

Student Reporter

## Seoul Initiates 2026 Youth Participation Committee



**Catherine Ryu**  
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In a conference room typically reserved for policymakers, students ranging from elementary school to 20-year-olds filled the room as participants, not just observers. On March 14, the Seoul Youth Participation Committee held its opening ceremony and first official meeting of 2026, marking the beginning of a new year of youth-led policy discussion in Seoul.

The Youth Participation Committee is a government-sponsored organization that brings together students who are eager to voice their opinions on societal issues. Its purpose is simple yet ambitious: to provide adolescents a chance to identify societal issues and propose policy solutions directly to the city. In a society where young voices are usually overlooked, the committee offers a rare opportunity for them to be heard.

While the 2026 committee has only just begun, the program itself has a history of encouraging civic engagement among young people. In previous years, participants have addressed a wide range of issues, including education inequality, student mental health, and youth welfare. Most proposals have been sent to be



Members of the 2026 Seoul Youth Participation Committee gather for the first meeting of the year. [Source: Author, Catherine Ryu]

reviewed by city officials, demonstrating that youth input can extend beyond simple discussion into action. One notable example of the committee's real-world impact can be seen in the development of "smart youth zones." These areas included the installation of ground-level traffic signals designed to improve pedestrian safety for distracted smartphone users. This idea, which began as a student proposal, was ultimately reflected in actual urban infrastructures, even earning top rec-

ognition at national policy proposal competitions and receiving an award from the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family.

As a returning member, I entered this year's opening ceremony and meeting with both familiarity and curiosity. Compared to last year, the atmosphere felt more focused, with participants eager to share ideas and identify areas for change. At the same time, the structure of the committee—one that includes a wide

range of ages and a meeting once per month—presented both opportunities and challenges.

Every year, this committee is separated into a few smaller groups, each focusing on a specific area of policy. This year, these include divisions such as culture and leisure, education, career and vocational development, city monitoring, and operations, along with a separate participation group for elementary students. Last year, I was part of the city monitoring division, where members evaluated existing policies and identified areas for improvement. This year, I joined the career and vocational division, which focuses more on proposing new policies rather than reviewing existing ones.

Looking ahead, the success of the Youth Participation Committee will not only be measured by the number of successful policies produced, but by the extent to which it creates meaningful and engaging communication between students, adolescents, and the government. The committee serves as a reminder that participation doesn't start at adulthood: it can start whenever we are ready to voice opinions.

Student Reporter

## Connecting Through Korean Culture Camp



**Amber Lee**  
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La Mirada High School

As a nonprofit educational institution that teaches the Korean language, culture, and history, the Korean Institute of Southern California holds an annual History and Culture Camp, featuring high school students from each branch of the Korean Schools. This was my third year participating, and I joined the camp as a Teacher's Assistant.

The History and Culture Camp happens every year in March, with every branch having to research and present a slideshow on a chosen topic, in addition to including fun historical and cultural activities. The theme for this year was the Korean culture recognized by UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization.

In the Fullerton branch, we were assigned the topic of Cheoyongmu, a traditional Korean mask dance used to expel evil spirits and diseases, based on the legend of Cheoyeong. We first split off the 17 students who participated in different sections, and I was part of the first group that did extensive research in or-



The Fullerton Korean School's presentation team presents the slideshow made about Cheoyongmu by the research group that I was in, showcasing the hand-made masks and the different colored shirts symbolizing the attire used in the actual dance. [Source: Author, Amber Lee]

der to make a slideshow with accurate information. Before I even set foot into the camp, it felt like I had explored a lot of Korea's history and folklore through researching about Cheoyongmu.

On the day of the camp, I arrived in the morning and met up with my group to prepare for the upcoming stations for the camp. The first station I participated in was learning the Korean mask dance, also known as Talchum (Tal-choom). Although everyone

felt very awkward at first, learning the dance together with the students from all the different branches in Southern California was very fun.

The second station I participated in was the kimjang station, where we made kimchi, which I personally enjoyed doing the most. We carefully spread the gochujang paste mixed with various vegetables and fermented seafood onto each leaf of the napa cabbage, so that when it

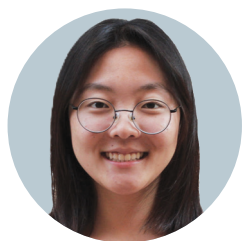
ferments, it becomes thoroughly flavorful.

After going through the two stations, the group ate delicious Bibimbap together, made by the staff and parents. Then we all met in the main area to listen to the presentations from the different school branches. We waited nervously for our group's turn and cheered on our team that was presenting. Much to our relief, our group's presentation went very smoothly and even better than our rehearsals beforehand.

The History and Culture Camp came to an end after the last presentation and a group picture. Overall, the experience was truly memorable, and I learned a lot of new things about my Korean culture, from aspects that I already knew to brand new ones. This helped me realize the importance of younger generations to connect back to their roots in delightful events like this camp, where everyone can enjoy a taste of their valuable history and culture, all while having fun with their friends and peers.

