and pioneers of Jazz music and history. Moran emphasized that he would be reinterpreting Ellington's works and through his collaboration with CSUN jazz students, he was reminded of the historical significance music can have; that indeed it is possible to reinvent music from the past while staying true to its essence. Tina Raymond received recognition from Jason Moran and the camaraderie between musicians was evident.

For the CSUN Jazz "A" Band, the concert was more than just a performance—it was an invaluable learning experience. The event, part of CSUN's fourth annual "Jazz at Naz" Festival, drew a packed audience of jazz enthusiasts, students, and faculty, all captivated by Moran and the young musicians. The standing ovation at the end of the night was a testament to the enduring legacy of Duke Ellington and the power of jazz has to bridge generations.

Student Reporter

A Blissful Opportunity of Commitment



Yerin Park
Grade 11
Seoul International School

It is said that childhood dreams help us identify our passions, and even lay a blueprint for who we become in the future. One of my childhood dreams was to become one of the beaming K-pop idols I see on television daily, receiving love and praise from the general public. Ever since then, I began to love singing. Till now, my hobbies and interests have changed frequently, except for the small passion for singing that continuously grew. Fifth grade was when I first had the opportunity to exert this passion, when I was part of a small musical production. Through this occasion, I was able to meet new friends who had the same love for singing as I did.

As time went on, the opportunities to pursue this passion became fewer. I grew closer with friends I had made through the musical, and we began to plan out a fun little concert we could hold. With our oldest member leading us, we met once a week to practice and prepare. The days we met were like a blissful gift to me, where I could escape from all of my studies and enter a peaceful realm. I spent most of my week counting down till the day of our practices.

One struggle that we were faced with was scheduling. Be-

cause all of us were high school students, it was hard to find days when we weren't preoccupied with classes. Arranging the show was also quite hard as we had to locate a place to hold it, find outfits to wear, and arrange the music amidst our busy schedules. It was also harder to arrange this as we were all young and inexperienced.

The best thing I gained from being part of the show was overwhelming joy. The transitory moment of being on stage made me feel like the bright stars I saw in my K-pop idols on stage. It gave me a type of happiness that a good result on a hard test could not. Unlike the graded assignments from school, no teacher was judging us. No letter grade was placed upon our performance. We were able to contribute to the production of this show completely, which made everything under our control and our choices. Although it gave us a huge amount of responsibility, it also gave us an equivalent amount of freedom.

The most memorable moment was my performance. I can picture this very vividly, from what the stage around me looked like to how the eyes of our audience twinkled sensationally. I can also remember my sweaty palm



A group huddle while monitoring our performance that had been recorded.
[Source: Author, Yerin Park]

holding the microphone that projected my voice across the room. "The most memorable moment was when I had just finished performing. As soon as my song ended and I walked off the stage, I felt relieved that I finished and sang well. It was also nice that my friends and family told me that

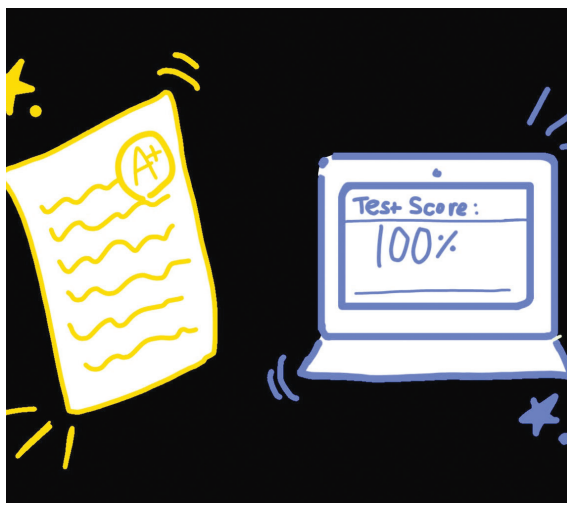
they loved the song choice and my voice. I can remember being really happy at that moment," said Lucy Park, another one of the performers. As the lights dimmed and we were getting ready to leave, we all had one thought in common: this was a blissful opportunity.

