

barque in bloom

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Bellevue Orchestra claims national recognition

TEO TAGAVILLA
Photo/Graphics
Team

Unlike the typical student's third-quarter high school slump, students in Bellevue High School's orchestra have sustained their momentum. The program claimed an impressive achievement: for the first time, Bellevue's Chamber Orchestra was selected to perform at the National Orchestra Festival (NOF), this year hosted by the American String Teachers Association in San Francisco.

The NOF brings together leading student ensembles for evaluation, professional clinics and national performance opportunities. Acceptance to the event indicates that a program has achieved an exceptional musical standard. For Bellevue, this invitation reflects both significant growth and national recognition.

"We were originally waitlisted in May and felt a bit bummed, but then we got accepted late summer and we were all so thrilled" said senior chamber member Madeline Lee.

From February 28 through March 1, Bellevue's Chamber Orchestra, the most selective and advance ensemble in the program, traveled to San Francisco, California, to represent the school. While there, students participated in a professionally led clinic and received critiques from established musicians. They



NATIONAL FAME: Chamber Orchestra posing happily for a photo. Bellevue is proud to have such a talented group of individuals.

also performed for an audience of peers, educators, and judges. Other Bellevue School District schools, including Interlake and International, were also in attendance, competing in the festival's competitive track.

The chamber orchestra performed four works that highlighted their skill: Pizzicato by Vivian Fung,

"Serenade for Strings" by Antonín Dvořák, "Orchid Fantasy" by Yukiko Nishimura, and "Danzas de Panamá" by William Grant Still. A requirement for festival admittance was a diverse and representative program, making this repertoire especially meaningful due to its technicality and diversity.

The momentum continues March 14 at Western Washington University, where Bellevue musicians will travel to perform at the state orchestra festival. This event will feature a collaboration between the chamber orchestra, sinfonia, and select band and percussion students, performing "Danzón No. 2" by Arturo Márquez. The Chamber Orchestra will also perform separately, further highlighting Bellevue's best.

"We prepared a lot to have a good performance at the festival. Band and Orchestra had combined rehearsals, and a lot of effort went into doing our best," said sophomore orchestra member Nathan Winget.

With national appearances and statewide collaboration, this spring marks one of the most significant semesters in Bellevue orchestra history. Through breaking new ground and continued excellence, Bellevue's own orchestra has been hard at work representing Bellevue High School and the greater community.

WILL O' HARA
Editor in Chief

BSD Adds AP Research

After wrapping up the election fair, Bellevue High School is adding AP Research to its academic lineup next year. AP Research is different from classes such as AP Language or AP Literature; this new English class is centered on what students want to study, not an AP test in May. This class gives students the opportunity to pursue a course with more independence, depth and real-world academic experience.

Before enrolling in AP Research, which is the second course in the AP Capstone Program, students must finish AP Seminar. If students do well on their AP exams, these two courses lead to an AP Capstone diploma. This diploma shows colleges that a student can manage demanding academic work over an extended period of time, conducting sustained, independent research and analyzing complex information.

Despite being a part of the Capstone pathway, the two courses have different objectives. While AP Research requires students to plan and carry out their own year-long research project, AP Seminar focuses on argument analysis and writing sophisticated analytical essays.

"In AP Seminar, we focus on research skills, presentation skills and learning how to read high level research," English teacher Kimberly Richardson said. "The difference between the two is in Seminar you learn how to read case studies and scholarly articles, but in Research, you create your own cases studies and scholarly research."

The class structure of AP Research makes it a highly attractive choice for students who are strong writers and independent thinkers.

"AP Research seems interesting and a way to broaden the skills and activities I enjoyed so much as an AP

Seminar student. After finishing AP Research, I would love to receive my AP Capstone diploma!" said sophomore Avika Ranjan.

Her viewpoint represents a wider interest among students at BHS who wish to take on a more independent challenge while continuing to improve the analytical and presentation skills they acquired in AP Seminar.

This is an important change for all students at BHS because this completely changes the pathway for English classes. Instead of high-achieving students only taking AP Language in their junior year, they now have the option to take AP Research alongside an English class. For students who like writing about subjects they are passionate about and want to gain experience that will help you in almost any field you choose, this is the right class to take.

