

Student Reporter

Students Walk Out Against Gun Violence



Chloe Je
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Orange County School
of the Arts



Students gather in front of the Orange County School of the Arts in orange clothing to support the national gun-violence awareness efforts.
[Source: Author, Chloe Je]

In early September, students nationwide participated in a coordinated walkout to bring attention to the ongoing threat of gun violence in American schools. The action was planned by a coalition of student leaders and other organizations that advocate for student safety. The walkout was scheduled to happen at noon. Students filed out of classrooms to

designated outdoor areas where many carried handmade signs that depicted similar messages to call for action against the violence. Certain schools also had students who wore orange clothing in a nod to the national gun-violence awareness efforts. There was an electric atmosphere that was infectious to students.

The walkout had two parts,

with greater meaning being each one. One was to honor previous victims of school shootings, specifically the recent Minneapolis shooting that killed two kids and injured seventeen others. The second was to press on school and other community leaders to enforce change to protect students from the daily threat of gun violence. Many students chanted from the outskirts of the school campuses to make their statement known. Various speakers also shared their experiences with lockdown drills through short remarks as well as performance poetry. Many stressed the importance of safety in a learning environment and emphasized that being protected from gun violence should be a given. They spoke about how schools should not have to be built with violent intruders in mind and argued for layered strategies like evidence-based threat assessment teams, stronger safe storage norms at home, as well as the continued effort to keep firearms away from individuals who pose a threat to themselves or others.

This peaceful demonstration showcased a great nationwide

collaboration between students and schools as they made their message direct and clear. District officials acknowledged the walkout in advance, and while addressing the importance of instructional time, they also worked with the local administrations to mark safe gathering areas and to minimize the disruption to anyone who chose not to participate. Many teachers supported the students in the act, with other community members also volunteering to follow up with conversations from the protest.

Students spoke for their peers and some even to the local press. They expressed their outrage alike, gathering in large crowds, eager to express their opinion. Popular slogans like “books, not bullets” and “protect kids, not guns” were seen on signs. For many, the walkout was another push against the demand for solutions and to remind the government that they have voices they can and will use. So while it is unclear how this protest will affect the policy changes moving forward, students made one thing clear: they strongly intend to be part of the process, not just subjects of it.

Student Reporter

The Benefits of Dual Enrollment



Yejoon Choi
Grade 11
Northwood High School



The Life Sciences Building at Irvine Valley College is just one of the many privileges available to students taking their dual enrollment courses. Taking the hundreds of courses available among various local colleges can change the academic career of countless students. [Source: Author, Yejoon Choi]

The dual enrollment programs, a source of education offered in various schools and colleges, are an excellent academic opportunity and a head start to a fantastic college career. Many students find themselves with extra time to spare for additional out-of-school activities, but are unsure or indecisive about how to approach new courses or opportunities. For such scholars, the dual enrollment program can be an excellent solution to their dilemma.

Contributing to college credits that can be transferred to nearby public colleges, although not considered extracurricular activities, the program is unmistakably important. By slowly accumulating classes each semester (fall, spring, and summer), students can prepare themselves for a college experience while also advancing past their college peers and graduating early.

Not only can dual enrollment accelerate the completion of an undergraduate degree, but it can also mean a quicker entrance into graduate school and additional opportunities for seeking even higher levels of education. Additionally, as this is only an extension of receiving college credit from this program, it is entirely optional for students to take few-

er classes per quarter, allowing for a more enjoyable, relaxing, and less stressful college experience.

Beyond just college credit, courses offered by these dual enrollment programs can help students access higher-level education that is unavailable even for AP classes. Although AP courses are more easily accessible and

allow direct preparation for the AP exams, college courses offered by Dual Enrollment programs can help prepare students for topics beyond AP-level studies.

After starting my educational journey at Irvine Valley College through the dual enrollment program, I was able to attend various biology and biotechnology lab courses, which allowed

me to handle lab equipment and content that was lacking in my AP biology courses. Working in such a lab setting with colleagues of diverse ages and backgrounds helped me develop essential skills and etiquette that would have been impossible to acquire before graduating from high school.

