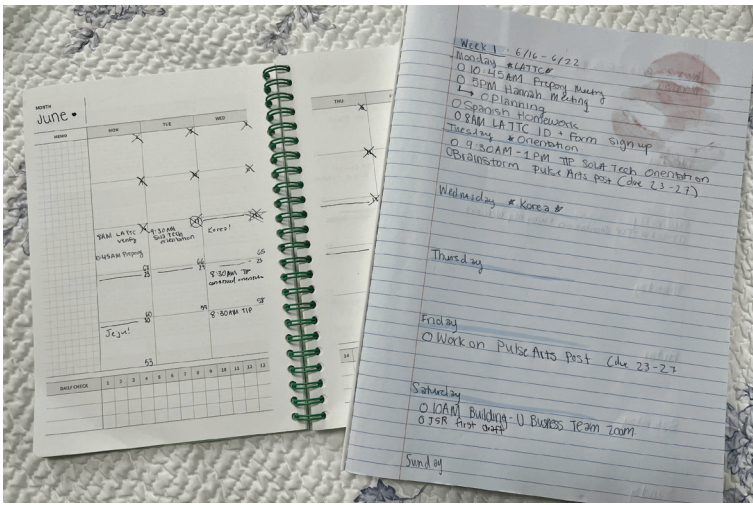


Editors Column

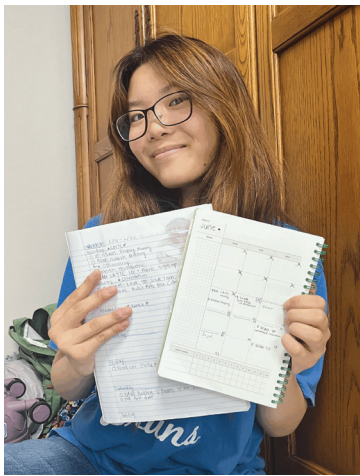
How to NOT “Crash Out”: Senior Year Edition



Jenna Kim
Grade 12
Pacifica Christian High School



What my calendar and planner look like! (It doesn't have to be aesthetic-just realistic!)



Jenna, satisfied with completing her planning for the month of June.

It's official: the students of 2026 are now the oldest members on campus. Over the past three years, I've roamed the halls looking up to the Senior class, thinking they had their lives together, in a far-off place, ready for college and adulthood. But now that I'm in their shoes, I feel not just excited for the future, but also some anxiety. So, as I was going through my senior year planner, here are some tips on planning so that you do NOT crash out your senior year.

summer, it's this: your planner is your weapon. Without facing all of the tasks, plans, events, or assignments head-on, I always feel worried about the future: Am I spending my time effectively right now? Is there something I'm forgetting about? So, I recommend getting out your planner, a cool summer drink, and writing out the next three months, listing out all of these worries and expectations for senior year. To start, make two categories: must do, and want to do. I recommend sorting these two lists into four columns:

academic, extracurricular, college applications, and fun. For example, I placed my AP summer work and SAT studying plans into the academic column, my internships and taekwondo practices into the extracurriculars, essay work and PIQs in the college applications, and lastly, my Korea trip in the fun column. This will give you a realistic eye-opener to what your summer will look like--and how busy it actually is.

I'm usually unsure what days I should do what. It is at this point that you get out your calendar and start to take two fundamental steps. First, write down all of the necessary Zoom meetings, in-person events, and travel days: all the dates you need to remember. And second, count the days that you actually have left to do the work. Next, divide up the larger tasks into these extra days. Ask yourself: What can I do each day to accomplish a greater goal? By the end of this step, you now have designated realistic tasks to complete each day.

As much as it is important to work hard in this final stretch, it's ultimately your last year as a high school student: the last year before adulthood, with many of your friends, and (for some of us) living with our families. Being an extremely sentimental person, it's hard to find the balance between hard work and being present. But I've learned that this is truly a necessary tool--to be able to reflect on our years while diligently preparing for the future. So I encourage you, class of 2026, and even underclassmen as well, to continue to wrestle with this balance. Don't give up (don't crash out), and continue to be present with your loved ones around you.

