

Editors Column

Growing Through Leadership Once Again



Joey Kwak
Grade 12
CCA

Returning to the Leadership Development Camp (LDC) felt both familiar and new to me. I recognized activities, the campsite, and traditions that had made me want to come back, but this time I returned with a new perspective and goal. Now in my second year as a staffer, I looked forward to not only having fun and meeting new people, but also supporting the new staff and delegates while continuing to grow as a leader myself. I wanted to give new delegates the same memorable experience I had in my first year.

Being a returning staffer was a completely different experience from my first year staffing experience. I was less stressed and more excited to experience camp again since I now had much more experience. Coming back, I felt confident and more prepared to take initiative when something needed to be done. I took on the role of a crew leader, which was a completely different role than as a Heart 2 Heart (H2H) leader in my first year staff year. As an H2H leader, I was responsible for guiding meaningful conversa-



Caption A: A group photo of the yellow crew, also called the Yellow Fellows, of LDC 2026 with the staffers in the front and delegates in the back. [Source: Author, Joey Kwak]

tions with delegates, whereas as a crew leader, I had a less active role in many of the activities. I think one of the most meaningful parts of being a returning staffer was being able to not only support the delegates in becoming better leaders but also the new staffers who do not have as much experience as I do. I was able to

learn that leadership is not always being the loudest person in the room but making space for other people to take initiative and encourage them to participate and grow as a leader. During this year's camp, I was able to provide help for the new staffers and make space for them to improve their leadership skills while si-

multaneously growing as a leader myself.

Even though I was a returning staffer, this did not mean I had everything figured out or that everything went according to my plan. Being on the multimedia committee, I had to help manage the audio and video equipment, including setting up microphones and projectors for different activities. At times, there would be technical problems that would come up unexpectedly, which I had to adapt to and solve as quickly as possible in order to allow for the camp to run smoothly. These challenges allowed me to learn how to stay calm during stressful times and be flexible in adapting to any situation.

I think this year I was able to enjoy camp more than my first year of staffing and was able to make more meaningful bonds with the delegates. It also made me realize how much I have grown as a leader and as a person since my first experience at LDC. I came back hoping I could provide the same memorable experience to the delegates and was able to leave with a new family of people I can always lean on.

Student Reporter

Two Schools On Shared Ground



Tae Lee
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STEM Magnet

Oftentimes, entering high school is a major change in many people's lives. After spending three years in middle school, students become familiar with their school's layout. They can navigate through classes easily, greeting and conversing with other classmates or teachers along the way. By pursuing further education, the process repeats itself, demanding more responsibility and maturity.

Though unusual, I happened to attend a school, Science Academy, that connected both middle and high school without needing to transition to another learning center. As the name suggests, this school focuses on strengthening young adults' interests in STEM, pushing challenging expectations that only the most passionate can meet. On top of that, we also shared the campus with another school, East Valley High School, for many of the locals in North Hollywood. Unlike Science Academy, East Valley had problematic, obstinate high schoolers who were academically disengaged. Despite our vastly different academic paths and daily schedules, sharing a campus ultimately created a connection between the two student bodies.

Managing such diversity and



East Valley High School and Science Academy students celebrating their third football win as a conjoined team. [Source: Author, Tae Lee]

combining two distinct school cultures on one campus came with many difficulties. Ranging from sixth graders to seniors, managing the campus required balancing countless factors: middle and high school counseling, prom, homecoming, sports, clubs, and bell schedules. Middle school was separated from high school by having different teachers and classes located on different floors. The two schools were divided by having different schedules, ending one school earlier and with the inclusion of their own lunch

period. Connecting these different groups came down to two decisive programs: athletics and youth leadership.

Mixed sports teams were where those initial barriers between the schools disappeared. By sharing an athletics team, student-athletes from both Science Academy and East Valley High School competed under the same name, holding the same pride. This is where I personally met new faces that could not have been possible without a joint ath-

letics program. Spending hours together throughout the summer, doing conditioning drills, and watching exciting Friday night football games, everyone looked beyond academic labels and focused on working as a team. The addition of occasional playful teasing about our differences in academics made the group connection feel more genuine and like family. Fighting for the same wins on the field quickly turned strangers into close friends and trusted teammates.

Beyond athletics, the two student bodies actively collaborate with their creative ideas. From time to time, student councils and ASB officers work together to organize unified school events, including joint pep rallies that bring both populations into the same gymnasium. Planning these events required constant communication, compromise, and shared effort to create a unified campus spirit, welcoming our differences and giving us the opportunity to meet people with the same interests.

