

Editors Column

The Benefits of Online Learning

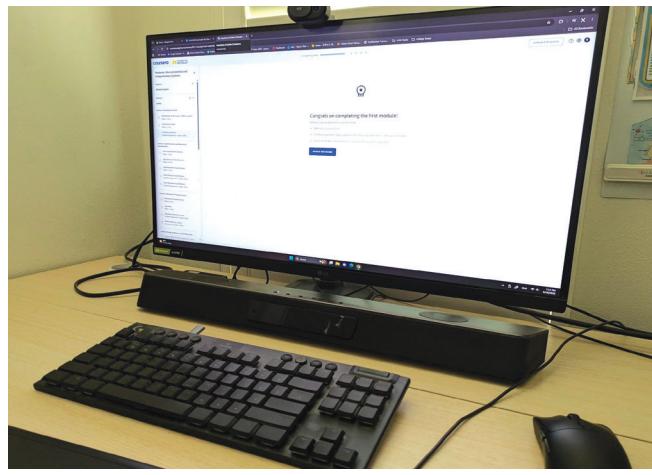


Yejoon Choi
Grade 11
Northwood High School

Following the progression of technology along with its drastically increased demand from the COVID pandemic, many educational activities transitioned from writing away under the warm glow of libraries to now typing away at a computer from home. Although a less aesthetic novelty, this change and development into online learning has brought many new advantages in education.

Many learning opportunities for students of all ages are often blocked and prevented by barriers. When it comes to such restrictions, prerequisites for a class, enrollment requirements, or monetary problems may come to mind, but one of the major issues for determined scholars can be geographical barriers. Attending classes would be excruciating if the school hosting the class takes hours to drive to, or if they are from a different state, and such barriers are substantial discouragements from applying for classes. In the past, due to such limitations, many who might have wished to study specific courses might not have been able to fulfil this aspiration due to this restriction.

However, with the assistance



Online courses allow their students to study from the comfort of their homes, trading textbooks and paper sheets with just one computer!
[Source: Author, Yejoon Choi]

of online learning, these problems become a non-issue. Many websites or organizations that offer online courses, such as Khan Academy or Coursera, are excellent sources of education and knowledge that can range from teaching the foundations of science all the way to offering courses taught by universities. Beyond that, by taking online courses offered by many colleges themselves, such as from community colleges, you can gain transferable college cred-

its or even earn certificates for completing specific courses.

Programs that do not require online meetings can also solve issues from scheduling conflicts. The lack of a set date for meetings or work besides assignment deadlines provides the ability to take multiple courses with an online course, rather than struggling to balance back-to-back class schedules. Additionally, such an absence of work meetings can allow this classwork to be done at any time

of the day and from any location, which allows for easy studying time management.

Personally speaking, after having taken multiple online courses and studying for a course on Musculoskeletal Anatomy and The Integumentary Systems from the University of Michigan this summer, I found the many benefits of these online courses, ranging from their flexibility in schedule to the removal of locational restrictions, to have been crucial in my educational journey. I would not have been able to attend any of these classes and complete those courses without the implementation of such a system.

As a constantly developing and now irreplaceable tool in the education system, online learning has brought many solutions to the woes of eager scholars regarding finding and completing courses that they have found a deep passion and interest in. I am very curious to observe this technology's future improvements based on its diversification of filling many niches in education.

Student Reporter

Charlie and the Chocolate Factory: A Student Production Ballet



Irene Kim
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On June 13, Champaign Urbana Ballet put on the 13th Annual Tobey J. Martinez Student Production: Charlie and the Chocolate Factory. Unlike the company's larger productions, such as The Nutcracker, which welcomes dancers from the community to join by audition, the annual Student Production is entirely created and performed by company members.

The Student Production Crew, which is in charge of work behind the scenes, is made up of Champaign Urbana Ballet's Senior Company. The production director assigns roles to the rest of the production crew, ranging from casting to choreographing individual and group variations (dances), designing costumes, organizing props, and even designing advertisement posters and tickets. The other parts of the company, Junior Company, Apprentices, and Trainees, perform. Company members meet throughout early summer to make the production happen in mid-June.