Student Reporter

## Hanbit Church's Middle School Praise Night



**Kristine Park**  
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Del Norte High School

Hanbit Church's recent Praise Night, led by the middle school praise team, brought students together for worship, praise, and community bonding, leaving a strong impression on everyone who attended. It was a great opportunity to find friends in a new community and to meet others with the same beliefs and passions for praise and worship.

To start with, at Praise Night, parents' hard work was evident in the dinner they provided. Not only was it delicious, but their love for the students shone through. Students gathered to eat and talk, settling in and getting to know one another, adding to the fellowship aspect of the night. Everyone present was able to enjoy the food and each other's company, which gave the night a great, positive start.

The Praise Night first opened with a sermon from Pastor Tim, who just recently started serving at Hanbit Church. In his sermon, he focused on the importance of savoring and enjoying youth. It was meant to encourage the growing students to not rush through this stage of life, but instead to appreciate it, grow in



At Hanbit Church's most recent Middle School Praise Night, attendees felt a strong sense of fellowship and bonding, connecting more with each other. [Source: Hanbit Church Photo Team]

faith, and build meaningful relationships. This message was very impactful and left a lasting impression on me.

Following Pastor Tim's sermon, the praise team began their setlist, with the crowd's excitement running high. One of the songs I enjoyed the most was "Another in the Fire," by Hillsong United. This song united the

crowd with its lyrics and created a powerful moment of fellowship once again. Many students sang along, fully engaged and raising their hands up high, and I could feel the crowd collectively sharing the growing enthusiasm throughout the night.

After praise, the night moved into a time of prayer. This quieter part allowed us to reflect and

connect more personally with faith. Students prayed alongside their friends while holding hands, along with Pastor Tim and their teachers. These moments helped strengthen bonds with each other and with their personal faith, as well. After prayer, the celebration portion of the night quickly followed, changing the mood to a more upbeat, uplifting, and energetic one. With songs like "Washed" by Elevation Rhythm, everyone was jumping along, singing, and praising with joy, which was thrilling to experience in person.

generate themselves. Without needing direct guidance from teachers or leaders, they took the initiative by preparing weeks beforehand, engaging fully in worship, and creating an atmosphere that felt natural and genuine.

For those who weren't able to attend, Hanbit Praise Nights offer an amazing opportunity to get involved. Whether it's through meeting new people, experiencing a deeper time of worship and fellowship, or becoming more involved with the ministry, Praise Nights are meaningful and are definitely worth attending.

Student Reporter



**Jean Lee**  
Grade 11  
Marlborough School

## Skip the Gym, Do These Classes Instead

Personally, I hate the gym. Too many people, too much noise, too many mirrors. And the music played is generic. I wouldn't consider myself a gym rat, but I love an occasional workout to relieve stress. During a busy test week, my favorite thing to do is go to a 7 PM workout class and think about how hard the workout is—nothing else. Given how stressful my past few months of Junior year have been, I've had my fair share of workout classes that weren't just in the typical gym, and these are the few I recommend.

**Hot Yoga.** This is the one I recommend doing early in the morning, preferably before school. It's exactly what the name suggests: a room heated to around 95°-105°. I've never sweated so much in a workout class. It feels life-changing, and it's as if you can feel yourself sweat out toxins. Beyond that, the class forces you to slow down and focus on breathing, which most of us forget during stressful weeks.

**Aerial Yoga.** I've always wanted to feel like I was floating,



My friends and I enjoyed Korean BBQ in Koreatown, which was a great way to recharge and enjoy some time away from the stress of school and studies. [Source: Author, Jean Lee]

and this comes pretty close. Using silk hammocks suspended in the air, aerial yoga is a combination of flexibility, corework, and

balance that makes the class feel almost weightless. At first, it may be intimidating (yes, you'll probably be upside down), but that's also what makes it so much more exciting. Surprisingly, you won't be focused on not falling, but rather on how to get into the pose and hold it.

**Pole Dancing.** Before you judge—like I did at first—hear me out. Pole classes are one of the most physically demanding workouts I've tried. It works out your whole body: the upper body strength, the core, the lower body, and your grip, all while being coordinated. While difficult, with enough classes and practice, you learn to trust your body enough to become one with

the music. Plus, the environment is supportive and encouraging, a change from the often-competitive feel of a traditional gym.

**Boxing.** I've always wanted to learn how to box, and this was the chance. These classes aren't just about aimlessly punching. You bounce, kick, and hold a plank for 2 minutes—it's a high-energy class. The one I went to had colorful flashing lights in the dark that felt like a party. With the lights off, you don't need to face judgment for being a first timer, which was nice. Boxing was one of the best ways to channel stress into something productive.

At the end of the day, working out shouldn't feel like a chore, nor should you be stressed out about it. You're doing it for yourself, and if it makes you feel negative, you shouldn't do it at all. These classes offer something different, and I love how I can move my body while actually enjoying it. So if the gym is a bit daunting, maybe it's time to skip it altogether and try something new.

