

all barque

no bite

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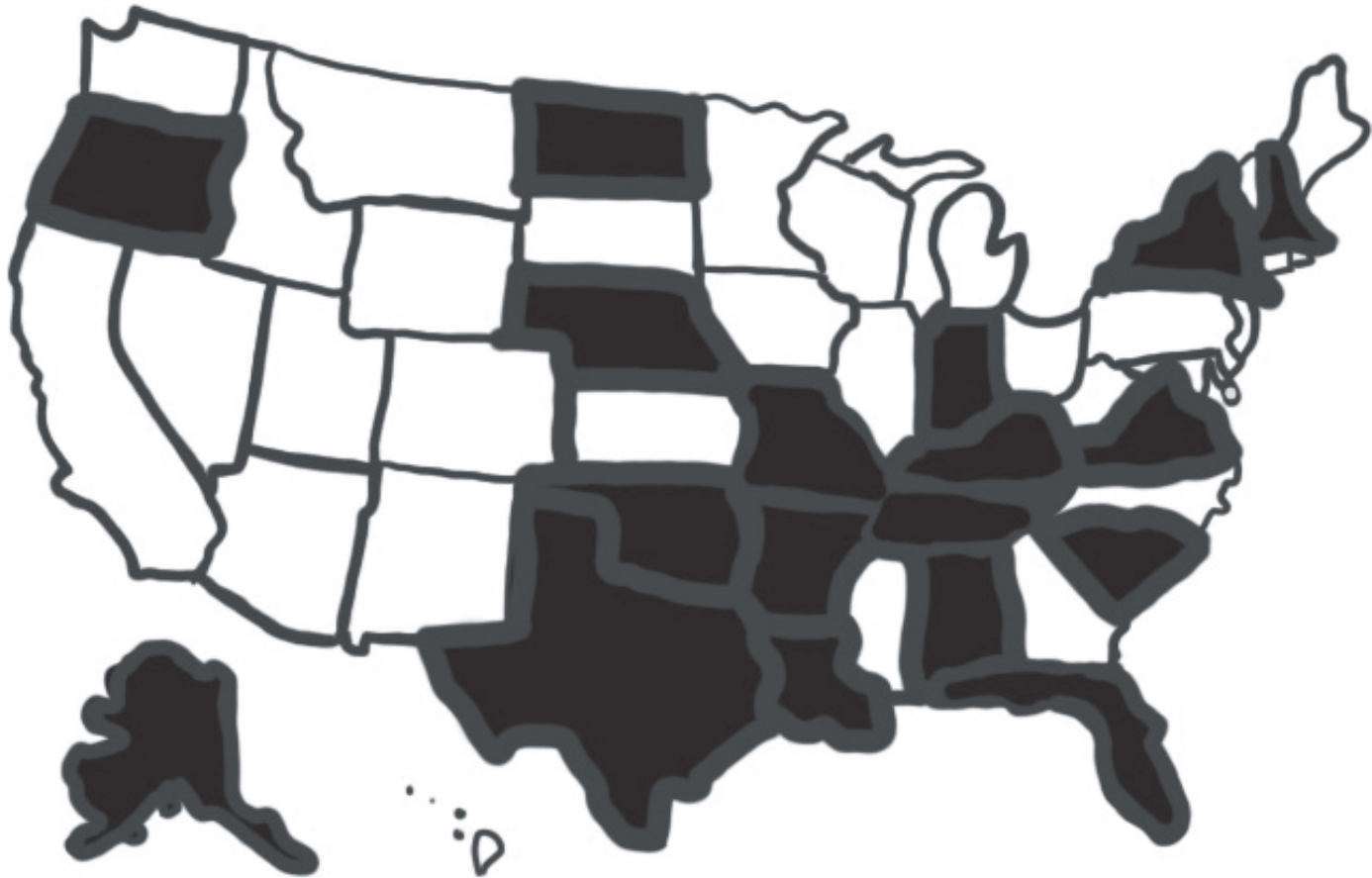
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States crack down on phones in school

AIMÉE NI
News Editor

HARRY ZHAO
Opinion Editor



GRAPHIC AND PHOTOS/ BROOKLYN O'CONNOR

STATES BANNING PHONES: The states that are shaded in have implemented laws that require every school district in the state to ban phone usage during the school day.

As of September 2025, 34 states have issued laws or policies on cell phones in school. Many have already begun to take effect this fall. Although Washington state has no official law on this issue, almost every district—including the Bellevue School District—have restricted phones in the classroom.

About half of the states have issued outright bans on cellphones in school while some other states have implemented partial bans. States with complete bans include Florida, Georgia, Nevada, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Texas and Utah. Alongside Idaho, Colorado, Minnesota, Alaska and New Mexico, Washington is urging districts to implement their own policies against cell phone usage.

In New York districts, the “bell to bell” ban restricts cell phones for the entire day, including lunch time and passing period. Security systems like Yondr lock the phones away in a pouch mechanism that can only be unlocked upon contact with a specific device.

Not all school districts are so strict though, as the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) provides students with some flexibility in choosing where to store their phones, i.e. a backpack or locker.

Bellevue School District falls in the middle of the spectrum; there is a dedicated policy page for the use of telecommunication devices on its website, and it states that devices can be “turned on and operated only before and after the regular school day and during the student’s lunch break.” This district-wide policy was implemented in 2012, but Bellevue High School has only begun enforcing it in recent years. Initially, the rules restricted phones only during class but allowed them during passing periods. This year, BHS has expanded their reinforcements to include all personal devices, such as laptops, going beyond last year’s phone pouches.

While some students argue that a ban on phones is unfair, many students seem unaffected by such a change. Putting your phone away has

become a normal procedure for students when entering the classroom; putting your phone in a phone or a pouch that releases them from that urge to constantly think about checking it. For students that didn’t use their phone to begin with, this is hardly a change at all.

“Honestly I feel indifferent about the... policy, since I don’t find a need to use my phone,” sophomore Hannah Kim said.

However, Kim raised concerns about the effectiveness of the policy.

“In terms of effectiveness, I don’t think the phone policies really are effective. At the beginning of the year the policy may be enforced, but as the year goes on no one really cares,” Kim said.

It’s true all teachers have their own preferences when it comes to the phone policy. However, when

“About half of the states have issued outright bans on cellphones in school... restricting them for the entire day.”

enforced properly, it certainly increases the focus of the students.

“When I used my phone, I would totally tune out and miss important things. Without access to my phone, it’s impossible for that to happen and I naturally pay more attention,” junior Tage Wilson recounts.

The policy certainly has positive impacts, with students like Wilson finally putting down their phones and reuniting with their studies. Nonetheless, the policy is not without its drawbacks. Students sometimes forget their phones in the pouches or simply find the policy inconvenient for situations where a phone is required for communication.

“As a freshman, starting school with stricter policies can be a little nerve-racking because sup-

pose one day I need to remember my classes or text my mom because I don’t have a ride. I can’t do that now because of the ban,” freshman Sania Jatia says.

Besides the rules limiting phones, even more policies regarding personal electronics have broadened the range of restrictions this year. But unlike the ban on phones, the restrictions on personal laptop usage have far fewer supporters.

“My phone use hasn’t changed because I never use my phone in class. Lack of access to my phone hasn’t changed my educational quality because I can’t concentrate in class anyways, so I just do all of my work at home. The... policies towards personal computers are far worse, and I’m not able to work as efficiently with them in class,” senior Aarush Vegulla said.

Indeed, many students prefer to use their personal laptops during class to escape monitoring and restrictions on school computers. Personal laptops became a popular pick and an essential tool among a vast number of students. This year’s sudden ban triggered a lot of opposition.

“Investing in a laptop to use for school and then being told that they’re banned, without any warning, is just unfair,” Wilson said.

For many students, being forced to revert to an unfamiliar school laptop, which could be broken or malfunctioning from being untouched for so long, can be irritating to the point that it affects their productivity.

“I don’t really care about any of the other policies, but the restrictions on personal laptop policy is the worst policy this school has ever instated and needs to be overturned,” Vegulla added.

Some teachers are certainly less strict about the policies, so Vegulla might be able to use his so-desired personal laptop after all. However, it’s unclear how well the restrictions on personal devices will be enforced in the future—both in BHS and across the nation. With more states passing laws on phone usage in schools, it could be a matter of time before Washington also implements a complete ban on personal devices as well.

King County Metro Service is changing

ANGELA ZOU
Focus Editor

With the light rail expanding and gas prices rising, public transport is more appealing than ever. The King County Metro Service change added more than 900 weekly trips by adding more bus stops and routes to local lines, but also lost many riders to the added inconvenience. The change intends on connecting bus stations to the light rail as part of the Eastside Link Connections project. This change has been celebrated by Eastside locals for connecting Bellevue to cities like Issaquah, but for high schoolers who are not traveling far distances, it has only made their journey to school more difficult.

Bellevue High School students have used the King County Metro Service for years as it provides a convenient and consistent mode of transport for those without licenses. However, on August 30, changes were made to the bus service that inconvenienced students.

Even though free rides for teenagers and the new stations mean wider access to transportation for everyone, it also means more traffic with buses stopping on busy roads more often. Along with the traffic, the change in routes and times are causing trouble for middle and high school students needing a ride to and from school.

"A lot of students without licenses also cannot have their parents drop and

pick them up every day so it is unfair that some students have to find alternate forms of transport because the bus comes too late or early," junior Dhruv Saini said.

Students with busy schedules now have to account for new routes that change their normal routine.