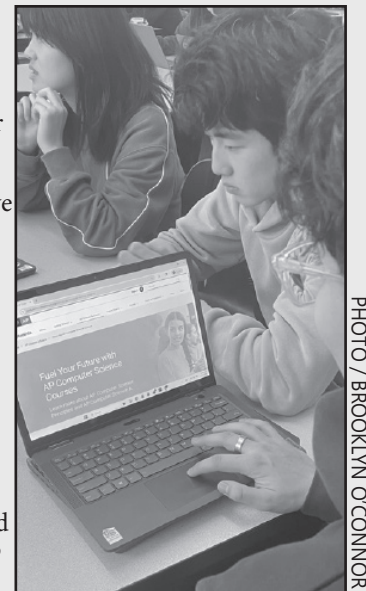


PHOTO / BROOKLYN O'CONNOR

ANOTHER AP: This AP is an exiting new addition for students. New content and info coming soon!

DECA sends 18 students to ICDC

MANDY KIM
Copy Team



LOOKING GOOD: Members of DECA posing for the camera after their success. You can feel their aura through the page.

This year, Bellevue's DECA chapter brought over 150 students to the Area Four conference and then took 58 students to State. After rigorous competition, 18 students will soon make their way to Atlanta, Georgia for the prestigious International Career Development Conference. To get a taste of what goes on during these conferences, let's take a behind-the-scenes look from some of the 58 students who advanced to State this year.

Some students at state point out a change in rigor due to the record high 6400 competitors scrambling for a spot at ICDC.

"It's way more than last year, making all the events feel a lot more competitive," recalls junior Conrad Krol.

From over 100 competitors per event, the top 15 were called up to stage as finalists. Of those 15, only nine of ten qualified to ICDC. As qualifiers were announced in descending order, anxiety spiked; the difference between staying a finalist and qualify-

ing for ICDC grew more uncertain by the second.

Besides competition, attending DECA conferences also opens the opportunity to network with students from other schools. At State, Bellevue students were able to reconnect with friends from all around Washington and create new relationships with students who share the same interests.

"I enjoyed getting to meet leadership from other schools," said junior Tara Saini, Bellevue's DECA president.

Another key takeaway for students at the State conference is learning to value the experience and not the rank. For underclassmen, attending a conference can be a great introduction into competitive extracurriculars and navigating a professional environment. Students at State also learned to value the memories made, particularly the ones cultivated with close friends. Community is a cornerstone of Bellevue's DECA chapter.

"Getting to dress up with my friends and supporting them for their

events was definitely my favorite part," recalls sophomore Talia Hsu.

One of Bellevue's students Conrad Krol even won State President this year! After going through several applications and interviews, Krol took the opportunity to give a speech during opening ceremony to thousands of students and later won by popular vote. Running against formidable candidates, while competing in two events is no small feat. When tackling obstacles from the perspective of growth and not quantitative success, anything can be possible, according to Krol in his candidacy speech.

"DECA is about bringing meaning to success- each hurdle makes success all the more significant," said Krol.

This year's State DECA Conference was full of fun, commitment, and growth. From the students who advanced to ICDC, to the students who fought their way to state and everyone who tried out something new for the first time, Bellevue High School is proud of all the DECA competitors.

The war in Iran is not just a simple conflict

YASH KOTHARI
Website Manager

As American and Israeli bombs continue to raze the streets of Iran, they also continue to grab our attention. Within just a week of the first flyovers of Tehran, Iran's capital, the streets of major cities around the US have been swarmed by protests and celebrations while forums about the internet have intensified with hot-take political discourse. Yet, for many, the full context of the situation still remains frustratingly inconspicuous. Do the Iranian people want outside intervention to be their saving grace? Will there actually be a US-backed regime change? And perhaps most ironically, what exactly is the Islamic Republic of Iran? Instead of jumping straight to conclusions, it's worth backing up and looking at the full context that lit this inferno in the first place.

Iran has long stood apart in the Middle East as the region's major Shia-majority power, a distinction that dates back centuries to the Safavid Dynasty and one that has put it at religious odds with the many Sunni powers in the area as well. In the 20th century, Iran's oil wealth made it strategically important, but also vulnerable to foreign interference. Britain and later the United States exerted major influence over Iran's economy and politics, most notably in 1953, when a U.S.- and British-backed coup overthrew Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh after he tried to nationalize Iran's oil industry, which would've threatened large swaths of Western profits.

That coup helped restore the rule of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, whose government pursued modernization but also ruled repressively. In 1979, a revolution toppled the shah and replaced his regime with the Islamic Republic, a theocratic government that defined itself in opposition to the West while also imposing tight social and political control at home.

Since then, Iran has

members, watching the country they come from reduced to rubble, and feeling pressure to choose between supporting the military intervention and supporting the people of Iran, even though the two are not mutually exclusive.