Student Reporter

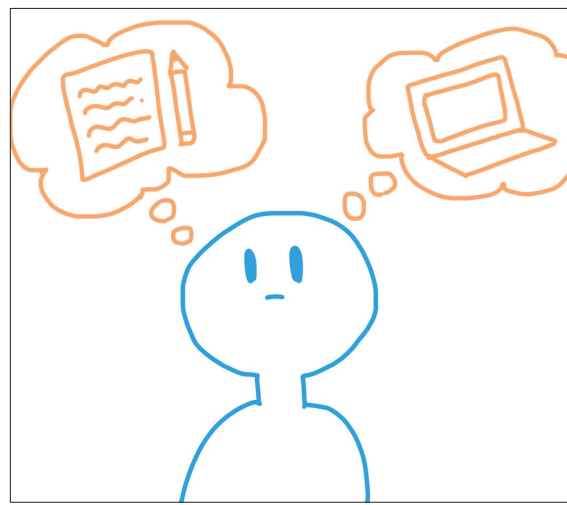
Handwriting vs. Typing: Best for Academic Success?



Harin Lee
Grade 8
Vista Verde K-8 School



Handwriting or Typing? Different Methods, Same Goal: Academic Success!
[Source: Author, Harin Lee]



Which Boosts Academic Success? Handwriting or Typing?
[Source: Author, Harin Lee]

Today, with the introduction of tablets and laptops in the classroom, handwriting appears to be outdated. Some students prefer electronics because it is simpler and faster to correct, but the classroom learning experience confirms that handwriting remains the secret to success. Handwriting legibility can determine whether the student is truly learning the material and will be able to recall the information, while typing promises speed and efficiency. The question is, what

method will yield the most academic success?

Handwriting is unique in how it is personal and how it accesses memory, making things more meaningful. When teachers can easily read the student's writing, they are able to concentrate on the content rather than trying to interpret hard-to-read text. Ms. Awbrey Smith, an eighth-grade English teacher, stated that students with good handwriting receive better grades on written assignments

and do better just because their work is more readable. Typing eliminates this issue. Still, others grumble that typing at a certain pace creates mistakes or a lack of careful engagement with the content. Although typing helps students write notes in a hurry, they tend to reproduce words without truly knowing what they are saying.

Speed is also a big difference between typing and handwriting. Typewriting enables students to quickly draft and edit

essays or reports, which can be beneficial in several classes. Nonetheless, research states that writing engages students, causing them to be more interested in the subject matter. As students write, they must paraphrase and interpret the information in their own words, training recall and deepening understanding.

Handwriting also activates more parts of the brain than typing. Research found that writing letters by hand improved intellectual growth, thought, and overall memory. Many students are more aware of the content when taking notes by hand during lectures. On a computer, they end up repeating what is said by the teacher without digesting the content first.

Though typing is quicker and more efficient, handwriting, especially if done proficiently, engages the brain in a manner that can increase academic success. As technology is increasingly utilized in the classroom, students would be served best by employing both methods: typing for speed and handwriting for retention. The way a student takes notes can have numerous effects on the student's grade and understanding of the content.

Student Reporter

Inner Workings of the Student Council at WRA



Christine Baek
Grade 11
Western Reserve Academy

Before writing this article, the Student Council at Western Reserve Academy was a somewhat mysterious entity to me. And I, like many other students, had a limited understanding of its function at our school. I was aware of its existence, the 10 students who composed it, and that they held their meetings every other week in Wilson Lecture Hall. Yet, the precise role and how they work remained in question.

Composed of 10 students, including 2 class representatives from each grade level and the two student co-presidents, the Student Council at Western Reserve Academy serves as the connection between the student body and the school's administration. "Our role is to take any voices from the student body and voice them to the administration," said Carter Fleming, one of two student co-presidents. He explained that their primary responsibility lies in ensuring that the students' perspectives are not only heard but also built into tangible actions.

But the real curiosity lies in the how of the process. How do our voices find their way to the ears of the administration, and do they indeed lead to meaningful changes within our school community?

Mr. Polak, the faculty advisor



Seymour Hall, the main academic building at Western Reserve Academy, isn't just where many classes are held but where the Student Council comes together with administration to make sure student thoughts and perspectives are heard.
[Source: Author, Christine Baek]

for the Student Council, provided insights into the system: "The class representatives (...) talk to the students and have the students reach out to them whether that is a suggestion, a concern ..." Subsequently, these voices are brought to council meetings, where the members discuss the matter in detail. Then, a draft proposal is written followed by a series of negotiations to meet the desires of both parties. Once it is completed and evaluated by the Student Life Office, the proposal is finalized.

This year, the Student Council is narrowing down their focus, primarily focusing on promoting school policies. As Mr. Polak puts, "It can sometimes be hard to balance multiple things at once, which then causes some parts to get lost (...) we're trying to put together a solid one." By working on specific changes regarding school-wide policies, the Student Council hopes to promote efficiency in responding to student needs.