"I used to ride the bus on route 249 because it was fast, but with the service change, the pick-up time from school was pushed back 40 minutes from 3:10pm to 3:40pm and the bus stop is significantly further than before," senior Elliana Nan said.

Route 249 was not the only route changed as many of the current lines have been altered to "revised all-day routes" where pick-up and drop-off stops have been moved. Even though the final destination remains the same, riders may experience increased wait times and walking distance to each stop.

Undoubtedly, the future of public transportation in Bellevue is brightened by the light rail's East Link early 2026 completion, finally connecting the city to downtown Seattle conveniently. However, for Bellevue High School students, this expansion of public transport, specifically buses, could mean more inconvenience as they have to transition to new pick-up and drop-off stops and times.



RAPID RIDE: A bus at night, in Bellevue Square.

Sound Transit's impact grows

MANDY KIM
Copy Team

Bellevue's community has made significant progress towards sustainable transportation initiatives. A noteworthy development includes the expansion of Sound Transit, particularly the East Link extension.

The development of Line 2, connecting South Bellevue to Redmond, marked the halfway point of the East Link in April 2024. The addition of these two stations has driven overall light rail usage significantly, as monthly boardings have soared from 2.5 million riders in April 2024 to an impressive 3.3 million by July 2025. Despite further delays in the overall timeline of the Link route, Sound Transit is diligently working towards the opening of Line 1 by early 2026.

Line 1 will run from South Bellevue, through Mercer Island, and end in Chinatown in Seattle. This opening will generate a wealth of transportation possibilities for Bellevue students. Rather than being confined to light rail travel to Redmond, students will soon be able to ride all the way to Seattle. This extension has garnered excitement from those who love hands-free transport, seek to reduce their ecological footprint, or simply don't drive. Suddenly, family-owned restaurants, Pike Place and museums in the city are all attainable destinations for hangouts.

Additionally, the light rail's convenience is a compelling factor for consideration.

"It's very easy to get on the light rail, and you just walk off and you're at the next city," senior Kendall Fitzpatrick said.

Bellevue High School's environmental science teacher, Aron Early, is also an avid supporter of the light rail, and uses it on an intermittent basis. The extension of our local East Link especially delights him.

"I'm looking forward to seeing more light rail expansion," Early said.

The use of Sound Transit is revolutionizing travel freedom for students. High schoolers now can stand against peer pressure and take the wheel at their own pace. As we all know, the best time to venture onto the roads isn't a number; it's personal confidence in committing to safety. In the meantime, Sound Transit can take you wherever you'd like, without the cost or the fear of an accidental crash. Bellevue can't wait to see this initiative's impact on incentivizing transport to be faster, safer and more convenient in our communities.



LIGHT RAIL: Sound Transit provides a clean transit option. This train is arriving at a station in Bellevue.

GRAPHIC AND PHOTOS/ BROOKLYN O'CONNOR

Fires will impact the future of Washington

FIONA WANG
Copy Team

Wildfires are emerging as the hottest topic in the Pacific Northwest. From the huge and devastating fires in LA, to the recent fires in Napa to the too-close-for-comfort fires in Vancouver, rainy Washington state may seem safe from these dangers. However, as global warming digs its claws in, who knows what might happen in the future?

Wildfires occur when three requirements are met. These are known as the fire triangle and is composed of heat, fuel and oxygen. Heat is the initial spark; it can be natural or man-made. For example, lightning is a natural occurrence, while campfires are man-made. Both are frequent causes of wildfires, yet nearly 85% of wildfires are accidentally initiated by humans, often due to ignorance of proper campfire procedures.

Here on the west coast, the effects of global warming can be seen through the decline in rainfall or changes in the rainy season. Less rain means drier vegetation, and dry vegetation is extremely flammable, which spreads the fire faster as more fuel is consumed. Bellevue High School's environmental science teacher Alyssa Bangerter suggests another root of the increase of wildfires in residential areas.

"Humans have also changed their habits. Humans are developing more land, and we aren't managing the land the same way indigenous populations did before. When we develop more housing, that means we are placing people in areas more prone to wildfires," said Bangerter.

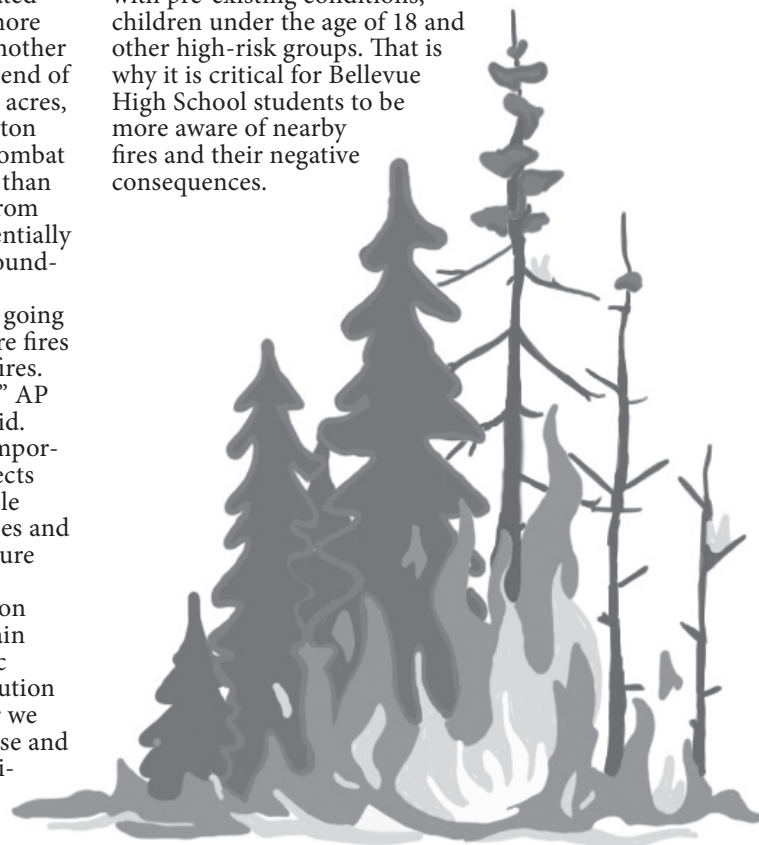
As of publication, one of the largest fires in Washington state is the Rattlesnake Fire, located west of Spokane. As of Oct. 6, it has spread more than 21,845 acres and was 96% contained. Another large fire is the Bear Gulch Fire on the north end of Lake Cushman, which has grown to 20,232.9 acres, with a 5% containment as of Oct. 6. Washington has sent out more than 8,000 firefighters to combat the ongoing fires, a number currently higher than any other region in the country. These fires from the areas around Washington could also potentially affect Washington residents, along with surrounding communities, negatively.

"With climate change in this area we are going to see drier conditions which can lead to more fires in the area. We are affected not just by local fires. Often smoke is traveling down from Canada," AP environmental science teacher Aron Early said.

These fires may seem far away and not important to our daily lives, but there are many effects of wildfires that no one considers. Unfavorable consequences of wildfires include the loss trees and other vegetation, as well as a rise in temperature both during and after the fires.

Wildfires are also a major source of carbon dioxide emissions. In addition, one of the main components of wildfire smoke is also a public health threat; particle pollution. Particle pollution refers to the mix of solid and liquid in the air we breathe. These particles enter through the nose and mouth into the lungs, potentially causing serious health issues to the heart and lungs.

The risk is even higher for people with pre-existing conditions, children under the age of 18 and other high-risk groups. That is why it is critical for Bellevue High School students to be more aware of nearby fires and their negative consequences.



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Seniors; Look Forwards, Not Backwards

This year's seniors face an admissions process in flux, and two choices stand out from the multitude of decisions students must make this fall as especially decisive: how to frame their essays and other written work and whether to submit test scores. In both cases, the strongest applications will lean toward the future rather than the past.

Start with essays. Too often, applicants get caught up in recounting every hardship in their lives, as if the point of the college application were to write an autobiography. Personal background does indeed matter, but that's not all that colleges are interested in. Admission officers are trying to build a class of students that bring diverse and unique perspectives, and to do that, they need to know what type of student you will be on their campus. The most compelling essays show a student's trajectory: how formative experiences shape a student's vision for what they will contribute on campus and beyond. It is not enough to describe what made you who you are; you must explain what you will do with that identity once given the resources of a university.

The same logic applies to testing, as it's the best lens for a college to evaluate how you would thrive in their university's academic environment in the future. With many selective schools bringing back SAT and ACT requirements, seniors now face a choice at test-optional colleges: send the scores or leave them out. Scores remain one of the clearest signals of academic readiness. Research shows they predict college grades more accurately than essays, activities, or recommendations. That is why admissions officers rely on them; a strong score gives a clear indication that a student can handle the future workload at that university.

That does not erase the importance of personal context. It shows up throughout the application, like in activity descriptions that explain how you earned an opportunity, in a "Why Major" essay that describes your background or early influences, and in short answers that highlight obstacles you have overcome. Admissions officers look for these pieces, but they are also looking for more. They want — using the same examples — your activity descriptions to hint at what you will continue to do with those opportunities in college, your "Why Major" essay to show how your lived experiences shape what your studies will allow you to do in the future, and your short answers to connect past challenges to the impact you hope to make going forward. Context explains the journey, but the strongest applications tie that journey directly to evidence of future potential and contributions.

Both essays and tests ask the same question: what story are you telling admissions officers about yourself? The class of '26 has an unusual opportunity, shaped by the shifting policies surrounding college admissions. Those who embrace a forward-looking strategy demonstrating not just who they are but who they are becoming, will stand out most.