Student Reporter



**Grace Song**  
Grade 8  
Lexington Junior High School

## Lexington FBLA Participates in Alzheimer's Walk

This year, Lexington Junior High started its very own FBLA, Future Business Leaders of America, chapter. As a widely known club and organization, FBLA focuses on developing leadership, business skills, and career development. With FBLA already well established at Cypress High School, a neighboring high school, the creation of a Lexington chapter allowed students to become involved at a younger age and build a foundation before transitioning into high school. Although starting a new club comes with challenges, it also creates opportunities for members to step out of their comfort zone and participate in meaningful events.

One of the most impactful events our chapter has participated in so far was the "Walk for Alzheimer's" event. Hosted by Alzheimer's Orange County, this annual walk at the Angels Stadium supports community members affected by dementia, featuring booths, activities, and entertainment.

FBLA members arrived early in the morning, around 7:30



Lexington FBLA collaborates with Cypress High FBLA and HOSA to cheer on Alzheimer's Walk participants. [Source: Melissa Anderson]

AM, and checked in at the booths before gathering as a group. We were then assigned to different spots along the walking route

where we would cheer on participants. As the walk began, we spread out with signs and bubbles, encouraging people as they passed by. Rather than walking the course ourselves, our role was focused on creating a supportive atmosphere from the sidelines throughout the walk.

While it may have seemed like a small role, it made a noticeable difference. Many walkers, some who appeared tired, smiled, waved, and expressed their appreciation as they passed. These moments were what allowed us to keep going and push through the heat and strain of our voices, for it was clear that even simple encouragement could truly make a difference.

This event was also in partnership with other organizations such as Cypress High's FBLA

chapter and HOSA (Health Occupations Students of America). Seeing these high school students actively involved helped our Lexington members better understand what FBLA can grow into beyond middle school. It was inspiring to see how different groups worked together and communicated to achieve a common goal. For many Lexington members, this was their first time participating in a large-scale community event. It showed us that FBLA is not just about meetings or business competitions, but also about supporting the community and making a positive impact.

The Walk for Alzheimer's gave Lexington FBLA a chance to be part of something bigger than just our own chapter. Even though our role was simple, it showed how small actions, like cheering someone on, can make an impact and allow others to keep walking with a smile on their face. As a newly-established club, experiences like this give members a better understanding of what it means to be involved, support others, and represent a meaningful cause.

Student Reporter



**Karis Kim**  
Grade 8  
Robert Frost Middle School

## The Secret Behind In-N-Out's Cult Following

On a sunny afternoon in California, the line outside of an In-N-Out Burger stretches around the corner, cars double-parked with eager customers waiting for their turn. It's more than just a meal; it's a ritual, a monument for locals and tourists alike. Unlike flashy fast-food chains with neon signs, In-N-Out has thrived for decades on a few simple items done exceptionally well. Behind its fresh patties, hand-cut fries, and secret menu whispers lies a powerful connection to Californian identity, loyalty, and culture. This is the story of how a humble burger joint became a beloved institution.

What started as the first drive-thru hamburger stand in 1948 by Harry Snyder (assisted by his wife, Esther Snyder) turned into one of the fastest-growing fast-food chains with over 400 locations. Harry Snyder is often credited as the man who created the first modern drive-thru in America. He focused on fresh, high-quality ingredients while wanting to maintain a simple menu to ensure efficiency. Even today, walking into any In-N-Out location feels like stepping into a space where quality and consistency matter more



Boxed Perfection: Exploring how a limited menu and "fresh-never-frozen" philosophy continue to dominate the West Coast food scene. [Source: Author, Karis Kim]

than profit.

One of the first things you notice when you step into an In-N-Out is how uncluttered everything feels. There's no overwhelming menu board with a million different options. It's just hamburgers, cheeseburgers, the Double-Double, fries, and shakes. From my experience, simplicity is what makes the food feel perfect every time. Each burger feels deliberate: the fewer the choices,

the better they can execute them. Most fast-food chains prioritize variety over quality, yet In-N-Out's focused approach makes every bite feel meaningful, which keeps people wanting more.

Besides simplicity, it's the quality that keeps me and so many others coming back. The beef is never frozen, and even the shakes taste like they were blended just moments ago. There's care in every step, from the grill to the counter.

This is the kind of attention that turns a simple cheeseburger into something you can actually savor. You can taste it, and it's obvious why people will drive past dozens of other fast-food options just for one perfect meal (including Michael B. Jordan, who went to In-N-Out after winning his First Oscar).

Another thing that makes In-N-Out even better is that it doesn't cost a lot to eat there. A Double-Double or a cheeseburger feels special, like a treat, but it won't break your wallet. You get fresh, high-quality food without paying fancy restaurant prices, which is one of the reasons people keep coming back. (Good food that's affordable and satisfying is hard to find these days.)

So what's the secret behind In-N-Out's cult following? It isn't gimmicks or aggressive marketing; it's authenticity, consistency, and a sense of community that turns a simple burger into a shared experience. From the first bite to the last, to the simplicity of the menu, the insider culture, and the connection to California itself, In-N-Out has built more than a restaurant. And for anyone who's been there, it's easy to see why that loyalty isn't going anywhere anytime soon.