Among students, those tensions can feel especially sharp. While some may focus on the risks of foreign intervention, others see the attacks as a possible

want," said senior Ava Yazdani. "My family in Iran have told me that they feel hopeful about what is happening, as they believe people there have been waiting a long time for change."

Yazdani's comments suggest that some Iranians and Iranian Americans do see the conflict as potentially beneficial. For them, the benefits of the current regime falling outweigh the consequences.

"I think it's a good move by the US as it's what the Iranian people wanted. They didn't like the current regime," said senior Vaughn Ederer.

So, do Iranian people want to be helped? For students like Yazdani and Ederer, the answer appears to be yes, at least if that help contributes to the fall of a government many Iranians resent. Their comments reflect the belief that some people inside Iran are not simply enduring the conflict, but actively hoping it could lead to change.

And what is the Islamic Republic of Iran? It is not simply "Iran," nor is it the same thing as the Iranian people. It is the government that rules them --- a system many oppose, and one that shapes how every act of foreign intervention is understood.

For Iranian American students, that may be the clearest truth of all: this conflict is not simple, and neither are the people living through it. Any real understanding of Iran has to begin by listening to Iranians themselves.



been shaped by a constant tension between popular frustration with the regime and public distrust of foreign intervention.

That tension is exactly why the current bombing campaign is so complicated, especially for Iranian Americans. The bombing means checking for messages from family

opening for political change inside Iran.

"I personally believe the conflict could help the people of Iran because it may lead to a regime change, which could allow the citizens to have more freedom and a stronger voice in choosing the type of government they

What the ACT's buyout means for students

ETHAN KURUVILLA
Social Media Manager

The ACT has long been a cornerstone of American college admissions. For decades, the exam operated as a nonprofit standardized testing organization, but after its recent buyout by a private equity firm and plans to shift toward a for-profit model, the ACT's future and its implications for students at Bellevue High School feel far less certain.

At first, the change may not seem drastic. The test will still exist; students will still register, study, and take it on Saturday mornings. However, the shift from nonprofit to for-profit introduces a fundamental change in priorities.

Nonprofit organizations are typically guided by goals such as access, equity, and educational measurement. A private equity owned company, however, must answer to investors by generating financial returns. That difference has the potential to shape pricing and accessibility, even if the exam itself initially looks the same.

For BHS students, the most visible impact could be cost. Standardized testing already carries a long list of expenses. Registration fees, prep books, paid courses, tutoring, and retakes quickly add up.

Sophomore Rohail Khan said the financial pressure surrounding standardized testing is already noticeable among students.

"A lot of people already feel pressure to pay for tutoring or prep classes just to stay competitive," Khan said. "If the ACT becomes more expensive or adds more paid features, it could make the

process even harder for students who can't afford all of that."

If a for-profit ACT raises registration fees or expands premium services such as enhanced score reporting, the gap between students who can pay and those who can't widen. Fee waivers may continue, but it's unclear how strong those programs will remain if the organization becomes more focused on generating revenue.

Beyond cost, the ACT's format could also change quickly. The testing landscape is already shifting. The SAT has become more digital in its format, and colleges are increasingly moving to a test-blind or test-optional policy.

The need for the ACT to reinvent itself in a manner that students and schools cannot keep pace with may be a factor in its staying relevant. This may be achieved by incorporating a digital format into testing, changing the testing schedule or sections, incorporating adaptive testing technologies into it, or changing the scoring system. Some such changes may be for the betterment of the test itself, but others may confuse students about how much to study for it.

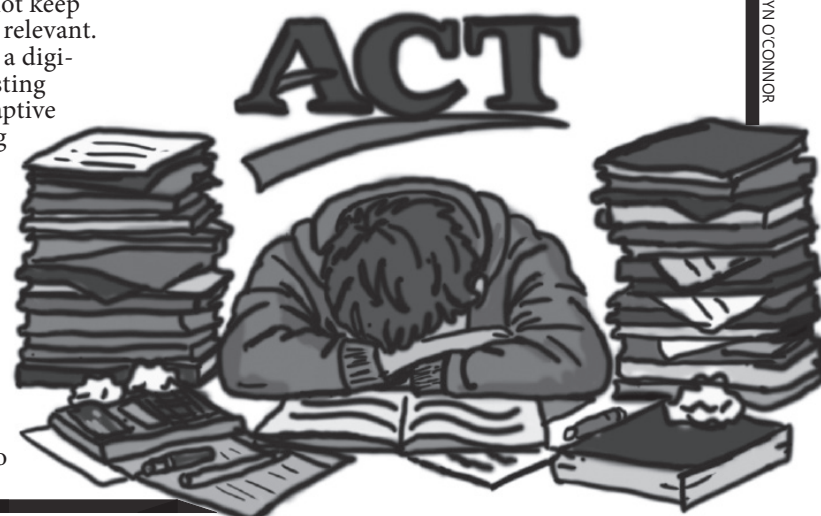
Junior Isa Rashid said that unpredictability can add extra pressure for students managing demanding schedules.