Colleges Requiring SAT/ACT		
#	Colleges/University	Location
1	Harvard	Cambridge, MA
2	Brown	Providence, RI
3	Yale	New Haven, CT
4	Cornell	Ithaca, NY
5	Dartmouth	Hanover, NH
6	Georgetown	Washington, DC
7	Florida State	Tallahassee, FL
8	Northwestern	Evanston, IL
9	Purdue	West Lafayette, IN
10	Tennessee	Knoxville, TN

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Crossfire: Team Jeremiah vs Team Conrad

STELLA O'CONNOR
Editorial Editor

Team Jeremiah

"The Summer I Turned Pretty" debate continues with season three's premiere this past summer. The contentious conversation of whether Belly Conklin should be with Conrad or Jeremiah Fisher, the brother duo of the century, still continues. While some may view Conrad as the so-called "husband material" choice in this love triangle, Jeremiah is the clear option. Not only is Jere attractive and charismatic, but his appeal also goes far deeper than surface-level charm.

First, Jeremiah has consistently shown up for Belly in ways Conrad simply hasn't. Let's be real; he would never abandon her at her own senior prom. Jeremiah doesn't shut her out or drown her in silence when things get hard; instead, he spends time with her, opens up, and actually tries to understand her perspective. That kind of emotional availability is essential in any lasting relationship, as seen in their four-year connection. Belly needs a partner who makes her feel seen and valued every day, not someone she constantly has to decode.

Another point in Jeremiah's favor is his personality. He's fun, outgoing, and brings that "golden retriever energy" that perfectly balances Belly's often complicated world. With Jere, there's lightheartedness, laughter, and spontaneity, opening space for Belly to be her authentic self. Their relationship feels like two best friends growing into something more, something built on both romance and friendship.

And let's be clear: Jeremiah did not cheat on Belly during his senior trip to Mexico. They had broken up. While Belly interpreted their argument differently than Jeremiah, it was never truly defined that she believed they were on a break. If Belly can forgive him, so can we. Conrad may have his mysterious allure, but it too often translates into distance and heartbreak.

Sure, Jere's proposal may have involved a comically tiny ring which practically requires a magnifying glass to see, but his charm, warmth, and good looks make up for it. With Jeremiah, you get both personality and looks. Personally, if I had to pick, I'd choose Team Anti-Belly, but that's a debate for another day.



Team Conrad

KAYLEIGH TUBB
Sports Editor

Although Jeremiah may seem like a good choice, I'd say he's just a "safe" option. Who wants to date the safe option rather than someone who you have a true connection with? We know that nothing beats a first love...and clearly Belly knows that too. Since their childhood, Conrad has always looked after Belly and appreciated her true personality. Jeremiah only seemed to find interest after she became "pretty." Conrad has always been surprisingly protective of her, which shows he truly cares for her well-being. He even taught her how to ride a bike!

I know that Jeremiah lovers are probably thinking that Conrad and Belly's breakup was completely unfair. The reason behind this was because his mom was sick and progressively getting worse. Can you blame him for being mentally unstable? He had to bear the knowledge of her illness and his father's affair and knew that he wouldn't be able to be there for Belly as much as she deserved. Even after making the biggest mistake of his life by breaking things off, he regretted it for years after. He never stopped yearning for Belly, but he knew that her and Jere were happy. He cared about their emotions and let himself hurt because he cared for them. Conrad constantly wrestles with his emotions yet kept showing his vulnerability to Belly, creating a stronger and connected relationship.

On the other hand, Jeremiah lacks the emotional depth we see from Conrad. I mean, proposing last minute just so Belly wouldn't leave him? Sounds pretty lame to me. He is extremely frivolous and never thinks of the consequences of his actions, just like his trip to Mexico. You may think Jeremiah didn't cheat on Belly, but they certainly weren't fully clear that they broke up. That's a big no for me. Unlike Jere, Conrad hasn't even looked at another woman since their breakup, which was four years before! He knew who he wanted and never gave up. If these reasons aren't enough to convince you that Team Conrad is the right choice, then I guess you are a true Jeremiah fan.

BSD Must Adapt to a Tech-Driven World

TEO TAGAVILLA
Graphics/Photo Team

At Bellevue High School, students can take various career exploration-oriented programs and classes. Classes such as culinary, automotive, marketing, intro to healthcare, and many more introduce students to practical skills and pathways to future employment options. Yet, despite a world revolving around technology, Bellevue only offers a few courses, Coding in Python 1-4, AP Computer Science, and AP Computer Science Principles, that directly target digital fluency. This disparity reflects a larger issue in Washington's educational system, while many schools provide interactive programs, few help equip students for a job market driven by technology.

This disconnect begins at the state level. The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) oversees Washington's educational standards and follows slow reform systems. OSPI reviews standards only every five to ten years, so by the time new technology-related skills are added, they're often outdated. In comparison, Colorado's education system revises its system every six years, with one-third of its content areas being revised every two years. Frequent revisions allow Colorado's curriculum to - with the economy and emerging technologies. In a world where the technology landscape is constantly developing and reshaping nearly every industry, students must be prepared in school to navigate artificial intelligence, coding, and data tools. The slow periodic reforms leave Washington students unprepared for the

digital realities they'll face post-graduation.

Lukas Michener, a history teacher at Bellevue, agrees, describing the Washington education system as "slow" and "needs to be more timely." That slowness, he notes, is not just about policy; it's about opportunity. "The U.S. educational system is based on a promise to educate every child, although it is debatable whether they have carried through with that promise," Michener stated.

The promise to provide students with tools to become educated must evolve with time. Fulfilling that promise today means adapting to a world increasingly driven by technology and recognizing that it needs to be taught.

To move forward, OSPI should treat technology education as a core requirement, not an elective, embed digital literacy throughout every subject, teach students to think critically, and build a strong analytic mindset. In math, this foundation of pattern recognition can be built through the teachings of algorithmic concepts, helping students grasp how algorithms in AI, coding, encryption, and data sorting work. The same mindset extends to English, which has a role in exploring AI ethics, guiding students on the moral implications of AI use and how they are represented in media and literature. Encouraging students to use AI as a tool to improve their literature skills, rather than forcing kids to write essays on paper in fear of AI scandals. Data literacy can play a role in all core subjects, teaching the foundational ideas of computer science. These skills can build technical fluency, creative, critical, ethical,



One step ahead: The Barque integrates technology into designing their newspaper. With the launch of their website last year, The Barque is adapting to the rise of digital media.

trend-driven thinking, and lifelong skills necessary to succeed in a tech-driven world.

As a progressive state, Washington can lead the nation by embracing technology in the foundations of its curricula. School education should reflect the modern day; as technology develops, schools should advance. Washington can redefine what it means to be prepared for the future, where coding, AI awareness, and ethical understanding of technology are as essential as core classes. If the state commits to this vision, it can empower a generation of students ready to navigate the digital world and lead it.

Bring back roll call

Bring back the beloved tradition. **NATE CHIANG-LIN**
Business Team

Bellevue High School prides itself on deep-rooted traditions. From our beloved parades to our hatred for Mercer Island, our collective identity makes us Bellevue. But some of that identity might be chipping away. This year, assemblies dropped one of our most iconic traditions, the senior mosh. When it came time for the mosh, it always ended the same way with the rush to the floor, a burst of energy that marked the seniors place at the top of the school. That senior mosh has now been banned, with administrators citing safety concerns. Seniors both understood the reasoning and were upset about the ban.

then why erase it? Piece by piece, Bellevue's traditions are being stripped away in the name of caution. And with every decision, assemblies lose more of what once made them exciting. Bellevue's spirit has never come from playing it safe; it has come from moments that were loud, messy and unforgettable.

Of course, balance matters. Safety should never be ignored, but wiping out traditions altogether is a blunt solution to a more nuanced problem. The biggest question is what we want Bellevue assemblies to be: quiet, orderly events where no one risks offense? Or energetic, unpredictable

"I respect the choice of banning it for safety, but I always leaned toward letting the Bellevue tradition continue."

"Losing a Bellevue tradition is kind of sad," senior Ryan Huang said. "I respect the choice of banning it for safety, but I always leaned toward letting the Bellevue tradition continue."

But the changes didn't stop with the mosh. Students were also discouraged from booing during roll call, a part of Bellevue's assemblies that gave each class its own personality. To many, the booing wasn't mean-spirited, it was a playful way of building connection.

"I didn't mind the booing," freshman Jonah ChiangLin said. "It felt like a greeting more than anything."

If the very students supposedly on the receiving end don't see it as toxic,

gatherings that actually make students feel part of something bigger?

As Huang noted, "You can never please everybody... the ultimate deciding factor is the whether the administration prioritizes conformity or identity."

Traditions like senior mosh and freshman booing gave assemblies an identity, one that built connection across grade levels. Without them, assemblies feel flatter, missing the spark that made them memorable. If Bellevue wants to protect its spirit and sense of community, it shouldn't erase traditions. Instead it should find ways to adapt them using more nuanced solutions to nuanced problems. Roll call deserves another chance.

The unseen harm of budget cuts

JACHIN LEE
Chief Copy Editor

How have budget cuts impacted students and teachers?

This past February, Bellevue School District (BSD) Superintendent Dr. Kelly Aramaki presented a proposal for a \$20 million spending reduction for the 2025-26 school year. This announcement became a widely discussed topic among students at BHS. Yet from a student's perspective, it's hard to notice whether the budget cuts really changed anything significant. They certainly have changed some things—I discovered the hard way that there's intense competition to grab a cafeteria seat during lunch—but for students, the supposed calamity that the budget cuts were made out to be has failed to materialize. No, the main burden of the budget cuts did not fall on students. It fell on everyone around students.