This year, the production was *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, based on the 1964 children's



Champaign Urbana Ballet Company members brought fun to their summer Student Production rehearsals with popsicles.
[Source: Ali Lewis]

novel by Roald Dahl. Like the original story, the production walked through Charlie's magical visit to Willy Wonka's chocolate factory, featuring four other major characters: Augustus Gloop, Veruca Salt, Violet Beauregarde, and Mike Teavee. Variations for each role brought out their individual character, and the costumes, which were similar to those of the movie adaptation, made the ballet friendly for audience mem-

bers familiar with the story. The candyland-esque backdrop and Oompa Loompa-sized trees ornamented with candy used as stage decorations illustrated the magical scene of Wonka's factory and added to the familiar whimsical energy.

Before the ballet began, as the production directors introduced themselves and the production, they also led a mini-lesson on mimes appearing throughout the

performance. As ballet is a dance performed with orchestral music, communication is done entirely through mimes without any sound. Though I came in already familiar with this, having had previous dance experience, I could understand how the various hand gestures and facial expressions could cause confusion for those in the audience who were less familiar. Especially for the productions based on more popular stories (in comparison to those that are classical ballet), Student Production tends to have a younger, more casual audience. With that in mind, the short mime lesson was helpful for the audience to follow the performance.

Champaign Urbana Ballet's Student Production of Charlie and the Chocolate Factory was a thorough, yet refreshing adaptation of the original story with creative use of props, familiar costumes, small easter eggs hidden throughout the production, and a mini mime lesson for the new audience. I was impressed by how the company stayed true to the story and to the artistry of ballet while still being thoughtful of the audience.

Student Reporter

The Race to Transition: Are Electric Vehicles the Solution?

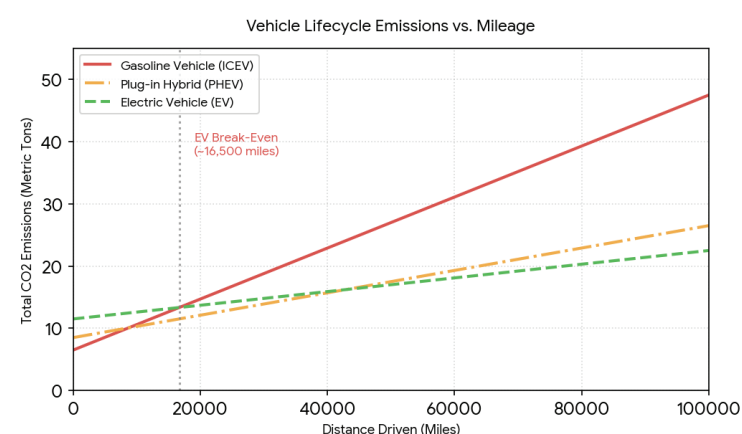


Jayden Kim
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Starting in the early 20th century, electric vehicles have posed a point of interest as they are quiet and environmentally beneficial. Since that time, there have been more advantages to owning electric cars. However, there have also been limits to owning an EV.

Electric vehicles are generally more expensive than gas cars, making them less accessible to many. The electric grid may not be ready for a rapid increase in demand, and charging infrastructure is insufficient in many areas. In colder regions, reports show that EVs have higher malfunction rates, leaving drivers stranded. In addition, critics argue that government mandates are an overreach and that the market should dictate the transition of gas to electric vehicles.

While electric cars decrease carbon emissions when driving, manufacturing the EV batteries actually creates more carbon emissions than producing conventional vehicles, requiring years of driving before reaching a "break-even" point. Though it may appear to be more environmentally friendly, the building process is often not



Although electric vehicles help with decreasing carbon emissions, are they 100%? Or do we have better choices?
[Source: Jayden Kim]

taken into account when calculating CO2 emissions. Furthermore, lithium, cobalt, and nickel mining cause ecological damage, such as water depletion in South America and potential child labor in dangerous cobalt mines.

Public charging stations are often unreliable and sparse in rural areas. Experts say that current electrical grids are not able to handle the 40% increase in power consumption projected by 2050 if EVs are fully adopted. In addition, the possibility of grid failure can happen from relying on a single

electricity source. This would lead to power outages that leave entire populations unable to commute.

In addition, there are many economic barriers to obtaining these electric cars. EVs typically cost about \$10,000 more, on average, than gas-powered vehicles, and that's just the upfront costs. Installing public charging ranges from \$2,200 to \$350,000, creating a barrier for public access. The batteries are the hardest to manufacture and the most expensive part of the vehicle, which also requires high maintenance costs,

widening the gap even more.

If gas-powered is unsustainable and electric-powered is economically inaccessible, then what other options are available? Some solutions are Hybrids (HEV) and Plug-in Hybrids (PHEV). Hybrids are often seen as the most practical transition because they require no change in driver behavior or infrastructure. PHEVs allow drivers to do 90% of their daily commuting on electricity while retaining a gas engine for the 10% of long-distance trips.