"In a school like BHS, where students already juggle AP classes and major extracurriculars, it's tough to

know how much time you should actually dedicate to a test if the format or expectations change," Rashid said.

There is also a question of credibility. If the ACT becomes more business-like in its approach, it may be seen less and less as a neutral tool in education and more as a product.

Ultimately, the buyout of the ACT represents a larger shift in the way in which education is financed and delivered. The best course of action for BHS students may be to be flexible and keep a close eye on changing testing requirements and whether or not it is in a student's best interest to submit or take the ACT in relation to the colleges they are applying to.



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To inform and entertain the community of Bellevue High School by providing relevant, interesting content while promoting informed discussion of important and controversial topics.

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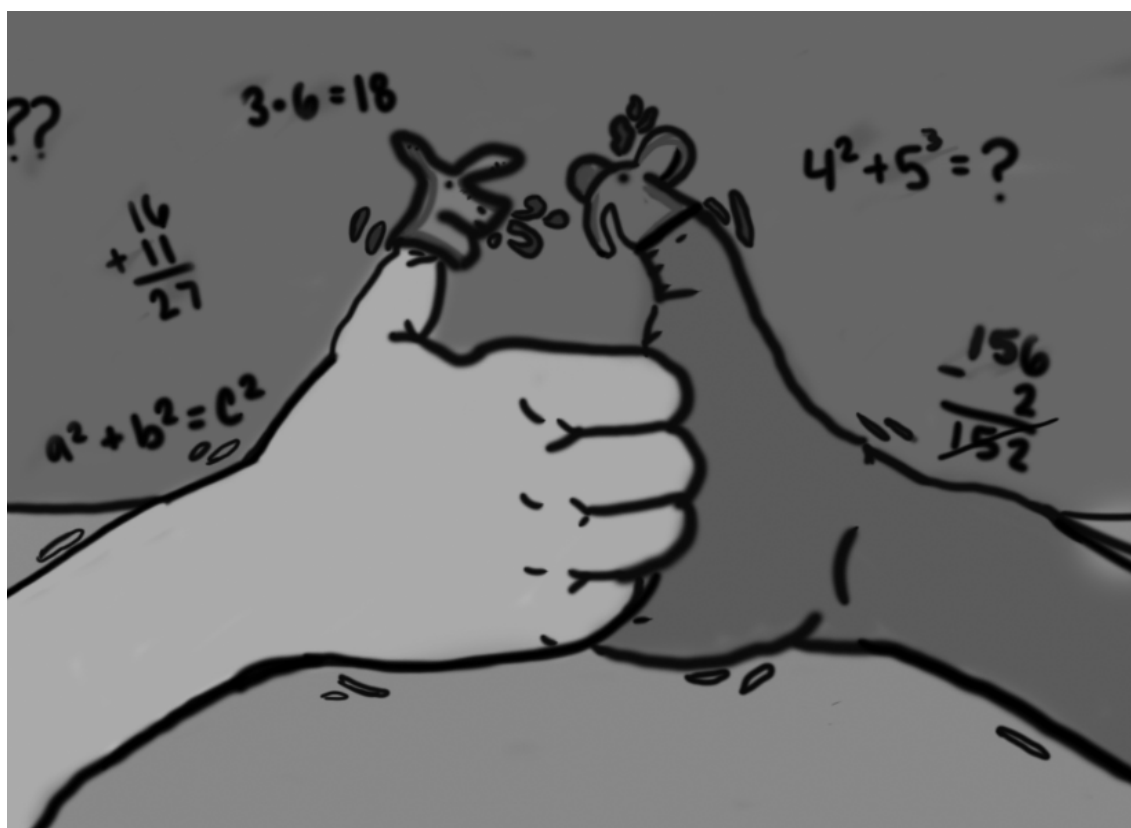
Is Discussing Politics at School Necessary?

Whether politics should be talked about at school is a widely debated topic, but education, at its core, is a byproduct of politics. According to USA Today, President Donald Trump has taken extreme steps to dismantle the Federal Department of Education, including an executive order and multiple large cuts in personnel. In addition, the American Civil Liberties Union states the Trump administration has set forth movement to change schools' curricula to align more with their conservative values. School has always been caught in the crossfire of politics, making schools and teachers hesitant to discuss current events with students in fear of repercussions from parents and, more importantly, long-term effects on students' political beliefs.