For instance, a lot of attention this past spring was focused on how classes would have to be consolidated, which would drive up the average class size and decrease students' quality of learning. Personally, this has not been the case. Although BHS's enrollment sits at 1,705 students this year, a 5.6 percent increase from 1,615 students last year, and despite my classes having an average of over 32 students per class (compared to 27 students per class last year), I still feel that I'm receiving the same amount of "personal attention" and quality of learning compared to last year.

On the other hand, staff and faculty members have acutely felt the increased class sizes. Spanish and English teacher Patrick Carpenter—who obtained his English teaching position as a result of staff consolidation—is no exception. Last year, his largest class was 30 students. His smallest class this year is 29. For him, the increase in "almost 10 students more per class means more grading. It means more I'm doing in class to interact with students." But despite his increased workload, Carpenter said, "I wouldn't say that the overall quality of my teaching has dropped," with the qualification that "students that sometimes need five minutes here-or-there... are getting that less frequently."

Carpenter also said that in addition to the BSD's financial poor health, his status as a non-continuing contract holder (meaning he doesn't know if he'll have a job with BSD next

year) has influenced the level engagement that he was able to bring the classroom.

"I think that towards the end of the last year it was something that definitely took up some of my mental energy... it just kind of put this dark cloud over us."

Instead of hurting students' learning, the main harm of class consolidation lies in the weight it puts on teachers. We cannot ignore the danger of teachers having to face the challenge of summoning their enthusiasm for teaching while privately worrying about their job security and dealing with additional grading or one-on-one interactions.

Another main point of discussion was how the Mental Health Awareness Team (MHAT), consolidation would impact students. Concerns were raised that the

reduction in MHAT positions would impact the quality of support that students would receive. But BHS's MHAT counselor Melissa Odegaard says, "I feel like it's [level of MHAT services] is still high quality," while adding, "it may not just be as many students that can be seen individually in the school." Odegaard told me that because of the cuts, the BSD MHAT team has been offloading more of their

work to Care Solace, an organization that connects students or families with mental health services. Similar to how teachers have borne most of the damage dealt by increased class sizes, the main consequences of MHAT consolidation have—to an albeit lesser extent—been shifted away from the students and onto the general BSD support system.

To be clear, shifting the impact away from students was the right move. The soul of BSD is the students, and there should be a student-centric focus when making difficult decisions. But students do not exist in a vacuum, and we are still in a state of financial trouble. If the future holds more difficult financial decisions, it is imperative to recognize that trying to preserve students' well-being when making said decisions might add unexpected stress to the support system around students. It falls on all of us to make this recognition and remember that the only way we can get through the next few years is if we all share the yoke together.



Is Bellevue Square Mall outdated? *Its offerings are out of touch with customers.* **LUCY BREWTON** Business Team

Bellevue Square has been a staple since its opening in 1946, but for local teens today, it's starting to feel a little out of touch. Despite having 153 retail stores, only a few dozen places are frequented by teenagers. If the mall doesn't evolve, it will leave teenagers, one of the most active and influential demographics, behind in a city that already heavily caters to older shoppers.

The mall is the default hangout spot for local teens, but not because it is designed for them, but simply because there aren't many other places to go. While the space has a great location, it doesn't fully support or engage the needs of a younger crowd.

While new openings like Aerie and H&M are promising, for every store aimed at younger shoppers, another one geared towards older adults, like J. Jill or Eileen Fisher, is built at the same time. Staples of teen shopping like Hollister, Cotton On, Garage, Subdued, Old Navy, Aeropostale and Tilly's are absent. Without these stores, more teens prefer online shopping, creating a disconnect between generations.

"I like going to the mall with my friends," said Deelani May, a Bellevue High School junior. "But once you hit the five places that are actually meant for teenagers, it's just a lot of wandering around."

Bellevue Square's lack of appeal isn't just about the store selection. Unlike any other shopping centers, Bellevue Square doesn't have a centralized food court. Dining options are scattered, limited, and often priced above what teens are looking for to spend on a casual day out, making Starbucks one of the only viable options. This absence of communal space weakens the mall's potential as a social hub.

The lack of engagement is becoming increasingly visible, even employees are noticing this disconnect.

"We see them come in, but they don't stick around for long. There is not enough to keep them here," said Ari Liboon, a Levi's employee.

Bellevue Square has the space, the location, the reputation, and the resources to be more than just a regular shopping center. Unless it begins investing in teen-friendly brands, affordable dining, and communal spaces, it risks becoming irrelevant for a generation that still enjoys gathering in person. To stay in the game, the mall must make a deliberate shift toward engaging teenagers, not just adults with minimalistic taste.

teachers who look mean but are actually big softies

Ethan Kuruvilla – Social Media Manager

Every high school has its share of teachers with intimidating reputations. Maybe it's the heavy workload in their class, the stern tone of their voice, or just the way they carry themselves in the hallway. For students walking in on the first day, certain names spark a mix of nerves and curiosity. At Bellevue High, two of those names often come up: AP U.S. History teacher Randy Litzenberger and AP Biology teacher Nate Manning. On the surface, both are known for being tough and demanding. But once you spend a little time in their classrooms, a different picture begins to emerge. It shows how these "scary" teachers are actually some of the most supportive and fair here at BHS.

For juniors, APUSH is a rite of passage. The course is notoriously rigorous, packed with reading assignments, essay practice, and enough historical detail to make your head spin. When students first hear about Litzenberger, the rumors can make him sound like a drill sergeant of history. The truth is, he is passionate about teaching and balances the workload with opportunities to improve.

"He lets us do corrections on tests and gives feedback on big projects like the civic engagement assignment before they are officially graded. It feels like he wants us to grow, not just get a score," senior Jerry Zhang recalled.

That willingness to guide students through one of the hardest courses at Bellevue makes him far less intimidating than the first impression suggests.

Manning's reputation follows a similar pattern. AP Biology is a challenging class on its own, filled with labs, diagrams, and dense vocabulary. Add in a teacher

who is known for his high standards, and it is easy to see why sophomores might walk in a little wide-eyed. But beneath the structure is a teacher who genuinely wants his students to succeed.

"He lets us make corrections on every quiz up to 80 percent, and he is open to rounding up your grade to the next letter if he sees you are putting in the work throughout the semester," senior Christian Wong explained.

Those policies not only reduce stress but also show that Manning's firmness comes from wanting students to understand the material rather than just chase a grade.

What makes teachers like Litzenberger and Manning so memorable is not just that they demand excellence. It is that they do so while still creating space for students to learn from mistakes and build confidence. "I know I come off as serious sometimes, but that's because I want students to take the class seriously too," Litzenberger said. "Once they realize I'm rooting for them, I think the nerves fade pretty fast." Manning was surprised to hear about his reputation. "Really? People think I'm scary?" he said, laughing. "I guess I never thought of it that way. I just want students to feel supported and know I'm here to help them learn." Their reputations might make them seem intimidating at first, but students quickly discover that the "scary" exterior hides teachers who are genuinely invested in their success. Once you get to know them, you realize they are the kind of teachers who push you to be your best and believe you can get there.

is junior year actually hard?

Angela Zou – Focus Editor

After three long years and many instances of losing direction in the hallways and getting ridiculed for being an underclassman, you are finally free. Finally, taking higher level classes, being taken more seriously by teachers, and receiving board positions in clubs. The time has come Class of 2027, it is your junior year, the most stressful and demanding year of high school. The year that will make you question your sanity, lose your hair, and work your brain. Or is it really not that bad? Is it all just a baseless, fear-mongering concept to scare young students?

"Junior year was not all that bad for me, even though I took a ton of AP classes. I think the biggest thing is time management, but in retrospect, the year was not horrible, but definitely during the year I thought it was difficult," senior Sanya Matta said.

For students like Matta, the biggest worry of junior year is being able to organize and handle all their coursework. Taking more than four APs in junior year is a common practice for Bellevue High students that causes a lot of the signature stress that junior year is known for. However, time management can be learned, and changing study habits can make APs and the SAT/ACT a breeze. So, here are some tips:

1. Use a management app like Notion, Google Calendar, or even the iPhone Reminders app to alert you of assignments and organize your life and schoolwork without relying on just your memory.

2. Learn terms and key concepts for classes with apps like Quizlet and Anki to make studying new vocabulary simpler.

3. Go to a café or library to study can help you focus.

4. Leave at least one day of the week for self-care, whether it is getting your hair done, hanging out with friends and family, or even going on a walk. Junior year does not mean you cannot maintain a social life. You will be more productive if you have a good work-life balance.

Nevertheless, there can be external factors that make junior year difficult.

"It was as bad as they said it would be. Especially when your personal life gets mixed together with your academic life, it is hard to balance. Everyone should try to stay out of drama and separate their studies from their personal life," senior Riley Neibert said.

This idea of a work-life balance emphasizes the importance of having a day just to yourself for self-care. Junior year is a tough time for everyone but dramatized in some aspects. There are many techniques to alleviate this stress but finding good study habits and having self-care days are the best solution to a stressful junior year. Juniors, The Barque wishes you luck! After all, everyone knows the toughest year is senior year...

driver's license 101

Yuri Pruett – Opinion Editor

So, you just turned 15. Happy Birthday! A dreaded reality now looms over you, one that the majority of (over-16) students at BHS have had to face: driving. How do you get your license? Where to start? How to not get into a multi-car pile up every time you press down on the accelerator? Look no further, you've come to the right place!