Another option is Hydrogen Fuel Cells. Hydrogen is the cleanest possible fuel due to its tailpipe emission being water vapor. It's increasingly viewed as the future for heavy-duty transport. Hydrogen tanks have fast refueling and a higher energy-to-weight ratio than batteries, making them more viable.

In the end, the race to end the use of fossil fuels will likely not end with electric vehicles alone. Instead, the future of transportation is trending towards a diverse, multi-path ecosystem where technology is matched to specific needs.

Student Reporter

On Transitioning from Middle High School



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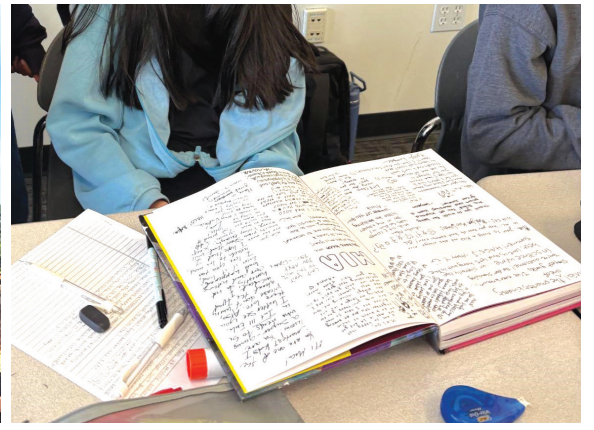
While for many students, summer break is the time for relaxation and fun, for some, it is the time for big changes and preparation for the upcoming school year. And especially eighth graders transitioning into high school freshmen, some students are feeling the pressure of change.

After a somber farewell to middle school, old teachers, and friends, eighth graders all face a great switch from the past few years. Whether they are attending the same school or transferring to a different one, school life will look different for everyone once summer ends.

While personally, I am excited for the transition between middle and high school and the new opportunities I will get, this is not the case for everyone. When asking one of my friends about her thoughts on this change, she expressed, "I'm sad to move on because I really liked middle school and I made a lot of connections with my teachers, so I don't want to leave. I had the best schedule during middle school, and I'm going to miss having all my classes every single day and having the best P.E. period with all my



Students feel a mix of joy and sadness as they attend their middle school promotion and prepare for their upcoming freshman year. [Source: Author, Ava Je]



Eighth graders signed yearbooks on the last day of middle school, marking their nervous and exciting transition into high school. [Source: Author, Ava Je]

friends." Another student moving on to a different school added on, "I'm sad that middle school has ended this early, and I'm going to miss so many of my friends. High school is going to get really stressful, especially during my junior and senior years, since my workload is going to increase a lot."

Contrarily, other students shared their excitement for the year ahead and the new opportunities of moving on to high school, such as electives. One student commented, "I'm excited to finally get to walk to school and get to

be a part of my school's choir and performances. I can't wait for all of the different experiences I'll get to be a part of." Finally, another student stated, "While there are cons, I still know that high school is going to be a fun four years, and I'm excited about the new friendships I'm going to create, and I think we should value our time there, as it will pass by really fast."

Ultimately, these students' responses show how the transition between middle and high school results in a variety of emotions for each person. However, they also

show how the new experiences ahead of them will bring unexpected opportunities and relationships that will make high school just as memorable as middle school was. While leaving behind old campuses, teachers, and friends is a con, the opportunity to meet new ones encourages students to face the upcoming school year while still keeping in touch with those from eighth grade. So, while the school year has ended and they face more work, they carry on their memories with them as new freshmen and look forward to their electives, new friends, and more.

Student Reporter

My Unforgettable Summer Vacation in China



Jisu Wi
Grade 9
New Covenant Academy

Following the 2025-2026 school year, my family planned a short vacation to China since they have stopped requiring visas for citizens of South Korea and select countries when visiting for 30 days or less. We stayed in Guangzhou, a city in China that is best known as a major trading port, for a week. While we were there, the weather was extremely hot and humid with frequent rains. Despite this poor weather, I had a fun time in China.

There were many foods and dishes I tried during the vacation. My family especially enjoyed eating regional cuisines, specifically those of Sichuan and Hunan, as they perfectly suited our taste. Both cuisines are typically spicy. I personally enjoyed Sichuan Hot Pot and Mala Xiangguo, which is a spicy numbing stir-fry pot. Although these dishes can be found in America, the originals made in China possess unique characteristics that are often lost in the dishes made in the US.