Ultimately, sharing the campus broadened perspectives of both schools and grades, demonstrating that common goals and shared experiences can steadily connect vastly diverse backgrounds.

Student Reporter

Cooling Off at Turtle Back Zoo



Ashley Kim
Grade 7
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Middle School

Escaping the scorching heat, our school field trip visited the zoo's touch tank, which became a special adventure. During my summer school field trip to the Turtle Back Zoo, I had the opportunity to explore and learn about different wildlife animals. The trip was definitely a fun way to step away from math and English and instead learn outside of the classroom. However, the scorching heat made me want to go home. It was one of those days when it was abnormally hot. Yet, one of the most memorable parts of the trip was visiting the touch tank. I got to have a close encounter with the cownose rays and other marine life. Being able to see and touch these creatures made it both exciting and educational.

At first, the cownose rays looked unusual to me. I had seen pictures of them, but never experienced them in person. When I entered the area, the cool air hit me in the face, refreshing my body. I was amused by the numerous animals there. Still, the cownose rays were the big eye-catchers. Their kite-shaped, smooth, flat



A cownose stingray swimming along the ledge of an interactive touch tank. The body is kite-shaped, tan in color, and it glides through the clear blue water. [Source: Author, Ashley Kim]

backs and their wide fins glided elegantly through the water. After I watched other students interact with them, I decided to give it a try. As I put my hand underwater, their skin felt way smoother than I imagined. What shocked me even more was that they seemed unfazed by all of those hands brushing through them. They seemed very calm and not

aggressive at all. They simply continued moving through water as if nothing happened. I even captured lots of photos, which saved memories for me in the future. Unfortunately, it was soon time to return to the bus and go home. Later, while watching one of the videos I took of the cownose ray, it realized that it sort of jumped up at me as the camera captured

the bottom of its mouth. It was really shaped like a cow's nose, just like its name. I decided that I wanted to learn more about them, so I began my research. I mostly learned that they are not typically harmful to humans. They have mild venom, but only sting when they feel threatened, are accidentally stepped on, or are cornered. This is why they are put in touch tanks. People can have the fun of gently touching them with their two fingers on their back without the danger of getting stung.

Generally speaking, it was a very cool experience to visit the Turtle Back Zoo with friends and discover new marine life facts. It was one of the most memorable experiences of my summer school field trip. Getting close to a cownose ray allowed me to experience marine life in a textbook, not just a photograph. I hope one day I can return to see the rays again!

Student Reporter

A Job Market Changed by AI



Yein Cho
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Crescenta Valley
High School

In recent times, a new issue has been speculated - finding a job after college. For many college graduates, finding a job straight out of college has always been a challenging process. Therefore, many work fields offer entry-level positions that allow them to gain experience and familiarity with the particular field. However, with the rapid growth of artificial intelligence (AI), these positions have been slowly disappearing. As companies use AI to complete work usually done by new employees, it eliminates job opportunities for recent graduates in need of a source of income and experience

Entry-level jobs have traditionally served as an important starting point for college graduates who want to build experience, develop skills, and make professional connections. Positions such as research assistants, junior accountants, and data entry clerks offered these benefits, but now are at risk of being replaced by AI. Currently, AI can perform basic and repetitive tasks including analyzing data,

answering customer questions, and writing simple reports. Because of this, certain companies do not feel the need to hire large numbers of new employees for

these positions. Instead, they reply with one statement: "AI does it better."

This shift could make the



Entry-level jobs in the workplace have begun to decrease with the use of Artificial Intelligence, leaving many college students looking for what to do next. [Source: Author, Yein Cho]

transition from college to the workforce far more difficult. With job opportunities declining, graduates may face increased competition for spots. Instead of simply looking for applicants with a college degree, employers may be expected to have previous experience working with AI. This creates a rather difficult situation for recent graduates, as they now need to have professional experience to become competitive, but fewer entry-level positions may be available to gain that.

As AI continues to expand, it brings both challenges and opportunities to college graduates. Although traditional entry-level jobs may be reduced, this automation can also create new job opportunities and change the ones that still exist. Therefore, future students and employers may need to have more knowledge of new technology and practical experience. It is important that the new generation, which will live with AI not only in the workplace, but also in many other areas of life, learns to use AI as a tool rather than view it as a threat.