Let's start with the basics. In Washington, all aspiring drivers under 18 must go through some form of certified driving school. In the Bellevue area, the most popular programs are 911 Driving and Defensive Driving School, both of which offer online and in-person driving lessons that cover everything from road signage to practice driving exams. This is the ideal starting point for anyone looking to get their license in the near future.

Once you go through driving school, you'll have to meet a couple of key requirements. One is the required fifty driving hours, 10 of which should be at night. Though this may seem like an impossibly big number, the minutes add up quickly. By driving in small

increments when you can, whether it's a few minutes on the way to school or a tour around the neighborhood in the evening, you'll reach the requirement before you know it.

The second requirement is testing, specifically the two driving-related exams. The first is a written exam, during which you'll be tested on the rules of the road and general situational understanding. This can seem daunting, but a few minutes of review on Quizlet will easily get you that 80% passing score. The second exam is the real deal: the driving test. There, you'll be tested on your actual ability to drive. Remember to make full stops at stop signs and signals for every turn. Once you beat this final boss, and pay a visit to the Department of Licensing, congratulations! You are now a licensed driver.

As difficult and as scary as it may feel, driving is an extremely valuable stepping stone into greater independence in a student's life. Getting licensed is not as difficult as it may seem!

How to be performative

EVAN DU
Chief Copy Editor

For the past few months, social media has been flooded with talk of “performative males.” A skit on Instagram parodying these pretenders where a man reads a book, drinks matcha, and wears wired earbuds has 3.4 million views. In August, there was even a “performative male look-alike” contest in Capitol Hill. Seattle native Marcus Jernigan was declared the victor, sporting an entire record player and various Clairo albums, as well as the performative male uniform of a tote bag, wired earbuds, a Labubu, and matcha.

“Performative male” doesn’t stem from a new concept. It’s a new phrase for the age-old concept of those not fully “committed” to a lifestyle or subculture once it goes mainstream for one reason or another. In the 80s, people who adopted the style and attitude of the skater or punk rocker without being true members were “posers.”

Nowadays, social media mocks men that wear bell-bottomed jeans or wool-knit beanies, or simply just read in public. Supposedly, all who participate in any of these activities are in the pursuit of appearing more intelligent and emotionally attuned, the implication being that they weren’t any of these things to begin with.

“I hope this fleeting and ridiculous social media trend doesn’t harm real people. I just feel like social media will always find something to bully. Just be authentic and enjoy what you want to. Beating down ‘performative males’ will lead to people who actually have those positive traits like emotional intelligence being negatively impacted,” University of Washington freshman Ema Lei said.

Participating in social media trends or joking about stereotypes can be a good bit of lighthearted fun, but it’s important to not take it too seriously. Because

apparently, drinking matcha automatically makes one inauthentic and a faker, without considering that the reason might be as simple as enjoying the drink.

GRAPHIC / IFRAH NAAZ



Students obsess over blind boxes

IFRAH NAAZ
Graphics/Photo Team

Most of us are likely very familiar with the concept of blind boxes: figurines. They are bag charms or collectibles sold in opaque packaging, often in the form of a cardboard box. The catch is that customers can only unveil the toy after unboxing it, so the purchased toy is purely up to chance.

Pop Mart is a popular Chinese toy company based in Beijing, currently the hottest place for customers to buy their collectibles. Most recently, a blind box character called Labubu has risen drastically in popularity among all age groups. They are oftentimes described as ‘ugly-cute’ monster dolls. Labubus come in a fuzzy coat of any color; red nose; rabbit-like ears; and menacing, sharp teeth. The toys gained most of their popularity through social media, where content-creators would gush over their vast collections. These monster toys are sold through Pop Mart, and their increasingly high demand makes a Labubu difficult to get a hold of. This often results in long queues, and wait outside stores for many hours just to get one. People who initially labeled the toys as ugly suddenly began to join in with the thrill-chasing crowd.

Blind Boxes go back to as far as the 1900s in Japan, fukubukoro — a Japanese tradition of selling mystery bags filled with leftover goods at a discount. In 1965, the same emerged into the toy-centered versions called Gachapon, vending machines that dispensed collectible toys encased in clear plastic capsules. “Various mediums of blind boxes emerged from that point and on, preying on psychological mechanism that kept consumer coming back for more.”

The psychological phenomenon behind the obsession with popular items revolves around the concept of an ‘in-group’. People subconsciously desire the need to belong, and one way that individuals obtain this sense of belonging is through ownership. When an object such as a particular piece of clothing or jewelry becomes a label of commonality among people, others

tend to desire the same to feel a part of the in-group. Similarly, Labubus’ popularity among people on social media provided the idea that anyone who owned one automatically identified with an in-group and held status. This explains why people who initially labeled the toy as creepy and useless went on to buy one for themselves. Regardless of the monster toys’ immense popularity, many people have very contrasting opinions about them.

“Labubus are kind of scary. People only buy them because they are trending,” junior Fiona Cheng said.

“Dressing up my Labubu in traditional Thai clothing makes me feel very represented and cute,” junior Desah Blair said.

Although the obsession over these monster toys signals our overconsumption of trendy items, others tend to identify with such toys in a more personal manner, which makes the experience and thrill worth it.



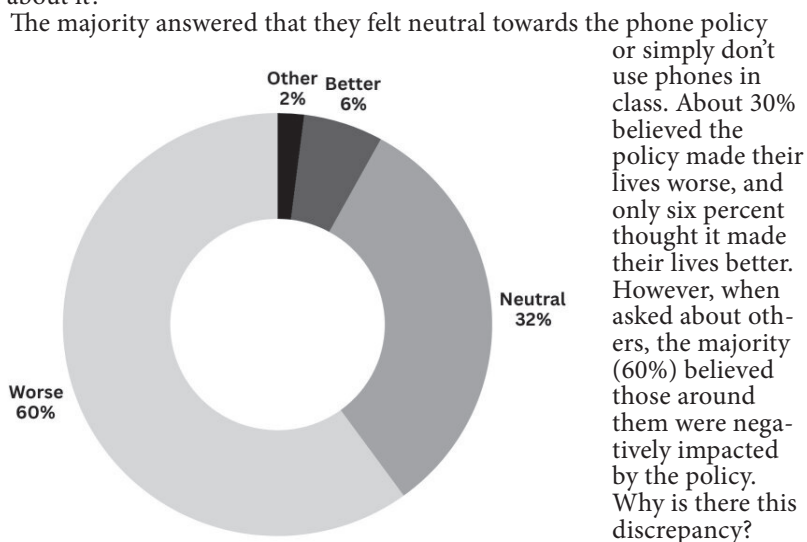
ALL PHOTOS / IFRAH NAAZ

PERFORMATIVE LABUBU: Junior Desah Blair poses with a cute Labubu she has recently bought.

Bellevue reflects on a year without phones

MINGZE SHI
Website Team

After one year of going to class with our phones silenced and held in pouches, what do Bellevue High students think about it now? To answer this question, I gave 50 students a poll with two main questions: how do they feel towards the policy, and how do they think their classmates feel about it?



GRAPHIC / CECE WANG

SURVEY RESULTS: The chart illustrates how 50 Bellevue High School students responded when asked: “How do you think the phone policy has impacted your peers?”

I asked the respondents for their GPAs anonymously, revealing that nearly 80% of the responses came from students with GPAs of 3.8 or higher. Since the majority answered both that they did not feel affected by the policy as well as having a high GPA, there could be a correlation between the two. Joey Yoon, a BHS junior, expresses a similar view.

“I think it’s good because I came from Chinook, so I’m used to a phone policy... It’s good for people who get distracted a lot, but I do my work and it’s kind of bad because I want to do something after I finish my work,” Yoon said.

Many students agree that they don’t deserve to be punished because they do not abuse phones but think those who don’t use devices properly should be restricted.

Next, what do the teachers think?

“It’s too easy to get distracted while you’ve got that device handy and available... Having it away, I see them being more social, I see fewer kids leaving class, I see them more focused than before,” Patrick Vandyke, a math teacher, said.

Four other teachers expressed similar sentiments as Vandyke (none opposed when asked), but he takes the phone policy more seriously than some: he will take your phone until 3:30 p.m. should it go off during class, even if it is in a holder.

“I’m pretty sure most of [my students] hate it. I think some recognize it’s good for them but most of them don’t like it,” Vandyke said, acknowledging their frustrations.

Though most BHS students surveyed dislike the phone policy, many students and teachers agree that even if it is unjust for some, devices restrictions are necessary for those whose phones hinder their academics. So, the question is, did those who say they were negatively impacted by the phone policy actually have a harder time learning, or are they just salty?

Japanese-American roots run deep

ZIA SHAIKH
Copy Editor

Bellevue Square is a staple attraction for most students at Bellevue High School, the various retail stores, delicious restaurants and nearby park make it a memorable landmark of the city of Bellevue. However, many students and citizens are not aware of how Bellevue downtown is built upon formerly Japanese owned properties.

The history of Japanese American families and farms in Bellevue began in earnest in 1896, when immigrants from rural Japan came to Bellevue, often to work on railroads. However, seeking opportunity, some of the immigrants decided to start farms and not long after created the agricultural powerhouses of the east side. They were renowned for their strawberry farms, which gained popularity across the region. According to the “Eastside Heritage Center,” the results culminated in the strawberry festival of 1925, leading to an annual event taking place in the summer. In 1935, the festival attracted 15,000 people, five times the number of people that even lived in Bellevue at the time.