Student Reporter

Visiting Tokyo: Into another Realm



Yerin Park
Grade 11
Seoul International School

Living in a familiar setting is almost like being entrapped in a bubble. Living in Korea as a high school student provides a rather limited experience when it comes to diversity. For many of us, we are accustomed to a homogeneous society where people share the same background, culture, language, and traditions. Since childhood, I lived in a protected bubble sheltered by my parents from danger or hardship. I was unaware of the realities that other teenagers around the world were facing until the summer of 2025.

With the start of the summer break, my family and I decided to book a trip to Tokyo as a good way to start the summer. Tokyo was a rather meaningful location for my family, as my mother spent some time after graduating from college to learn cooking there.

Stepping into Tokyo was like a surreal entrance to a foreign place, one that I was not used to. As opposed to visiting places like the US or China, where I can comfortably speak the language to some extent, I entered Tokyo knowing almost no Japanese. In Japan, I realized everything was different from the beliefs they had, to the



Taking photos to remember and understand the culture of Tokyo, Japan.

outfits they wore, to the culture they were used to. When entering a shop, one of the owners approached me and spoke to me in Japanese, and when I responded in English, she was shocked that someone who looked so Asian could speak English. I realized

that my visuals would bring some shock, and some people would hold prejudices towards me.

These were realities I had never encountered back at home, where I was surrounded by people who shared similar values, experiences, and privileges. That

week in Tokyo, I learned that in life, I would meet people with different perspectives and even prejudices about me.

One struggle that I encountered in Japan was the language barrier. While some shops offered employees who could speak English, stores and shops in the older and less modernized parts of Tokyo had older employees who could only speak Japanese. I would have to pull out the translator, use my body, or even leave the store. I got to feel, first hand, the struggles that travelers and immigrants may have, and experience the feeling of being lost.

On the last day of my visit to Tokyo, I looked outside the window the entire car ride, feeling fascinated once again by how different the view was compared to Korea. The blend of traditional culture and modernized architecture. A combination of vibrant colors that light up the night sky.

This experience fundamentally shifted my mindset. I came to understand that traveling not only brings pleasure, but also allows you to learn about different cultures. I was finally able to step outside the bubble I had grown up in and pop it myself.

Student Reporter

CAVA: The Uprise of the Mediterranean Chipotle



Bailee Kim
Grade 12
Crescenta Valley High School

Fast food places are of great popularity, and competition for survival between them is constantly raging. To remain standing in the intense battle for popularity and sales, these chains must appeal to their main audience, young adults who value all four components of taste, price, health, and convenience. One restaurant that has recently shown rapid growth is CAVA, a Mediterranean fast food chain that satisfies all four of these components and has been skyrocketing in popularity across the nation.

CAVA is now well known as the “Mediterranean Chipotle” due to its similarities in its focus on a fully customizable meal with similar store layouts and food options. They are both appealing to the young adult audience, but more eyes have been shifting to CAVA due to the continuous rise of health-conscious food choices. Compared to Chipotle, there are more options in toppings, especially more vegetables, which makes it easier for consumers to build a more balanced bowl to stay conscious of what they are eating. If the bowl is made with nutrition and health in mind, it can create well-balanced meals that incorporate all of the core macronutrients. The chain push-

es the idea of health in not only the nutrient balance of the food but also the fresh ingredients they use. Consumers being able to see their food being made right in front of their eyes through the clear screen increases their trust in the cleanliness of the assembly space and ingredients. This idea of CAVA being a healthy, cleaner fast food option is what seems to be the primary drive of its rise in popularity among young adults.

