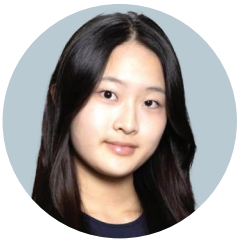


Editors Column

Ethical Debates Take Students to North Carolina



Angel Song
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One of the most interesting activities one can pursue in high school is competing in the National High School Ethics Bowl (NHSEB) competition. Students are expected to form teams of 3-5 and discuss complex ethical scenarios, while answering questions from the opposing team and three judges, in order to defend their stance. The scenarios are presented to teams before the competition, but they do not find out which specific one they will use in a round until after they enter the competition room, making meticulous preparation a requirement for success.

Unlike debate, where aggressive argumentation is often the norm, a successful ethics bowl round looks like a polite discussion between students who are all there with the same goal: to advance their understanding of ethics pertaining to real-world situations. At the end, the judges, who are often lawyers, professors, coaches, or PhD students with backgrounds in ethics, determine the winners.

Our team first went to the local competition at Chapman University and advanced to regionals. Once teams pass the regional competitions, they are eligible to advance to nationals, which takes place in North Carolina. The na-



The 2026 National High School Ethics Bowl competition, where many others and I competed, was held at Duke University. [Source: Author, Angel Song]

tional competition normally occurs at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, whose ethics department founded the NHSEB. This year, however, due to a separate event happening on campus, nationals were moved to Duke University, situated approximately ten miles away in Durham. I actually appreciated this change; as a junior preparing to apply to colleges over the summer, this meant I was able to visit a university I was interested

in applying to. Although we were not competing on the main campus, our team still had the opportunity to check out the entire area after our rounds were over.

Heading to nationals was a fulfilling experience, not only because of the meticulous preparation that went into practice sessions and weekend discussions. Our team met over spring break, and in the days leading up to the national com-

petition, we met during lunch to discuss and practice presenting our stances to ensure we were ready for nationals.

At the competition, we had to win at least three out of four preliminary rounds in order to advance to the quarterfinals. We went into our first round confident that we were going to win. Unfortunately, the odds were not in our favor. The scenario we had received was not one we were completely comfortable discussing, and we lost. However, through teamwork and dedication, we were able to win four consecutive rounds with 3-0 decisions, helping us get past the quarterfinals. We walked into our semifinal round knowing we were going against a very experienced team, but we were also ready to listen and learn from their performance.

All in all, I'm proud of our team for having made it into the final four teams and placing third nationally. Succeeding in the ethics bowl requires an understanding of ethics, adaptation, and good teamwork. My experience at nationals made me appreciate the beauty of critical thinking and helped me realize how helpful the ethics bowl could be for my future.

Student Reporter

Analog Culture: Old is Gold



Jayden Kim
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STEM Magnet

Analog culture is a lifestyle focused on offline activities to counter present-day digital burnout. The trend prioritizes real-world interaction and active engagement through activities such as reading physical books, listening to vinyl records, and using film cameras. These analog activities are known as "productive friction," while the never-ending loop of content on digital platforms is considered "frictionless." These activities require patience and sustained attention, in contrast to the usual mindless doomscrolling.

Physical movements like touching and turning pages, the crackle of a record, or the smell of developer chemicals are sensory triggers that "anchor" people in the present time and combat hyper-digital living. Digital content is often viewed as "rented" or "ephemeral," while culture reclaims ownership through physical contact with objects, acting as lasting artifacts of one's identity.

In an era of AI-generated so-called perfection, analog cul-



A Compact Disk (CD) that came with a modern album cover shows how analog culture is still present in the music industry today. [Source: Author, Jayden Kim]

ture celebrates flaws like grainy film photos, handwritten journals with messy handwriting, and happy accidents that all feel unique because they are genuine.

Constant connectivity and the pressure of "personal branding" online have led to widespread exhaustion. Analog living offers a collective exhale from the surveillance and algorithmic curation of social media. As more digital devices minimize the

need to think and create, people seek out hobbies that foster the feeling of accomplishment and authenticity. Pottery or doodling are actions that an AI can not replicate without human insight and imagination.