Unfortunately, in the 1940s, President Roosevelt signed order 9066, mandating the internment of Japanese American citizens nationwide as an effect of the Imperial Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. As a result, 60 prominent Japanese families in Bellevue were rounded up and shipped to detention centers in Northern California. According to “The Seattle Globalist,” Following the absence of these families, prominent Seattle area businessmen were quick to buy up the available property, initiating the process that would birth the downtown Bellevue we know today, with sprawling suburbs and high-rise buildings.

When 11 of the 60 families returned years later, they found the city completely different. An article published by the University of Washington finds that the families encountered staunch racism when they came back, with different organizations set up to prevent the re-incorporation of Japanese American people. Most first generation “Issei” struggled with readjusting to life without their farms and livelihoods, while some second generation “Nikkei” were able to attend universities and get new jobs. For all Japanese American families, the scars of betrayal from the country they had lived in for generations cut deep. In 1988, President Ronald Reagan awarded surviving internees 20,000 dollars each, a somewhat lackluster semblance of remorse to livelihoods lost and generations of culture uprooted and destroyed. Fortunately, individuals in the community still strive to remember the events of what took place.

“Each spring, Mercer Island resident Judy Kusakabe joins us at BHS to share her family experience while interned during WWII, [which] speaks pow-



PHOTO / CITY OF BELLEVUE

HONORING THE JAPANESE FARMERS: The Emerging Radiance art installation was on display at the Bellevue Arts Museum in 2022. This year, Tani Ikeda and Michelle Kumata continued this exhibition at Bellevue Library.

erfully about the legacy of racism in our community then and now,” said history teacher Randy Litzzenberger.

The city of Bellevue has also taken a similar step, as on February 18th, Mayor Lynne Robinson unveiled “Emerging Radiance,” an art exhibition at Bellevue Library. The exhibition even features augmented reality, with audio and animated video screenings, allowing participants to witness the experiences of real Bellevue farmers before, during, and after their incarceration. Experiencing Japanese culture has also touched members of Bellevue High school.

Junior Max Wu reminisces to the time he took a school trip to a Japanese tea garden in Bellevue, saying, “the combination of tea and beautiful plants made it feel super relaxing.”

Although Japanese American culture in the Bellevue area may have been suppressed in the past, it is the same persistent spirit and culture that put Bellevue on the map keeping Japanese culture an integral part of community today.

Tempo setters hold the band together

BROOKE BEDE
A&E Editor



PHOTO / SOPHIA XU

DRUM MAJORS POSES FOR SPIRIT DRESS UP: Drum majors junior Carmen Aguado-Scheyer, senior Olie Peterson, and senior Sophia Xu dressed up as life guards for the band team-bonding activity! They had just led a successful marching band rehearsal!

With a school culture heavily rooted in football, it's no surprise that Bellevue students often find themselves sitting under bright stadium lights at least once a week. They cheer as players run into the end zone, chant obnoxiously at every botched play and stare in confusion as three students dressed in white... climb up onto silver podiums?

Most understand the value of the marching band and the spirited soundtrack they bring to the football games. After a halftime show, most of the credit goes towards the directors and players of marching band. However, there's one student-led role that most of the school tends to overlook: the drum majors.

For those who don't know, drum majors are the ones responsible for conducting during a marching band performance, giving verbal commands and hand signals to start music and dictate tempo. When the band is out of sync with them, the result can be catastrophic, a mess of discordant notes and rushed rhythms. Nevertheless, there's a lot more to the role than just conducting. Drum majors serve as a liaison between the director and the players. They organize routines, help plan practices and serve as mentors to newer members of the band.

This year drum majors Sophia Xu, Carmen Scheyer and Olie Peterson noticed the band spirit was lower than past years, so they decided to take measures into their own hands. The most recent change was a new addition to marching practices: competitions between instrument sections.

“One of my favorite parts of being a drum major is organizing team bonding. My favorite has to be when we held a pool-noodle jousting competition. It was a fun way to make practice seem less stressful,” senior Sophia Xu said.

Besides just representing the band during football games, the drum majors also have a uniquely

important role when it comes to public relations. When news sites want to gain insight into the student perspective of band kids, they often reach out to the drum majors themselves directly.

“Last year we got interviewed on Fox News live. It was a little stressful because we had to find the right words to convey what band means to us, and it was live, so we couldn't mess up,” said Xu. “Overall, however, the experience was really fun, and I would do it again.”

Being a drum major requires a higher level of professionalism that can sometimes be difficult. Drum majors must be able to respond quickly to events that happen during the game and interact with directors and parents. Being an active communicator is an essential part of the process, which is why the directors are extremely strict during auditions on who gets chosen.

However, at the end of the day, the hard work that goes into being a drum major pays off.

“It's always so cool to see the band doing so amazing during our shows,” Xu said, “I've met all my favorite people through music, and I know it's a community I can also go back and be comfortable with.”

So, at the next football game when you see white-clad figures climbing the podiums, remember that they're more than just conductors. The drum majors represent the beating hearts of the marching band, through both their rhythm and their spirit.



ALL GRAPHICS / IIRAH NAAZ

Hot or not? Bellevue students' take on fall fashion

BROOKLYN O'CONNOR
Graphic/Photo Team

Fall is in the air and school has started back up, which means students can express themselves through fashion. As summer comes to a close, we move away from polka-dots, butter yellow and denim. This now paves a way for a new mix of neutral and warm tone outfit statements. Let's see what's hot or not for Fall 2025.

"A fashion in is a short trench coat, but an out is definitely the Isabel 'Bekett' Marant shoes, I feel like they're going out of style and overworn," senior Ai-Khue Williams said.

Since the early to mid-2000s shows like "Gossip Girl" and people like Angelina Jolie, made a huge fashion statements by wearing short trench coats, where preppy meets polished, often paired with skinny jeans and a "classic tall" Uggs. Gen-z has made their own twist on that same style by often wearing a short trench coat paired with a mini skirt or wide leg jeans. Short trench coats give a put together and structured look, with natural color tones making a perfect fall statement. On the other hand, the Isabella "Bekett" Marant shoes has been a hot topic in the sneaker world since social media apps like TikTok have re-popularized them, a very bold and chunky shoes known for controversy among many people, some people even go as far to call them "ugly-chic." They first gained popularity in the early 2010s which later fell off, but more recently, wedge sneakers have made a comeback, but as fall arrives, their popularity wanes.



Neutral tones are back for fall. Since fall is all about transition, fashion trends also do the same, moving away from past colors and more into a broader neutral palette which is perfect for layering, effortless elegance that gives off a "clean girl" look. Feeling warm and cozy is perfect for this upcoming season. A trend that never seen to leave and

is a must-have for a lot of people is the UGG Classic Ultra Mini boots which is reoccurrence annually in the fall, and a timeless piece that is often seen a lot by the student body, which doesn't seem like it's going to go anywhere soon.

"The ins for this fall in my opinion are neutral shades. I know this is really basic, but I love my mini Uggs. I'm excited for them to be back in trend," freshman Hailee Middleton said.

New trends, filled with familiar and new styles and prints, are coming for Fall 2025, which is going to be exciting to see. So, whether you are pulling off a short trench coat, mini Uggs or a neutral pallet, express your style and enjoy the fall spirits.



FALL FASHIONISTAS: Sophomores Hailey Anderson and Chloe Chenoweth seen posing in the flex with their matching fall sweaters. Cozy is the style for the coming months.

Drama club works on production of Dracula

PIPER LIPON
Business Team

As the weather cools and the wind picks up, students in the drama club at Bellevue High School get busy planning, building sets and practicing for the yearly fall shows. Numerous hours of work and resources go into creating these amazing performances and the yearly performance of "Dracula" is always perfect to set the mood for the spooky month of October.

Everyone has a chance to see these stunning productions on stage, but rarely ever get to hear about the effort behind the scenes. To truly appreciate the work put into these shows, it is necessary to know the people who work all of the technical components. The tech workers, also known as "techies", are the people who really make the show come to life.

"I would say that in my experience teching for shows like "Dracula" or just shows in general, tech is a very fun

and creative way to bond with people. The techies at BHS are a very supportive and encouraging bunch of people who have really helped me and other find our place here. As for the upcoming shows this fall, we are working to make some of the most creative, interactive, and dynamic shows possible!" said sophomore Tala Everman.

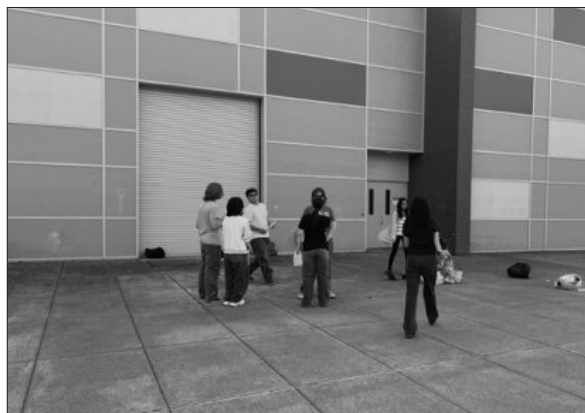
With that said, it is also important to mention the dreaded "tech week" and the stress put into perfection.

"Last year I teched 'Dracula'. I mostly did painting, and during shows, I was part of running crew and ropes operator. Though tech week is always stressful, once you get to the show days you really realize how much the hard work everyone puts in is worth," said sophomore Melissa Wang.

The stage managers are the real masterminds, having to lead 20 to 30 people at once, fixing problems mid-show and making sure all of the people and props are in the right place is no small feat and should not be overlooked.