Beyond the STEM side, students can also enroll in classes on topics that interest them, such as the history of rock music or philosophy. The wide range of courses offered by numerous colleges to high school students throughout the states allows for a diverse selection of classes. Offering online, in-person, and hybrid courses that can be taken not only throughout the school year but also over summer break or a gap year, these various opportunities offer students an academic challenge. Working around a busy schedule, they can not only accommodate themselves in college by earning credits, but also help develop good habits.

As an optional yet life-changing program, any dual enrollment offered by high schools or colleges should be considered as one of the many opportunities to build a successful academic career and bright future that can be acted upon now.

Student Reporter

Growth on the Court: Ayala at Beckman



Kaylyn Wee
Grade 10
Ayala High School



One of Ayala's Tennis Varsity girls playing a singles match during the Beckman Tournament. [Source: Author, Kaylyn Wee]

Recently, the Ayala High School Girls' Tennis Team attended the Beckman Tournament, with both the Junior Varsity and Varsity teams of Ayala, Beckman, Redondo, and Woodbridge High School competing. The tournament brought together the four teams to compete, creating an exciting atmosphere. This opportunity allowed players a chance to put their skills to the test while also learning from their mistakes. Players were pushed to their full potential and were able to interact with other athletes and coaches. Overall, the tournament was about far more than just winning - it was about growth, sportsmanship, and making memories.

To prepare for the tournament, my team and I attended daily practices and worked on our weaknesses to be able to play our best. During practice, the team played practice matches in both doubles and singles, did drills with coaches to solidify fundamental skills, and discussed strategies such as key targets and different choices of hits. Since we entered the tournament for growth, our goal and focus were not about winning; instead, we all wanted to try our best and push ourselves to our full po-

tential. Through our preparation, the team was ready to play and have fun.

Instead of taking place at a school, the tournament was held at a park near Beckman High School that had multiple tennis courts. When my team arrived, we had some time to settle down and start warming up. For warm-ups, the team did some dynamic stretching and rallied with one another. When matches began, doubles were on first, and then the singles began. There were breaks in between each match, and players played a total of three matches. The whole tournament ended around 6 PM, and we went back home with unforgettable experiences.

Besides the learning, the team was able to get to know each other and make memories. To start, we had face paints in our school colors of red, white, and gray to show school spirit; we wrote “Ayala” on our legs and arms with paw prints. Throughout the tournament, the girls conversed with one another about their match and were able to simply talk. There was a small playground at the park that we played on, we got to know each other while walking

and exploring the area, and ate snacks.

The Beckman Tournament was a memorable experience for the Ayala High School Girls' Tennis Team. Whether we won or lost, each match added to our growth as athletes and individu-

als. While playing against strong opponents, we learned many lessons, and the tournament served as a bonding experience as well. We will remember this tournament as a step in our team journey, and it proves that tennis is more than a score.

Student Reporter

My Fall Lineup: Showers, Nails, Movies



Charis Kim

Grade 10
The Science Academy
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Starbucks and Crumbl with a friend: the perfect treat for fall.
[Source: Author, Charis Kim]

“Autumn (n): the third season of the year, when crops and fruits are gathered and leaves fall...” The description above may be the “official” definition of autumn, but for me, Autumn screams pumpkin spice, Starbucks, movies, candles, knit sweaters, and fresh nails. Since fall is right around the corner, here are my favorite fall activities and habits for relaxation.

Reading:
We are all accustomed to scrolling through social media. It provides instant entertainment and adrenaline. I am also guilty of doomscrolling, when one.... Instead of being stuck in this cycle, I’ve found satisfaction in reading a whole book. There’s something about finishing the last page that makes you feel grounded and accomplished. It feels nice to get away from a tiny screen and be part of something time-consuming, but whole. I loved reading “A Good Girl’s Guide to Murder,” the Percy Jackson Series, “If He Had Been With Me,” and “Then She Was Gone.” All of these books are fast-paced, interesting, and make for a great read this fall.