For older generations, the past is comforting because it's knowable. For Gen Z and younger Millennials, analog feels like an authentic alternative to the digital world they know.

Lately, more people have been participating in a digital detox. In fact, sales for vinyl records have reached \$1.7 billion in 2024, marking nearly two decades of active growth. Some audiences buy records despite not owning a player, just to have a tangible connection to their favorite artist. The once considered obsolete cassette sales jumped 74% in the past few years as a low-tech alternative to streaming. The demand for physical film and instant cameras has also reached a record high. Needlepoint, crochet, and knitting are a couple of physical hobbies that have seen a massive

renaissance, with searches for beginner needlepoint items rising over 200% over the years. Other hand-made crafts, like pottery, sourdough bread-making, and even rockhounding, are popular for the mind and body connection.

Analog culture has also spread to community-based activities such as board games and puzzles. These activities are now reclaiming family nights and serving as a way to bond without electronics. There has been a surge in in-person clubs for activities like bird-watching, running, and silent reading. Intentional attendance at live readings, independent magazine launches, and live podcast recordings is seen as a way to find interest that digital platforms cannot scale.

Ultimately, analog culture is a "sensory anchor" in an increasingly virtual world, proving that while digital tools offer efficiency, analog experiences offer meaning. By choosing the tangible over the pixelated, people are reclaiming their connection to the physical world.

Student Reporter

IA Students Explore Through Voice Acting Masterclass



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Recently, the Integrated Arts conservatory at the Orange County School of the Arts (OCSA) had the special opportunity to attend a masterclass, an event that happens only a couple of times a school year. Since it is a specialized learning session where an expert artist teaches others, it can be hard to schedule due to the artist's availability and other conflicting events.

First, with OCSA being an art school, the arts program comes with many privileges. Other than the students' daily conservatory classes or art electives, they are occasionally given the chance to try something different than their normal school schedules. Since the Integrated Arts (IA) conservatory focuses on exploring all art forms, such as creative writing, musical theater, film, and more, the knowledge gained from these unique events can be applied to any art category.

This year, the IA conservatory director invited voice actor and comedian John Paul Karliak, also known as JP Karliak, to OCSA to lead this year's masterclass. As the students filed into the large theat-



Integrated Arts students line up to take pictures with voice actor JP Karliak after the exciting masterclass. [Source: Author, Ava Je]

er for his presentation, the excitement and anticipation quickly grew.

To welcome the guest speaker, the IA director showed a video on Karliak's most famous roles, the most notable being Boss Baby himself from Netflix's Boss Baby: Back in Business and Boss Baby: Back in the Crib TV series. Other roles he has previously played include Morph in X-Men '97 and the Joker in DC: Dark Legion. Especially since he has played a variety of roles that IA students have grown up

watching, he received much support and appreciation from the audience.

Firstly, the conservatory director allowed Karliak to answer questions from the audience, with one student asking what his favorite character he ever played was and how he manages his personal and work life. Karliak discussed his own experiences and funny stories. For example, he answered a student's question on the differences between working together with the cast at a studio versus working from home.

Karliak got many laughs as he shared amusing stories about his different experiences from when he was recording for one of his favorite roles. However, the students' favorite part of the masterclass was when Karliak showed them how to manipulate their voices in order to create different sounds. While explaining the different parts of the mouth used for voice acting, they experimented with different sounds alongside Karliak.

To make it more hands-on, the actor invited a few people onstage to try creating their own unique characters using what they had just learned. And as laughter filled the room when he did his most recognized voices, the students deepened their knowledge while creating lasting memories.

After lining up for photos with Karliak and thanking him, the IA students walked out of the theater with a new skill and a rare privilege experience. In the end, this event showed how masterclasses offered at the Orange County School of the Arts make a huge impact on students, something not every school offers.