The phrase "talking about politics" has grown over the years to include discussion of controversial topics and opinions, not just in association with political bodies. This has led more people to use the excuse of the more general phrase to avoid any slightly controversial discussion. People are scared to be potentially offensive and miss out on important discussions that may change one's view on the topic. This also applies to class, key knowledge and experience can be lost if not talked about or addressed. Over time, this creates a disingenuous and cautious tone throughout our student body.

Students are relatively disconnected from the reality of politics in thought and mind. In an ideal world, students shouldn't have to worry about the world around them and focus on enjoying their childhood. With many impactful political events disrupting our everyday lives, more students and teachers are discussing various potential risks and dangers. For example, when ICE was spotted in Bellevue, many teachers had sit-down discussions with students on the authority of ICE, what they can and can't do. They also reiterated the rights of people on American land, including for those who were immigrants. Being up to date on current political events doesn't just provide protection and preparation on physical, imminent danger, it also prepares for potential threats to the rights of American people. As a democratic country, power lies in the Constitution and the votes of the people. Even as most of the student body has yet to be legally allowed to vote, it's essential to be informed about current events, where different states and politicians stand, and the rights people have on American soil.

It's important to discuss and debate current events and political issues with trusted adults and peers, even if it's just to hear a contrasting argument. Listening to different perspectives will help build your own. Listening to different opinions from those around you is listening to the opinion of the American people, these are the people whose vote will impact our generation's future.



Voice your comments, opinions and concerns by emailing us at s-oconnors@bsd405.org

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N O R T H W E S T

'BELLEVUE'S TOWING POLICY' By: Ben Kahn 4/1/2026



CROSSWORD

				1										
		2											3	
4														
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Across

1. seattle weather

4. in bloom

5. important clothing

Down

1. check out uw

2. canceled spring event

3. spring color

Across: 1. cherry, 4. flower, 5. rainjacket Down: 1. cloudy, 2. tofo, 3. green

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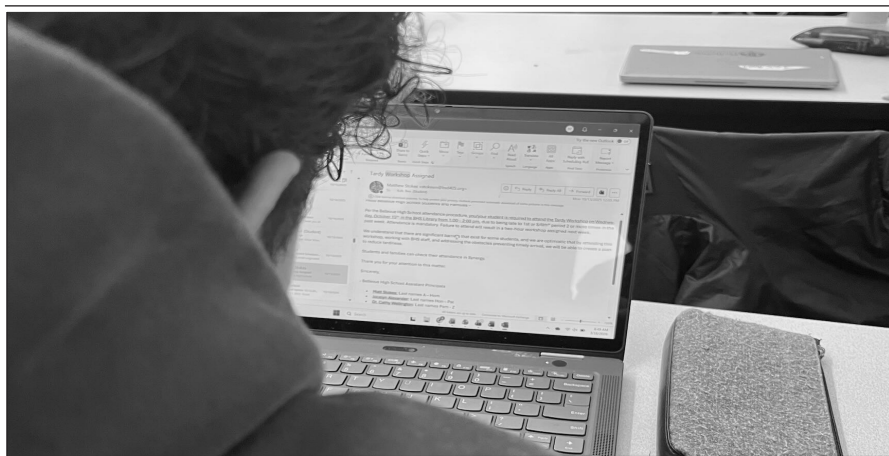
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Tardy attendance workshops are effective

PIPER LIPON
Business Manager



Tardies, absences, detentions and workshops are all nuisances for many students at Bellevue High School (BHS). According to the BHS's student handbook, if students show up late and receive two or more tardies in one class or seven in all classes within two weeks a student will receive a tardy workshop. Some students see the detentions as a place to quietly reflect and motivate themselves to do better, but many other students see the workshops as an unnecessary obstacle. So, the question is: do attendance workshops work?

Students hate receiving tardies, especially when that means being held after school for hours. The school administration has put a lot of effort into ensuring that all students at BHS can arrive on time. However, the effectiveness of the attendance workshops isn't solely due to the calls from the administrators for students to change

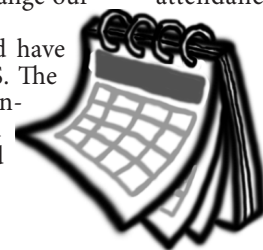
their behavior. Instead, it seems that the students are more motivated to change their morning routines to avoid receiving annoying workshops. This pressure seems to lead them to shift their habits to reduce tardies accumulated.