"As someone who's watched Dracula for all four years of my time at BHS, I sort of revere the story and I'm worried about doing it justice, especially on such an important year as our 13th! But I have a lot of faith in my actors and my techies to make this as best as we can get it! 'Dracula' was the first show I ever got to work backstage for, so to see it come full circle just makes me so excited to see what comes of it! It's going to be an uphill battle, but I do have so much faith in the theater to get this, along with our other fall play, in motion!" said senior and stage manager Caitlin Arinas.

As the leaves float to the ground and the buzz of the theater spotlights are heard all the way from the stage, the dedication put into the fabulous fall shows shine fully through the students who commit themselves to their production.



TENACIOUS THESPIANS: Drama club members spotted rehearsing outside of the BHS Performing Arts Center. They're hard at work on the iconic yearly production of Dracula.

Make this delicious pumpkin pie recipe!

CECE WANG
Features Editor

As the maple trees turn red, BHS is proud to bring back its pumpkin spice recipe series. A beloved Thanksgiving tradition among students is enjoying a warm and delightful pumpkin pie. If you're excited for the holidays, or just want a good treat, this recipe is for you.

Ingredients:

Pie Crust: 3/4 cup of cold butter, 2 cups of flour, 1/4 cup of water, 1 tablespoon of sugar, a pinch of salt

Pie Filling: 2 cups of pumpkin puree (or canned pumpkin), 1 cup of evaporated milk (or whipping cream), 2 large eggs, 1/2 cup of brown sugar, A pinch of salt, 1/2 teaspoon of cinnamon, 1/4 teaspoon of cloves, 1/4 teaspoon of nutmeg

Crème Brulee topping: 3 tablespoons of granulated sugar

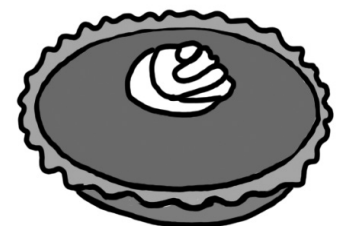
Instructions:

To make the crust, start by measuring out the flour, sugar and salt into a large bowl. Then, cut the cold butter into small squares and use your fingertips to gently mix the butter with the dry ingredients. Once the mixture forms a wet-sand-like texture, gradually pour in the water and knead it until it forms a dough. You may need to adjust the amount of water. Next, transfer the dough onto a clean surface and roll it out to 1/4-inch thick. Lay the dough over a 9-inch pie tray and trim off the excess around the edges of the baking tray. Place a piece of parchment paper over the crust and place beans (or oven-safe items with weight) to cover the crust. Bake in an oven preheated to 350 degrees for 15 minutes. Remove the weights and parchment and let it cool on the side.

For the filling, whisk together the pumpkin puree, brown sugar, salt, spices and eggs. Lastly, add in the evaporated milk and gently mix until fully incorporated. Pour the mixture into the cooled crust and bake the pie for 50 minutes at 350 degrees.

After the pie is finished baking, sprinkle the granulated sugar over the pie, and use a torch to caramelize the sugar on the top.

Dig in and enjoy!



ALL GRAPHICS / FINLEY GERON

Students recommend nostalgic books

VIDULA RAJESH
Business Team

Many of us remember going to the school library to choose a book, whether to read for an independent reading assignment or just for fun, wandering the aisles of the library to pick the perfect one. Unbeknownst to us, these books would shape us and teach lessons that would stay with us for a lifetime.

1. "The Magic Tree House" by Mary Pope Osborn

This series taught many of us history as if we were part of it and the intriguing premise of siblings traveling back into various important times in history captivated young readers. It introduced many booklovers to the genre of historical fiction.

2. "A Series of Unfortunate Events" by Daniel Handler

A series that follows orphaned siblings going through unfortunate events. Readers rooted for the Baudelaire siblings and got invested in the mystery of the VFD and secret societies, while allowing young book lovers to be introduced to important lessons hidden between the lines.

3. "If You Give a Mouse a Cookie" by Laura Numeroff

Readers followed the story of a boy giving a mouse a cookie and read along as the mouse continues to ask for different things and ultimately ends up asking for a cookie again. Many kids were amused by the mouse's requests, along with the sequels that followed the requests of different animals. This book takes many of us back to our elementary school's classrooms.

"I remembered reading 'If You Give a Mouse a Cookie' in elementary school and I really miss reading fun books like that," says junior Kharisma Wong.

4. "Diary of a Wimpy Kid" by Jeff Kinley

"When I read 'Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Rodrick Rules,' it was the first time I got hooked on reading. Every week at the school library,

I would only want more from the series. It's what made me love books," said sophomore Amyra Agarwal.

This series was always easy to find in the library with its bright color cover, and a fun read with a simple art style. Readers really felt like they were reading Gregory's diary.

5. "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory" by Roald Dahl

Roald Dahl is probably the first author that comes up when we think of childhood nostalgia books, with his iconic childhood stories like 'Matilda,' 'The Witches,' 'BFG,' and 'Fantastic Mr. Fox.' However, the one almost everyone has read or watched is Charlie and the Chocolate Factory. We all rooted for Charlie to win his golden ticket and were in awe of the mechanics of the factory. The lessons it taught to be kind, grateful, and honest added to the nostalgia of the book.

Whether these were your favorite books as a kid or some newer titles that

you have never heard of, these books hold power. They allow us to be reminded of the days with less homework, when we had time to let our imagination run free. By revisiting these comfort books, we are able to remind ourselves why many of us love reading.



BOOK WORMS: Sophomores Gabby Walters and Stephany Peixoto cozy up in the library to read their favorite books. The library is a popular spot especially during fall as people escape the cold weather to read.



ALL GRAPHICS / FINLEY GERON

Watch these underrated horror movies

YURI PRUETT
Opinion Editor

A fast-approaching fall kicks off the beginning of our 2025-2026 school year, and with it, whispers of costumes, ghosts and candy. The air is getting colder, the trees are turning orange, and Halloween season is fast approaching. It's the perfect time to curl up inside with some warm popcorn and a scary movie.

"I've always been a fan of horror movies, but I find it especially thrilling to watch during the spooky season," said senior Zoey Lin.

But well-loved films like "Scream" and "Jaws," though iconic, too often overshadow a myriad of underappreciated spooky movies. As a self-proclaimed movie reviewer (I have Letterboxd), here are some of my favorite underrated horror movies you should watch this Halloween.

1. "The Blair Witch Project" (1999)

The "Blair Witch Project" is the quintessential example of found footage horror movies. The tape-recorded film follows a group of friends as they explore a forest rumored to be haunted, armed only with a shaky video camera and a set of camping supplies. It was a groundbreaking movie upon its release, particularly with its overwhelmingly convincing tape-footage format that carries genuine first-person terror to its audience. If you're a fan of a spine-chilling thrill, this movie will keep you at the edge of your seat all the way through.

2. "The Prince of Darkness" (1987)

John Carpenter's "The Prince of Darkness" is adored by lovers of the weird and paranormal, and runs only 102 minutes (absolutely the ideal length of time for a movie, in my opinion). Follow a group of graduate students as they accidentally find a strange liquid, inadvertently unleashing an evil force and dooming all of humanity. It's full of poofy '80s hairstyles and lots of screaming, an extremely fun watch for lovers of both sci-fi and horror.

3. "The Wicker Man" (1973)

"The Wicker Man" follows a police sergeant as he investigates the mysterious disappearance of a little girl. His investigation leads him to a remote island, where the sergeant uncovers a web of strange and unusual traditions. Fans of movies like "Midsommar" would definitely enjoy this movie, given that it was one of the bigger influences in this genre of horror. It's unsettling, strange and lots of fun.



4. "Nope" (2022)

For fans of "Get Out," director Jordan Peele strikes again with this part-horror, part-sci-fi adventure. The story follows a pair of siblings who discover something sinister living above their Californian horse ranch, and set out to understand what it could be. For fans of aliens, the paranormal and a good Akira motorcycle slide, this movie is perfect. It's fun, thrilling and incorporates references to a true story, making it all the more terrifying. A great option for this fall!

Fall is a great time to expand your movie repertoire, and underrated horror recommendations like these are a perfect starting point to kick off the season. Happy watching!



MOVIE BINGING: Senior Rowan Geron spotted watching "Scary Movie 2". Movie binging becomes especially popular among BHS students as the weather gets colder, since they need to move activities inside. Just make sure you don't take a walk alone when it's dark out afterward, or you might be in for a scare!

PHOTO / FINLEY GERON

Bellevue Pickleball Club launches excitement

Daniel Debenport
Business Team



Pickleball fans in Bellevue should be excited since there will be a new indoor facility opening in the neighborhood. The Bellevue Pickleball Club, originally set to open on October 1 at 44 Bellevue Way NE is now expected to open in a few weeks due to final construction delays. Despite the delays, the anticipation is still high since pickleball is one of the fastest-growing sports in the nation and Bellevue is a local hotspot. The building once housed Bellevue Consignments, a furniture store that closed in late 2024, but now with approval from the City of Bellevue, the 35,000-square-foot space is being transformed into a top-tier indoor athletic facility.

The facility will feature 13 regulation-size courts with smooth acrylic surfaces, professional lighting, and climate control. They will even offer four signature pink courts, the first indoor pink courts in the country. Players can become members and sign up for offers, lessons, and other membership benefits. The club will be open daily from 6 am to midnight, giving players a place to play, rain or shine.