Student Reporter

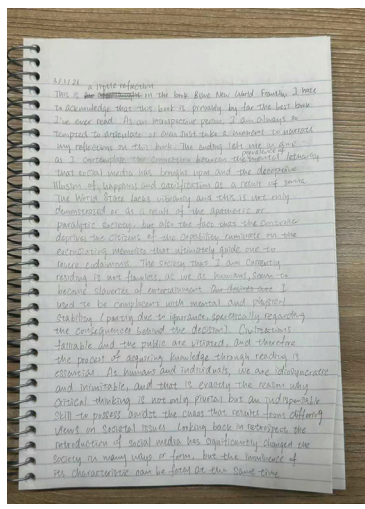
Pages of Growth: How Journaling Transformed My Inner Life



Linda Li
Grade 11
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For the past few months, I have been consistently journaling to fulfill the commitment that I made at the beginning of this year. On New Year's Eve, my family gathered in the living room, and I declared that I wanted to become an introspective young woman not only by perusing literature, but also by writing. Strangely enough, the practice has provided me with immeasurable stamina to stay persistent, especially during this hectic time when exams are coming up. However, before this moment, I thought that the claim—that it was a waste of time as a junior applying for college—could perfectly justify my idleness and haughtiness.

The abrupt transformation in mindset stems not only from a random opportunity to test whether the method is efficacious. Last summer, I attended a book discussion held by one of my closest friends, and she shared a book that she had just finished reading. Her presentation focused largely on the ideologies and the intricacy behind the author's arguments, which captivated me so much that I lost



A page I wrote after finishing the book *Brave New World*, in which I jotted down the thoughts that intrigued me and expressed my understanding and interpretation of the book, as well as my reverence and appreciation for Aldous Huxley. [Source: Author, Linda Li]

track of time. During the session, she emphasized the importance of knowing oneself comprehensively through self-reflection and seeking the most authentic side of oneself, and journaling is one of the best forms to achieve this purpose. Therefore, hold-

ing on to the conviction that I would never spend the last portion of my day documenting my thoughts, I picked up my pen and started writing. The process was frankly life-changing and even sacred, as I completely immersed myself in a conversation between the me whom everyone knows and the other me lurking behind my face. As I continued scribbling, the thoughts flowed into my mind like an inexorable tide, and I felt immense satisfaction in visualizing and even later articulating them to the other me who is dependent on people's views, opinions, and expectations.

When the timer beeped, I was so engaged that I could not pull myself away from the situation until I realized that it was time for me to leave. I felt a plethora of feelings after the process: initially confusion and disdain, and later happiness and pride. It was so magical that it was as if I had transcended back to my childhood and found my childish, innocent, and complacent self. That day, the rain poured down harshly, doing no justice to my hair and makeup, but, surpris-

ingly, I could not have cared less. The extreme amount of joy overthrew the anxious and insecure me, and I ran back home, without even taking the bus, to indulge myself in the situation. When I finally returned home, I was hardly capable of containing my desire to jot down the thoughts that were inspired during my commute, and, believe it or not, they still linger in my mind as I am writing this piece.

Overall, now that I have been journaling for over three months, I have noticed changes, including an alacrity toward opinions, an ability to think critically, and even the capacity to eloquently communicate my ideas. Most importantly, I have learned to reflect on my own life and what I have experienced, which were oftentimes excited by trivial matters, and to embrace myself and understand my needs, which will hopefully carry me to a point where I can grant myself the freedom to show my genuine and vulnerable self. The meaning of journaling lies in the quote by author Anaïs Nin: "We write to taste life twice, in the moment and in retrospect."

Student Reporter

A Digital Parasite: Mobile Devices and Their Harmful Influence



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Science Academy
STEM Magnet

In today's world, phones feel almost impossible to live without. They wake us up, help us with schoolwork, and keep us entertained. As a student who spends hours surrounded by people scrolling through screens daily, I've started to see our devices less like tools and more like something that steals a part of us. The more I talked with classmates, parents, and teachers, the more I realized how common and reliant we become on our phones.

Although phones are not inherently malicious, excessive usage, despite several alternatives, presents many drawbacks. Studies from PubMed Central state that overusing your smartphone is directly tied to mental and physical health issues that create difficulties in cognitive-emotional regulation. However, because our devices have become a part of our daily routines, smartphone addiction is prevalent in modern society.