The younger community's appeal not only comes from the food itself but also from the advertisement and convenience. Upon taking a look at CAVA's Instagram page, I noticed that many of their posts were very obviously centered towards a younger audience. By hopping on popular trends and incorporating deals mainly communicated through social media, CAVA's marketing is clearly made for those who are actively on social media. Their collaborations with public figures, such as athlete Gabby Thomas, also assists their advertisement. By bringing in a well-known athlete to help advertise the fast food chain, they create the connection between CAVA bowls and athletes. This brings the idea of CAVA bowls being nutritionally balanced and healthy back up be-



The CAVA bowl has recently gained great popularity due to its healthy options and great marketing.

cause Gabby Thomas promoting the chain helps consumers trust the food. The strategic marketing through social media and collaborations promotes their food to older teens and young adults, the main consumers who have been fueling CAVA's growth.

With young adults becoming

more health-conscious but still paying attention to taste, CAVA's Mediterranean cuisine appeals to them as a nutritionally balanced meal that can be eaten guilt-free. Nutrient balance, along with strategic marketing, is what drives CAVA's recent skyrocket in growth and popularity.

Editors Column

The Bubbly Universe of Chiikawa



Audrey Park
Grade 12
Northwood High School



Lots of Chiikawa merchandise has been sold in America after its popularity entered Western media. [Source: Audrey Park, Author]

With replicable anatomies and simple motivations, Chiikawa characters traverse modest tribulations, often stemming from the purest ancestors of thought: browsing a local market sale, strumming an oversized acoustic,

indulging in a delectable tidbit. This is the world of Chiikawa. Introduced in 2017, manga illustrator Nagano aimed to celebrate simple approaches to mundane issues and document the everyday lives of his uniquely

shaped cast through short, serialized volumes. Finding a loyal audience with both children seeking cute characters to fawn over and young adults craving an escape from their more serious, daily affairs, Chiikawa has cemented itself in various corners of Japanese and Western media. Now existing in the form of an animated series, AFK mobile game, and tourist attraction, Western videos about it are only a small testament to its growing popularity. However, those familiar with such content can roughly grasp why the Chiikawa brand is so well-liked; why are stores lining their shelves with its merchandise? The Chiikawa characters are the crown jewels here. The main trio consists of Chiikawa, Hachiware, and Usagi. Chiikawa is a nonverbal creature that resembles a hamster, often portrayed as a crybaby who easily toils over small impediments and is frequently consoled by Hachiware, a caring cat with a more advanced lexicon. Towering over them both is Usagi, an outspoken, energetic rabbit who communicates with “haa”s and “ya-ha!”s. It dances in light and shadow and is a great favorite amongst fans. Appearing alongside similarly unconfrontational and chippy creatures, they traverse a world where trivial threats reign in the form of cute monsters and various foods

randomly appear. A handful of the characters are challenged or motivated by simple objectives, while others are not so much. Additionally, Western media has taken another approach to representing these characters. For instance, many TikTok users have assigned each character to one of the seven deadly sins, following the trend of distorting cute icons into something more sinister. For one, Usagi’s large appetite has been ironically compared to a vigorous, near blasphemous glutton. For months, several Instagram posts have labeled clips of the bunny chewing on omelettes or simply enjoying a jelly sandwich as demonstrating a repulsive sin, fat-shaming the character in an unserious manner afterwards. Others have drawn low-quality images of Usagi abusing the other characters for food as if they were its royal subjects. Similarly, Momonga, a pompous flying squirrel, has received the same treatment. Due to its excessive vanity and constant pursuit of compliments, the Chiikawa community has collectively agreed that it should be the poster child of Pride. With its growing popularity in the U.S., lots of fans have speculated on the reason for its success. Ultimately, Nakano’s Chiikawa demonstrates that the gentle absurdity of life is a blessing, and not an obstacle.

Student Reporter

Fusion Food: The Taste of Cultures Colliding



Yulkwon Lee
Grade 9
University Prep Value High School

Have you ever wondered who first thought of putting bulgogi in a street taco? While Korean-Mexican fusion might seem like a modern trend, fusion food is more than just that. You could even call it histoculture, the blending of history and culture. Fusion food teaches us more than which foods taste great together—they can also reveal the importance of cultural exchange. When elements of two different cuisines come together, they tell a story about migration, shared traditions, and cultural exchange. By learning about the stories behind food, we can also learn about global history. One of the earliest examples of fusion food can be traced back to the Silk Road. This ancient trade route not only allowed the exchange of spices, grains, and goods, but also for cultures to converge. Thus, people also traded cooking techniques, and new cuisines were developed. Over a millennia later, cultures continued to mix and gave way to iconic dishes, like jerk chicken and calaloo during the colonial period. Today, with the increase of global trade and migration, we have even more diverse and blended cuisines. Los Angeles is the perfect



Pijja Palace, a restaurant that serves Indian-Italian fusion food, has dishes including tandoori onions and pizzas.