Student Reporter

Teaching Students for the First Time



Grace Song
Grade 9
Cypress High School

Summer is often thought of as a time to relax, spend time with friends, and enjoy a break from school. For me, however, this summer became an opportunity to step outside of my comfort zone and try something I had never done before. Instead of being the student sitting in a classroom learning, I found myself standing at the front of one, trying to figure out how to teach a group of elementary school students.

Top Academy, my afterschool program, allowed me to teach English to elementary school students over the summer. Although I had worked with younger students before, this was my first time planning and leading lessons of my own. I quickly learned that teaching a classroom full of students was much harder than I had anticipated. One of my biggest challenges was keeping the students engaged. Because it was a room full of elementary school students, they would often talk to each other while I was teaching and get distracted easily. Soon, I realized that teaching solely with lectures would not work. I needed to find ways to make learning fun through hands-on activities. For example, when I taught informative writing, I wanted students to understand that this type of writing focuses on facts and information. I wrote differ-



Teaching students English over the summer was a valuable experience that helped elementary schoolers and taught me the importance of adapting. [Source: Author, Grace Song]

ent animals on pieces of paper, folded them up, and placed them in a bag. Then each student took turns picking a paper with an animal and had to describe it using

only facts and without saying its name. The other students then tried to guess that animal. Afterward, we connected the activity back to informative writing and

discussed how writers use facts to help the readers learn about a topic.

I used a similar interactive approach when teaching narrative writing. I found silly images online and asked the students to create a beginning, middle, and end based on what they saw. This allowed them to practice storytelling while giving them something entertaining to write about. Activities such as these made the lessons more interactive and helped the students stay focused.

Although the differences between students made teaching difficult at first, they eventually became one of my favorite parts of the experience. Some students loved writing, while others were much less enthusiastic about it. However, I began to notice that every student was putting in effort in their own way. By the end of summer, I had grown to care about the students and appreciate their individual personalities. Teaching them not only helped them, but also taught me that being a good teacher is about adapting to students' needs and finding ways to make them want to learn. What started as an intimidating challenge became one of the most rewarding ways I could have spent my summer.

Student Reporter

Commence Coffee: Lattes and Matcha



Kaylyn Wee
Grade 11
Ayala High School

If visiting or residing in Chino Hills, California, and wanting a delicious drink, Commence Coffee is the cafe to be at. Commence Coffee is a Korean-inspired minimalist cafe that opened on Chino Hills Parkway earlier this year on February 14, 2026. The shop serves a variety of drinks and pastries: from classic coffees to specialized lattes, Commence offers its customers something yummy to purchase each visit. This cafe is a personal favorite place of mine, so I took a regular morning visit.

The coffee shop features a Korean minimalist-styled interior, with mostly wood furniture and interesting seating options, including a long, continuous bench, stools for high tables, and unique seating cubes. Under the bench that runs along the wall of the cafe, there are outlets, along with free Wi-Fi, making it an ideal spot for productive work and studying. There is also some greenery and soft lighting, so not only is it a great study spot, but also an inviting place to chat with friends.

Commence Coffee offers a



Commence Coffee has a Korean-minimalist interior style, cultivating a calming and welcoming environment. [Source: Author, Kaylyn Wee]

large menu and has a pastry display at the front of the line. Each pastry is made fresh daily and comes out warm every time. Personally, I always get my usual matcha latte with whole milk, and each time, my drink comes out delicious and is a great pick-me-up for the morning. I ordered a vanilla latte with whole milk as well; both drinks had authenticity in flavor and a great aftertaste.

Commence also serves hojicha lattes, peanut butter lattes, double matchas, and so much more. As for pastries and baked goods, the cafe sells different types of croissants like Biscoff, jalapeno cheese and ham, and garlic cream cheese. There is also a variety of salt bread, danishes, sandwiches, and cookies. When visiting Commence, it is almost guaranteed that anyone can find something

delicious for themself.

Another thing I love about Commence Coffee is the amazing customer service. Every time a customer walks through the door and the bell rings, a worker at the front welcomes them with a friendly smile and greeting. They also regularly recommend items to customers and are willing to help make their Commence experience the best it can be.

Commence Coffee is a cafe everyone should visit if they are in Chino Hills. Even this morning at 9 AM, the place was full of people, and the cafe was lively with conversation. The menu is made of amazing, simple, and specialty drinks and pastries, making it a place where everyone can find something delicious. The interior design and atmosphere are calming yet inviting for studying, work, or chatting with friends. The customer service is great, and with helpful employees, it is a guarantee that everyone's experience will be special and positive. Again, Commence Coffee is worth supporting and stopping by!