Everything Shower” and Fresh Set of Nails:

Something that immediately refreshes both my brain and body is an everything shower. I don’t think an everything shower necessarily needs dozens of products. But switching up from your

normal shower routine makes it feel like an even more relaxing time, all for yourself.

Having fresh nails doesn’t need to break the bank if you do them yourself. Buying and reusing press-on nails is an affordable option. I’ve found a fun hobby of making my own press-on nails. Although the initial expense is equally as expensive as getting your nails done once, think of it as a long-term investment. The best part is that I can have fun while looking put together with different nail designs every month.

Drinking Fall-Themed Favorite Beverages:

The fall Starbucks menu is full of delicious drinks and pastries. Some of my favorite fall drinks include the chai latte with cold foam, iced white mocha with pumpkin cream cold foam, and an iced caramel macchiato with vanilla bean powder. The chai latte is definitely one of my favorite drinks. To save my wallet but satisfy my taste buds, I like to buy chai concentrate and mix it with oat milk. It tastes so delicious and is very similar to the Starbucks version.

I hope this article gave you some inspiration to help you enjoy fall. Most importantly, take care of your physical and mental health by working hard, but also by taking breaks and having fun.

Student Reporter

TikTok: A Teacher or Just a Distraction?



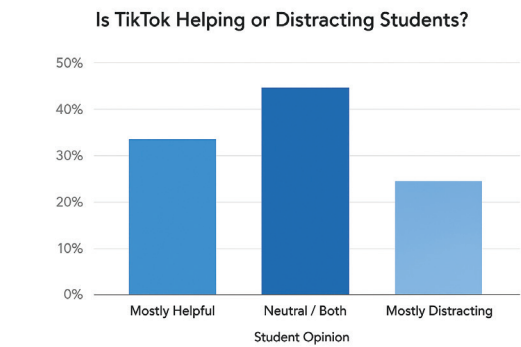
Robin Ryul Kang

Grade 11
Palos Verdes Peninsula
High School

It’s no secret that TikTok has become one of the most influential and popular social media apps among students today. With an endless amount of scrolling on endless amounts of content, it’s easy to lose sight of your surroundings and even your own thoughts, which is also known as “Doomscrolling.” Consequently, the platform is often blamed for shortening attention spans. But is it possible that TikTok is more than just a distraction? Could it actually be reshaping the way we learn?

Since its birth, TikTok has transformed into an impressive hub for compact learning. Educational creators, under hashtags like #LearnOnTikTok, #StudyTok, or one of the many school subjects, post quick tips or lessons on everything one can possibly imagine. These videos are accessible and designed to be engaging, as that’s how the creators earn views. “I’ve learned way more about human anatomy from these videos than I did in a week of my class.” Viewers say these in many of the educational videos (Though they might simply be jokes).

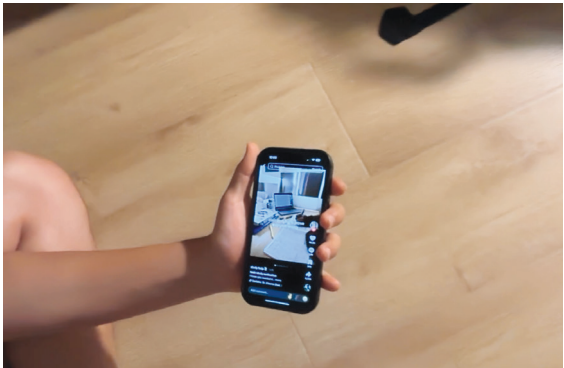
However, not everyone is convinced that TikTok can be educational. Many students admit



Student opinions on TikTok’s impact reveal a mixed graph. While about a third say it’s helpful, a similar amount say that it’s distracting.
[Source: Author, Robin Ryul Kang]

that while they do occasionally encounter educational content, TikTok is mostly nothing but a quick entertainment and a distraction. They admit to opening TikTok to search for some quick tips on studying, but end up “doomscrolling” on content that is unrelated to studying. The same algorithm that delivers useful information can also lead its users to endless entertainment that is hard to escape.