[Source: Author, Yulkwon Lee]

place to explore fusion food thanks to its incredible cultural diversity. Take lomo saltado, for example, which is a dish that combines Peruvian and Chinese cooking techniques. The result is a delicious blend of soy-marinated beef, sautéed onions, tomatoes, and French fries served on a bed of rice. At a Korean-Hawaiian

restaurant, you might find Hawaiian beef paired with pickled carrots, or try tandoori chicken pizza, which fuses Indian spices with an Italian staple. All of these dishes carry a deeper meaning behind food; they tell the story of two cultures coming together and can even spark new ideas in fusion cuisine. Even when fusion

food originates from cultures that are distant from each other, they still manage to create new types of connections and relationships between their backstories. After learning more about fusion food, I decided to try something I had never had before: Indian-style pizza. It was excellent and I enjoyed every last bit. The flavors were strong and delicious. I’d recommend pairing it with side dishes like fried onion rings or drinks if you’re sensitive to bold flavors. The pizza was spicy, but it came with a sweet dipping sauce that balanced the flavors perfectly. Indian pizza is a lot spicier than the pizza normally served. Instead of plain cheese or pepperoni, this version included a green mint-cilantro chutney sauce, as well as green peppers. These kinds of differences can actually improve something as familiar as pizza, showing us there’s more than just the same old toppings we know. Food isn’t just about eating. It is about how we understand the way our food came to be. So, we should always try new things because we never know where the next best idea and flavor will come from.

Student Reporter

Making the Most of Your Summer



Heesue Joy Shin
Grade 9
New Covenant Academy

I’m sure many of the students reading this article have started their summer break and are enjoying the newfound freedom that they now have. However, it’s really easy to look at all the free time you have and fall into a pit of procrastination. If you’re glued to your phone during the summer, it’ll go by super fast, and you’ll be left feeling like you haven’t done anything during summer break. Here are some tips on how to stop procrastinating and actually start enjoying your summer. Now that you don’t have to wake up early every day for school, you might end up sleeping through the whole morning and feeling sleepy in the afternoon. A good way to make sure that you get things done is to write a schedule. That way, you create a clear vision of the tasks you have to complete, and you can feel accomplished when you get to cross off a task. It may seem tedious, but making schedules is worth it. Even if you don’t have to wake up early every day for

school, it’s a good habit to make during the summer. When you wake up early, you have more time to do things throughout your day, and you won’t feel like you have to rush through your tasks. Waking up early allows you to take your time getting ready for the day and enjoy the peacefulness of the morning. When waking up early, it’s good to go outside for a few minutes to get some natural light in your eyes. Breathing in the fresh air can cleanse your mind and allow you to appreciate life. You can spend the summer trying to get into a hobby that you’ve been wanting to try out, like painting, working out, reading, or learning a new language. Trying out a new hobby is a super good way to utilize your time, and it’s a good way to experiment with what you like and what you don’t. Learning new things can also make you more open-minded and creative. Since you have a lot more time now that school ended, it’s a good time to do things that you usually can’t do because of school



Sights to see when going outside early to start your day productively will inspire and refresh you during your summer break. [Source: Author, Heesue Joy Shin]

time or having to do homework. Some ideas are spending more time with your family and going to places like the beach. You can hang out more with your friends on weekdays or go to cute cafes to get motivated to study a bit. It’s really good to make the most

of your summer and all the time that you have to do things. There are a lot more opportunities to spend your time meaningfully instead of watching your phone all day. So, before summer break is over, get out there and enjoy yourself.