"Waking up earlier and rushing out the door to get to school on time sucks, but with so much to do after school I can't afford to have attendance workshop; they're really a nuisance and I would rather change my routine than have to go. I appreciate the teachers being respectful and understanding when telling us to work on our tardiness, but what really convinced me was how packed my schedule is," said sophomore Misha Rustogi.

Speaking from personal experience, after receiving two tardy workshops, I was so fed up with being called to stay at school that I changed my routine to ensure I'd get to school on time. From data provided by BHS assistant principal Mr. Stokes, the number of chronically tardy students has dropped by more than 50 percent from last year.

"Last year a few of my friends and I received a tardy workshop. Afterwards we all changed our routines to get to school earlier since having to go to the tardy workshops was super annoying and we assumed that it would go on some record. The threat of going to another workshop convinced us to change our attendance," said junior Katya Volynsky-Pouliotte.

It is clear that attendance workshops do work and have greatly improved the attendance of the students at BHS. The detentions may not work in the way that administrators intended them to work, but it is still wildly successful and has convinced many students to change their habits and routines to get to school earlier.



AI image generation is now dangerously good

EVAN DU
Chief Copy Editor

Think you can spot an AI-generated image? You probably can't anymore. Just a year ago, AI image generators were notorious for rendering nightmarish, six-fingered hands and background signs filled with alien gibberish. Those days are gone. Today's models effortlessly generate anatomically correct subjects, flawless lighting, and perfectly legible text in seconds.

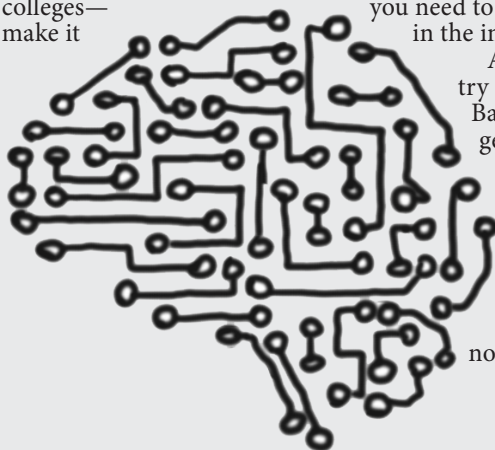
A recent University of Waterloo study found that given unlimited time, people can only distinguish real photos from AI fakes with 61% accuracy. The researchers expected an 85% success rate, but the reality is that human detection has plummeted to little more than a coin toss. During casual use of news and social media, expect to have an even harder time picking out deepfakes.

One highly concerning effect of improving image generation models is that AI is now the perfect tool for mass media manipulation. Recently, highly realistic AI images falsely depicting NYC Mayor Zohran Mamdani as a child alongside disgraced financier Jeffrey Epstein were circulated to millions by conspiracy theorist Alex Jones. Despite originating on a joke Twitter account, the fake images caused real damage, forcing Mamdani to address the fakes making rounds on social media.

These leaps in image generation are also damaging to students in ways that might be hard to imagine. Some students at BHS hoping to study design and ultimately go into the industry are increasingly concerned over AI's growing presence in the commercialization of art. One of these students is senior Jeannee Chin.

"The job market for designers is tough these days, and I've seen high tech companies laying people off due to the lack of need for entry level jobs. The role of a designer is evolving due to the presence of AI, leading to uncertainty and fear. It's not enough to only study the traditional design skillsets taught at most art colleges—you need to be able to do more beyond that to make it in the industry," Chin said.

And image generation's barrier to entry is only getting lower. Google's Nano Banana 2 is a freely available image generator that can create highly detailed and realistic images in seconds. Although Google implemented a system called SythID (an invisible embedded "fingerprint" that makes any AI image made by Google identifiable), competitors like Elon Musk's Grok Imagine do not have similar guardrails in place.



CHATGPT ART? AI Image generation, through platforms like Gemini, ChatGPT, and Duda, has become increasingly common and difficult to identify.

Without unified regulations and safety guidelines on image generation, easy access to tools like these lends itself to chaos.

"I do not think there is one fix, but stronger safeguards and accountability would go a long way. Companies need to make harmful content harder to generate and easier to detect, and platforms need to act faster when that content is used to mislead or exploit people," AI club president Arthur Zhu said.

It has always been apparent that left alone, corporations will only chase cheaper labor and higher margins. There is no endgame, no grand plan in the matter of AI, only profits to be had. That's why it's increasingly necessary to outlaw more nefarious uses of image generation like propaganda and protect Americans from predatory corporate practices.

When the harms of image generation are disregarded, it may be time for strict regulation on AI companies. After all, they won't do it themselves.