The Student Council's commitment to strive towards growth in policies is evident in their re-

cent achievements. One such notable improvement is the adjustment of weekend dinner times, granting flexibility for boarders. Winter dress code, another topic of dispute, is also in the process of drafting a proposal. Such feedback conveys their commitment and conviction in addressing the issues that matter most to students. Addie Mendelson, a member of the Student Council, addresses the ongoing efforts towards resolving student concerns such as dining hall menus and dress codes. In addition, proposals addressing dorm visitation policies are in the works, for the council has agreed that it is of common concern among the community.

Looking forward, Mr. Polak mentions the Council's upcoming focus. "Right now we are working with the Student Life Office in figuring out how to collect more student voices in a more easier, accessible way." The goal is to consolidate all voices into one place, further enhancing the vocal of the Pioneers.

As students, the importance of how our ideas and concerns are transformed into solid actions brings us to appreciate the hard work and diligence of the Student Council. It creates school spirit, pushing WRA to be a better place, community, and home for many.

Student Reporter

How Does AI Affect Students?



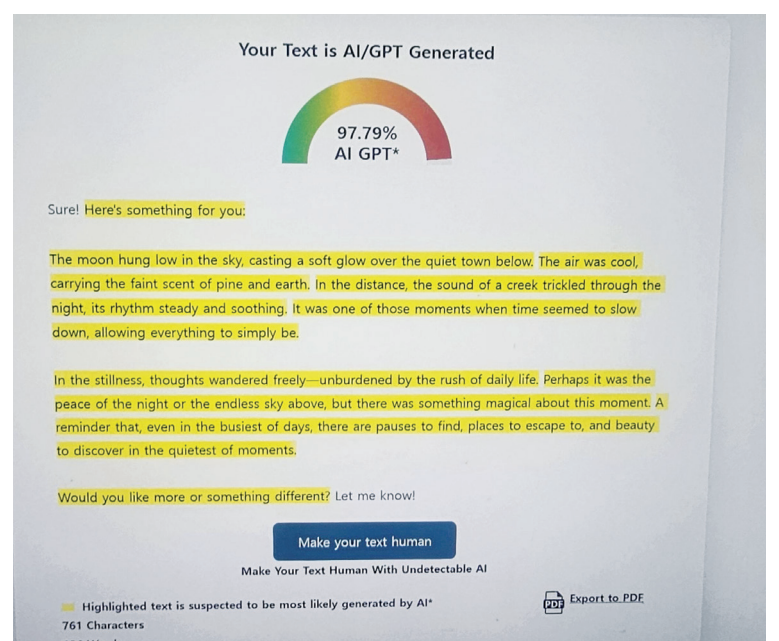
Justin Kim
Grade 10
Science Academy
STEM Magnet

AI stands for artificial intelligence, and it has become a huge problem for students, as many have started using AI for their school work, in turn giving teachers headaches. Whether it is an English Essay or a math problem, students have been known to abuse the help AI gives to finish their assignments. The use of AI leaves the student's knowledge (or lack of knowledge) unknown to the teacher, which has the potential to harm the educational relationship between the two. This can be bad because teachers don't know when students are struggling, and therefore cannot plan lessons accordingly. At the Science Academy STEM Magnet School, if students are found to have used AI, they face consequences, such as not being able to receive letters of recommendation for college.

And although AI may be seen as a negative, it is important not to lose sight of why students may choose to use it in the first place. Reasons include struggling with homework, being overwhelmed with large amounts of homework, or simply finding their homework to be pointless and

a waste of time. These problems can be lessened if schools limit the amount of unnecessary work given in classes. Another solution would be to provide tutoring sessions during lunchtime to help students who are struggling with a subject or homework, helping them to understand the materials better and steer away from AI.

Many teachers have started using AI detectors to see if students are using AI or not. This has the potential to harm the relationship between the teacher and student, as students may think that teachers must suspect them of cheating before checking their work, creating an uncomfortable environment if the student is caught. An English teacher from my school stated, "AI is very controversial. It can help the student and also harm the student. Students can use AI to get help with their homework, but unfortunately, most kids just use it for evil purposes. It has way more of a negative impact than a positive one." Teachers have been expressing that AI has increased cheating, as artificial intelligence provides all of the answers stu-



An AI detector shows AI has created the work of a student, shown above.
[Source: Author, Justin Kim]

dents would need for an assignment and prevents them from studying their material.

AI negatively impacts students and actions are taken to prevent the use of it, but it is not enough. Students abuse AI, lead-

ing to bad habits and preventing them from learning the necessary material. Hopefully, in the future, the use of AI will lead to positive effects and help students learn instead of creating just a quick answer.