After my classmates shared some thoughts about their phone habits, almost everyone admit-



Modern entertainment from smartphones replaces traditional offline practices, proven to be more harmful than good. [Source: Author, Tae Lee]

ted that they felt dependent on their devices. One friend told me that the first thing she does each morning is check notifications, even before getting out of bed. Another said he sidetracks and loses track of time due to scrolling. Many agreed that phones make it harder to focus, to the point where even a single vibration pulls them out of whatever they were doing.

Parents I interviewed see a different side of the issue. One

mom discussed how she notices conversations at home fade the moment someone pulls out a phone. Another shared that phones make it harder for teens to sleep, especially when "one last scroll" keeps them awake longer than they planned. Listening to another perspective showed me just how easily our priorities are rewritten.

Teachers shared yet another point of view. Nearly all of them said that phones are the

biggest classroom distraction they face. When students are not using their devices, having a phone nearby creates a mental distraction, constantly tempting them to reach for it. One teacher said that students' ability to sit with boredom, think deeply, or stay focused has noticeably decreased over the past few years. "Without the recent cell phone ban policy, it was like competing with an entire world living inside a screen," she added.

As students, we can not pretend that phones are not a part of our lives. If we start paying attention to how they affect us, we can appreciate the life around us just by replacing our devices with something else. Setting boundaries, putting the phone away during conversations, or taking breaks from social media may sound small, but it's these actions that help us regain control. The digital parasite only feeds when we let it, and knowing that gives us the choice to push back. So I encourage you, make a commitment to take some time to set down your phone and enjoy the alternatives that life gives us.

Student Reporter

LA Transit: How Will it Affect Us?



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STEM Magnet

As Los Angeles prepares to host many major global events like the FIFA 2026 World Cup and the 2028 Summer Olympics, the city is facing pressure to improve how people move around the huge city. With millions of visitors expected, transportation has become one of Los Angeles' concerns. However, Metro is not just proposing new transportation projects to control large events, but it is also introducing never-before-seen projects to improve everyday mobility for commuters. By expanding rail and bus lines to span across LA County, the city aims to reduce freeway congestion and make daily commutes more efficient through innovative ideas.

For the past few years, Los Angeles has been expanding and modernizing its transportation networks through projects led by the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority. One key project is the extension of the rail lines, specifically the D Line subway, which will connect Downtown LA all the way to UCLA. They have also recently approved the K Line extension, which will allow riders to travel all the way from Torrance to the Hollywood Bowl, while passing the Los Angeles In-



7th St/Metro Center Station, which serves as the busiest and major transport hub for traveling across Los Angeles. [Source: Author, Yale Lee]

ternational Airport along the way, easing traffic around the airport and offering smoother commutes for residents and visitors.

Beyond the extension of rail lines, the city is also investing in bus rapid transit, bike lanes, and encouraging the construction of pedestrian-friendly infrastructures. Also, with many Los Angeles officials entertaining the idea of a "no-car / transit-first Olympics," the long-standing problem of traffic congestion and pollution can be

temporarily reduced.

Nevertheless, in the long term, these transportation improvements could significantly impact the residents of Los Angeles and the deep-seated issues the city struggles to deal with. First, the expansion of transit lines could reduce the city's heavy dependence on cars. Historically, the city is well known for its car culture and the hour-long traffic jams on the freeway, but improved coverage and reliability of public transit

could encourage more drivers to switch over to riding the bus. This would not only ease rush hour traffic but also lower the amount of greenhouse gas emissions into our atmosphere. Second, better transportation can increase access to jobs, education, and other resources. For example, residents of underserved communities would have an easier time commuting to their place of employment or schools.

However, these developments not only come with benefits but also major challenges. The costs of these projects are expensive and can lead to temporary disruptions during construction. Also, the concern of gentrification in neighborhoods near where the stations are built could push out long-term residents due to rising property values.

Overall, the transportation efforts the city is making for the World Cup and Olympics have the potential to leave a helpful impact on the residents of the city. If implemented effectively, these improvements would transform Los Angeles so that it could be more connected and accessible for both residents and visitors.