Plus-minus grading should be implemented

JACHIN LEE
Chief Copy Editor

One fundamental purpose of grades, per a May 2025 draft of BSD Secondary Grading Practices, is to “accurately reflect student learning.” Yet current grading practices fall short of this reasonable ideal. With third quarter report cards on the horizon, now seems an appropriate time to propose a change to BSD’s grading methodology. I believe that BSD should forgo our current letter grading scale in favor of a plus-minus grading system.

The main reason I endorse plus-minus grades is that they allow for increased distinction between students. It’s simply not fair for the student who earns a 98 to be equated with one who gets a 91. This may seem to increase the potential for grade inaccuracies—a student who gets an 87, for instance, may end up with a higher grade than one who gets an 85 despite not actually understanding the material any better. But the reality is that the current grading system creates far bigger disparities. A student who ends with an 89 gets a 3.0 in their GPA calculation, while one who ends with a 91 receives a 4.0. Plus-minus grading would cause an 89 (a B+) to receive around a 3.3, while a 91 (an A-) would equate to around a 3.7. Instead of the 89-student losing a whole GPA point for scoring one or two percentage points lower, plus-minus grading only leads to about a 0.4 GPA point decrease.

Besides the hypothetical, the idea that a letter grade system is less precise than a plus-minus system is supported by research. A 1997 study conducted by Professor Rick Matthews of Wake Forest University concludes that even if faculty can only grade accurately within a $\pm 6\%$ range (i.e. a student who deserves an 85 will receive a score between 79 and 91), a plus-minus system will STILL be a more accurate reflection of aggregate student performance.

Additionally, plus-minus grading will ensure students maintain their motivation through the entire semester. The student who heads into the end of the

semester with a grade in the mid-90s or 80s will put little effort into their final assignments because their grade is both too high to slip down a letter grade while simultaneously too low to achieve the next letter grade.

“[For] chemistry, health and econ my grade was pretty high so I didn’t really study a lot for those classes,” said sophomore Andrew Chu.

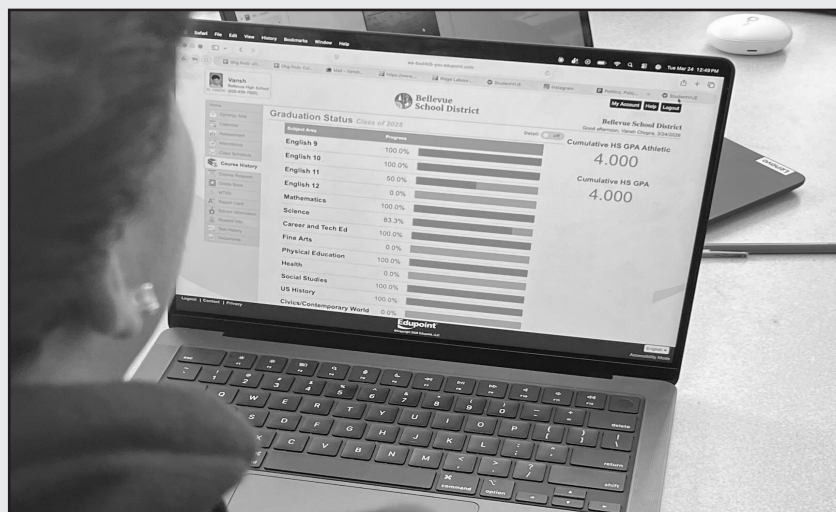
Plus-minus grading, on the other hand, will ensure students almost always retain the possibility of grade change. Even at the end of the semester, a student with a B can still achieve a B+ (or fall to a B-) and therefore will be incentivized to maintain a high level of academic effort.

For those concerned that this change would amount to grade deflation, I would first assert that grade deflation isn’t necessarily something problematic. But notwithstanding that debate, a plus-minus grading system would also create a plethora of students who end semesters with a high letter grade (e.g. a B+) and therefore a higher GPA. And if we go back to Matthews’ study, we find that their overall change in GPA for most GPAs (those between 1.0 and 3.6), will be “almost exactly” zero. It is true that students with all As or very low Ds will be negatively im-

pacted by plus-minus grading, but in aggregate, a plus-minus system will have little impact on overall GPA.

BSD’s current grading system is imprecise and, in certain situations, fails to provide an incentive for academic effort at the end of a semester. By contrast, a plus-minus system will allow for accurate student distinction, promote sustained motivation, and will not, despite what naysayers claim, create widespread GPA deflation. If BSD values fair grading, their first step should be the implementation of plus-minus grading.

Sidenote: I am not proposing the implementation of an A+ or D- grades, as the Washington Administrative Code prohibits public schools from implementing these grades.