Yet, the benefits of TikTok as an educational tool are real. Students can find motivation, study strategies, and even new interests by simply scrolling through their feed. Robin Chen, an 11th grader at Palos Verdes Peninsula



In just the palm of your hand, TikTok can spark curiosity or provide endless entertainment.
[Source: Author, Robin Ryul Kang]

High School, said in an interview that he has “been using the so-called Feynman method for studying, which he learned through TikTok. It has helped a lot with his quizzes and tests.” Also, for some people, TikTok introduces topics that have never appeared in their daily lives, broadening their perspectives. In those terms, TikTok gives everyone, not just students, an education of opportunity, available within seconds.

In summary, TikTok is both a teacher and a distraction. It has the power to broaden perspectives, inspire curiosity, and make education engaging for some. Yet it also risks reducing learning

habits to only small-scale ones and disengaging students from long-term, deeper studies. So, is TikTok reshaping and aiding our studies, or just wasting our time? The answer is both. TikTok shows our generation’s relationship with knowledge: fast, accessible, entertaining, but also shallow. In the end, this fact reflects both the benefits and harms of social media, or, more specifically, learning on social media. While it can spark curiosity and make learning more engaging, it cannot replace deeper study or critical thinking. In that sense, whether it ultimately strengthens or weakens us depends on how we use TikTok.

Student Reporter

A Unique Blend of Pop Culture



Jordyn Bak

Grade 10
Mira Costa High School

A good event to attend to get a taste of Korean pop culture is Kplay Fest in Orange County, California! Kplay Fest is a K-pop-based event with K-pop vendors, artists, guests, and more. Kplay Fest organizes many fun activities such as random play dance or RPD, collaborations with companies, fanclub meetings, dance competitions, and other interactive events.

One of the companies that collaborated with Kplay Fest was Yakult! Yakult is a yogurt-based drink originating from Japan. They had a booth set up where guests could get a taste of Yakult for free. Isabella Bergman, an attendee, said, “The Yakult was quite nice to have after spending most of the day at the event, especially because it was free and extremely easy to find”.

Another collaboration Kplay Fest had was one with Indomie, an instant noodle brand. When I asked attendee Ashley Chen about her experience at the Indomie booth, she said, “The line

wasn’t too long and moved fairly fast. Even if you didn’t win the big prize from spinning the wheel, you were still able to take home a pack of yummy Indomie.”

I had the chance to participate in the K-pop random play dance during the first day of the event. A random play dance is when a song’s chorus is played, and participants who know the dance to the song can go to the center of the stage and showcase the choreography. This is a very fun and friendly activity for K-pop fans, regardless of whether you’re an experienced dancer or not.

In addition to Kplay Fest, you can also experience its sister events, Collectors Expo and Anime Impulse, at the same time. Whether you have the Kplay Fest ticket or the Collectors Expo ticket, every ticket gives access to the other events to encourage participation in each world. The Anaheim Convention Center was sectioned off between Kplay Fest, Anime Impulse, and Collectors



The vendor hall in Anime Impulse was a great place to find merchandise and get to know more about the K-pop culture.
[Source: Author, Jordyn Bak]

Expo. Being able to experience pop culture through K-pop, anime, and collecting was a unique opportunity and experience. Some unique attractions I noticed throughout the whole convention were a wrestling stage with active wrestling, an arcade, and dekokars, essentially custom-decorated cars based on media like a video game.

Fortunately, there are two annual Kplay Fest events in South-

ern California that you can always attend! The one I attended was Kplay Fest Orange County at the Anaheim Convention Center, which takes place the weekend before Labor Day. Kplay Fest Los Angeles, at Fairplex Pomona, is another annual event taking place around the beginning of the year. Overall, Kplay Fest, along with its sister events, is a great and unique way to experience a diverse range of pop culture!