The most memorable thing that I did was race cars. It was scary at first since the cars were going very fast and the



A: Chinese food served as the best part during my vacation, especially the Sichuan Hot Pot. [Source: Author, Jisu Wi]



Racing cars provided a fun experience and a nice breeze in the humid weather of Guangzhou, China. [Source: Author, Jisu Wi]

curves were very sharp. It was hard to control the vehicle in the beginning, but once I got used to it, it was much easier. So, I enjoyed driving from then on. It was very relaxing and a time when I cleared my mind and solely focused on driving. Also, the experience was surprisingly refreshing because of the breeze created by driving at high speed in the extremely humid weather.

One of the most interesting parts of the trip was the McDonald's in China. Most of the core items at McDonald's in America can be found in China as well. However, a big difference is that China McDonald's

sells a variety of chicken items, including bone-fried chicken and spicy chicken wings. Another interesting part is that in China, it has become uncommon to pay in cash or card, so many places don't accept it. Instead, everyone uses Weixin Pay, which is similar to Apple Pay but can only be used through China's social communication app called WeChat. Since Weixin Pay is connected to a bank account, a visitor might have a hard time using it. However, Weixin Pay also provides a wallet system that stores money received in your WeChat wallet. So, that money can be used just as well, but it's simply not connected to a bank

account. My experience in China was new, exciting, and peaceful. Most importantly, it refreshed me from a tiring school year. However, one challenging part was that China uses the Great Firewall system, which blocks all foreign websites and apps, including Google, Instagram, and YouTube. So, many things can only be accessed through a VPN. Because of this, it was challenging for me to communicate or contact others, as it takes away freedom and restricts the use of familiar apps. Despite this hardship, my vacation in China was very fun to the point that it is unforgettable.

Student Reporter

The Perfect Time for "Hobby Maxxing"



Charis Kim
Grade 10
The Science Academy
STEM Magnet

Summer is finally here! A time full of warm sun, tanning by the beach, hanging out with friends, and eventually feeling bored. For me, the start of summer was full of excitement, but over time, it feels as if there is too much time and too little to do. The solution to this problem? Hobby maxxing! Hobby maxxing is a lifestyle trend that fills your calendar with new activities and skills. Today, I'll be introducing some activities to keep you entertained and productive over the summer.

Learning an Instrument: Pick up the old guitar in the corner of your room, or brush off the dust on the piano and start playing! This summer, dedicate your time to mastering your favorite song on an instrument. Learn how to read sheet music, play chord progressions, and maybe even improvise. Choose an instrument and make it your own form of expression.

Deep Cleaning: Clean up that mess you've been procrastinating on cleaning up. Turn on your favorite music, pick up old clothes, reorganize a scattered mess, and dedicate a day to creating a cleaner



Strolling through the California African American Museum, I explored and learned about the history of music/media, just one of the many fun things to do over the summer months. [Source: Author, Charis Kim]

living space. Have fun with music while checking off a task that's been on your to-do list since January.

Start A Blog: With a camera, record all of your experiences and memories you make over the summer. Record even the smallest moments, take pictures with your loved ones, your food, the sky, and anything else you are grateful for! Compile all of the video clips and pictures, and rewatch how you spent your summer once the fall

rolls around.

Journaling: (Creative Writing/ Scrapbooking) Write down all of your miscellaneous ideas, create a fictional story, or write poems about anything on your mind! Collect old tickets or receipts and create a collage in your journal, decorating the page with various stickers and stamps.

DIY Crafts: Search up YouTube videos and create something

with your hands! Thrift-flip the ugly shirt you bought at Goodwill, learn how to arrange flowers into a beautiful bouquet, knit a shirt for winter, create jewelry, or sun-print shirts! Invite your friends and use scraps and materials you have at home.

Bake/Cook: Learn how to make dishes around the world every week, or purchase a cookbook and try to recreate every recipe. You are able to learn something new while creating delicious food for yourself and your family!

Go to a Museum: I think going to a museum is one of the most interesting side-quests I've done this summer. Los Angeles is home to over 100 museums and galleries. It is so interesting to learn about the history behind musicians, artists, and even civilizations. Looking at and analyzing artwork with a sweet drink is a great way to spend your evening.

These are just some activities to create a fun, productive, and busy summer. What are your plans over the summer? What activity do you want to try out?