This was the goal of founder Susan Tai, who discovered pickleball just last year and immediately fell in love with it. "It was love at first hit," Tai recalls. She explains that it wasn't even the game itself, but "the laughter, the connection, and the pure, uncomplicated joy that came with it." She wishes to share this feeling with others by creating "a sanctuary from the rain and a year-round haven for joy and community."

This new club will welcome everyone – from competitive athletes to those who are picking up their first ball and paddle for the first time as beginner fans of the sport. Tai wants the space to be both social and active -- a place to improve, compete, and connect. The mission of the club is to build a community where "passion meets play."

With this new and nearby facility, Bellevue High School students have the perfect opportunity to create their own pickleball club or join an already existing team as a member of the club. Bellevue high school's Hugo Kim, a current junior, says "I will join the club and pay the membership rate," explaining how he would like to join the new club as a member and would be excited if the high school had its own club he can sign up for. Another student, Alex Gillin, a senior, also states similar reasons about wanting to be more spirited and involved in both school and community. "I play for fun right now, but I will pay the membership to improve my skills and become a better player." Playing pickleball will foster social interactions and develop team-building skills. Its social and inclusive nature makes it an excellent way to compete, stay active, meet new people, and build community.



PLAYERS IN ACTION: Barque students play in a competitive tournament where they were able to showcase their pickleball skills. They displayed their teamwork and dedication on the court!

Bellevue Football returns

Finley Gerron
Graphics/Photo Team

Fall brings all the best things...pumpkin spice lattes, comfort food, warm sweaters and FOOTBALL SEASON! Bellevue Wolverines have a history of dominating the field. The team has won the 3A State Championship 11 times. If you are a new student, get to a Friday night game and see for yourself what they are all about!

Bellevue's season started off with a big game against Bethel High School on Sept. 5. There were eight different running backs who carried the ball for the Wolverines, earning them a 35-14 win over Bethel. The following week, our Wolverines faced the Lake Stevens Vikings, which was hyped as a battle between two of the best football teams in the state. The Vikings were out for revenge after losing to the Wolverines in 2024, and they came with all they had, beating the Wolverines 14 to 21. This loss did not slow down the Wolverines, as they came back strong against Mount Baker High School, winning 42 to 21. Five more games are scheduled before the 3A KingCo Championship on Halloween night at BHS.

Nick Norrah, is an outstanding player on the Wolverine team, when he was asked about the season.

"I think the season will turn out great. I think we'll end up back at Husky Stadium in December; we just need to get the job done this year," said senior Norrah.



ALL GRAPHICS / TEO TAGAVILLA

With Bellevue High School's top notch coaching staff, Norrah reflects on his experience.

"The season's been good so far. We've got a long way to go and improve on offense and defense, but we've got the best coaches, and they know what they are doing so we just have to trust them to do our jobs," said Norrah.

The offensive coordinator coach, Joe Razore, was asked what he thought of the team.

"This is a year where we expect a ton of growth as younger and/or inexperienced players adjust to the speed of the game at the varsity level. It's been fun seeing the strides we've made since spring ball," said Razore.

He also pointed out a player, Mathaias Kalepo, playing left tackle for the Wolverines this season.

"That spot was previously held by Demetri Manning. Mathaias has gone all-in and is developing into a great O-Lineman too," said Razore.

This will be a strong year for the Wolverines.

Not to mention, the Wolverine crowd doesn't disappoint in the stands; there are fun themes for the home games. So far, the crowd has supported the team in the "back to black" theme and then flipped the other direction and went "neon" for the Lake Stevens game. Then, the homecoming game on Oct. 3, everyone showed up in their "blue and gold"! Wolverine football games are the place to be on a Friday night; go cheer on your classmates and bring school spirit to the stands.

Through the lens: Jack Corsi captures school sports moments

Vansh Chopra
Graphics/Photo Team

Jack Corsi's Instagram page, @_shotbyjack, has drawn the attention of almost 1200 followers. His profile ranges from posed pictures of athletes to candid shots in the game - including close-up shots of the Wolverines sign, the barbells that the football team lifts with, and the athletes warming up for their games. This thoughtfully curated portfolio of work shows this Bellevue High School student's skill as a multifaceted photographer.

"This is my 3rd year taking pictures for the football team and it's always been a lot of fun, I just hope to have fun with my senior year," Corsi mentioned.

By taking pictures of the weightroom or drills on the field, Corsi also brings

the behind-the-scenes work to light. Corsi's passion is strongly recognized by the athletes. Varsity football player Adam Neff acknowledges the quality of the work and the effort behind it.

"He puts a lot of time and effort in making such high-quality pictures. Truly brings the picture to life," Neff compliments.

While mainly taking photos for the football team, Corsi also photographs soccer, basketball, and baseball.

When asked about the origin of his photography passion, Corsi states, "My sister did it and she got me interested in photography, and in my sophomore year, the JV football team said I should come take photos which is what really got me going."

Jack Corsi's photography career has just started, but his work is meaningful and is increasingly impressive. As he looks forward, Corsi hopes to continue excelling in the field of photography, pursuing it "in college and maybe extending into professional sports."



FOCUSED ON THE FIELD: Jack Corsi captures the game one shot at a time. His keen eye ensures every moment of the game is perfectly captured.





IN ACTION: From every sport, every play, Jack Corsi captures the spirit and energy of different athletes. His photos tell the story of determination, passion, and movement in every frame.



SOURCE / JACK CORSI

Athlete of the Issue: Gordon Rounds

Ben Koh
Graphics/Photo Team

It's been a fantastic season for Bellevue Golf so far as its players continue to dominate on the course. Their success, however, would have been short-lived without a rising talent on the team - junior Gordon Rounds - who has stepped up to fill the shoes of last year's seniors. A captain already, Rounds has shown consistent improvement in matches and has been leading Bellevue this past month.

"It's crazy how much Gordy has improved. He's gone from a kid with very little golf experience that barely made the team as a freshman, to being a huge contributor to a team that finished 2nd in State the very next year. Now, as a junior he's a team captain and one of the best players in Kingco."

Bellevue golf coach Scott Didrickson says. But Rounds' character and discipline also shines through his performance.

"He's worked so hard to get there, and all along the way he's been humble, fun to be around, and a great teammate."

Didrickson adds. During their match against Interlake, Rounds shot a two under 34 (meaning he completed a round with only 34 strokes compared to the default par 36), winning the title as the medalist of the match.



"Not only has [Rounds] improved his game immensely over the past two years, but he has proven that he is a player who can be counted on to come through for his team in the biggest moments. He is one of the strongest players in the strongest conference in the

State, so to say that he has the potential to play beyond high school would be a gross understatement."

Interlake's golf coach Scott Marcum, who was impressed by Rounds' achievements, said.

High praise coming from a rival team, but Rounds doesn't let all the accolades get to his head.

"I don't really feel the pressure just on me - it's more about the whole team because we all want to do well for each other and keep building on what we did last year. Everyone's been working hard and when one of us plays good it makes the whole team better; so for me, it's just about doing my part so we can keep moving forward together," Rounds said.

It's clear that Bellevue Golf would be a lot different without Rounds - less triumphant, less spirited, and less dominant. Rounds' improvement and discipline is a clear example of hard work resulting in success.



SOURCE / GORDON ROUNDS

STANDING TALL: Gordon Rounds is ready to take on a challenging tournament. With confidence and focus, he is prepared to rise to the occasion and cheer on his team.

Athlete of the Issue: Kaitlyn Nguyen

Haideen Adam
Graphic/Photo Manager



SOURCE / KAITLYN NGUYEN

JUMPING HIGH: Kaitlyn Nguyen dominates the game one powerful strike at a time. Her agility and precision make every play a moment to remember.

The Bellevue Wolverines volleyball team is off to a hot start. With eleven returning varsity players - eight of them being seniors - this team is unstoppable. They haven't dropped a set yet, sitting at an impressive 7-0 undefeated. They hope to continue to keep their winning streak alive; all of this could not be done without Senior Kaitlyn Nyguen, their star player.

She has been on the varsity team for all four of her years at Bellevue. Nyguen received 1st team All Kingco her sophomore year and MVP her junior year. She contributed with the highest hitting percentage and most amount of digs in the league, helping Bellevue volleyball go to State all three years and is hoping to make it again this year. Not to mention she has been a team captain for three years now, helping keep the team intact.

She is an outside hitter for Bellevue where she plays all the way around hitting and passing. In volleyball, there are six rotations, so she hits for three rotations and passes for the other three. However, her true calling is being a libero which is a defensive specialist who passes for all six rotations.

Nyguen has played club volleyball since she was eight years old, starting young and getting better each year. She also participates in beach volleyball during her summer, getting first in many of the tournaments she plays in.

Nyguen is continuing her volleyball career next year and will be attending the University of Washington which is a D1 NCAA Volleyball school. To further her academics, she will be studying marine biology.

Some tips that Nyguen would share with new volleyball players or current ones looking to improve:

"Do things outside of practice time like extra reps or watch film on your own time. Play with people who can humble you, you will learn and grow from it," Nyguen said.

She brings a fun energy both on and off the court and always brings up everyone's spirits.

"After first being on a team with Nyguen, I realized she is such a supportive teammate and inspires me to push myself during practices and games every day. I am so proud of her and cannot wait to see the amazing things she'll will come to accomplish while at UW," senior Sadie Dochtermann said.

The season is almost halfway done, so make sure to come support your Wolverines and see star player Nyguen in action, it won't disappoint. They have a long way to go and are hoping for a 4-peat visit at State in November!



ALL GRAPHICS / TEO TAGAMULA