INFLATED GPAS: Some may argue that the lack of a plus-minus grading system at Bellevue High School can lead to inaccurate representations of student learning.

Extracurricular transportation fees are unfair

CECE WANG
Features Editor

I logged into my TouchBase account, and an unpaid fee caught my attention: \$100 for Choir Transportation fees. This fee caused confusion for me and my friends in choir. The transportation fees are required from all students enrolled in a music class to supposedly offset the cost of transportation for group travel throughout the year, as Choir Director Andrew Jacobson explained in an email to student families. However, we were not convinced by this justification. When my choir group traveled to Seattle for a performance, or when we attended the Solo and Ensemble Contest every year, we had to find transportation individually.

“We go on maybe one trip a year [in Sinfonia Orchestra], and you are telling me I need to pay 100 dollars for that?” senior Kimaya Prasanna Raghavan said.

On the other hand, debate and sports teams receive fairly regular bus transportation for tournaments while paying the same exact fee. Is that truly fair? The same fee is being paid for drastically different quantities and quality of services. Sure, the levels of engagement and travelling opportunities will never be the same across programs. But the standardized transportation fee frames itself as a measure to protect equality, yet it causes students to feel unequal. This system risks causing further complaints.

Furthermore, on this year’s choir calendar, there are few travelling events scheduled, and school bus or charter bus transportation has not been provided with the exception of a retreat for upperclassmen only. For freshmen in music programs, travelling opportunities are very few. Such deviations have existed within music programs for years.

“In Concert Choir, there are so little opportunities for trips and retreats. Although we get more trips in audition choirs, we are mostly told to carpool to get to the location. In Bellairs, we get to bus to a lot more places, which is great. But it makes the other choir experiences feel even worse,” junior Peyanne Chang said.

These concerns and frustrations are experienced across music programs. We need to stop excusing such transportation fees as necessary to achieve “fairness” or “equality” when our students feel quite



TRAVEL-HEAVY EXTRACURRICULARS: Many students at Bellevue High School, including sophomore Rohail Khan and seniors Ethan Kuruvilla and Saveer Sidhu, participate in extracurriculars like Speech and Debate.

the opposite. While standardization may be a good idea, overgeneralizing it can be a problematic funding choice.

A potential solution is to guarantee transportation for all music-program-related activities. If most of members of the music department attend an event, school buses must be provided. We shouldn’t have to drive ourselves to an event that invites the entire choir. Or, the school can implement a tiered transportation fees system, where activities like choir and orchestra are adjusted to pay less compared to sports teams. These changes could make the fees consistent with the stated purpose.

how to make the most of spring

Yuri Pruett – Opinion Editor

As April approaches and the days feel longer, the sprouting plants and growing leaves reveal that spring is officially on its way. With the new season comes a slew of possible activities for Bellevue High School students, both inside and outside of school. Even if you're not an outdoorsy person, spring in the Bellevue area offers options for anybody. Here's a quick guide on how to make the best of the next three months.

There's no spring without flowers, and naturally, there are plenty of flower-related activities available this season. One of the most popular annual events is the viewing of cherry blossoms at the University of Washington, open to the public from late March to early April. The main quad and surrounding streets display over 30 iconic 90-year old Yoshino trees in full spring bloom.

"I've gone almost every year in the last decade. It's extremely beautiful and always packed with people," said senior Triston Lin.

The surrounding stores and restaurants in U-District also offer themed events and specials, making the U-District cherry blossom festival an excellent (and free!) way to enjoy the blooming flowers this spring.

In addition to cherry blossoms, many gardens around the Seattle area offer festivals or plant sales to celebrate the coming spring. A particularly popular event is the Skagit Valley Tulip Festival in April, displaying rows of tulips in Mt. Vernon, WA. But if you're not willing to take the trip, a closer option for

flower-lovers is the 18th Annual Pike Place Flower Festival held in Seattle from May 9-10. For a local option, check out spring plant sales at the Bellevue Botanical Gardens in March and April.

If you are someone who is interested in more than just viewing, other gardens offer hands-on spring activities. At Fiori Floral Design in Seattle, you can take a peony floral design workshop on May 28th, or take the April in Bloom Spring Floral Design Class in Woodinville on April 4th.

However, not everybody is a flower-enjoyer (myself included - I have terrible allergies). Luckily, there are plenty of other accessible activities for Bellevue students. For lovers of the outdoors, hiking is a great way to enjoy the spring nature, and there is no absence of local trails around the area. Seattle also offers whale watching tours, and kayaks or paddleboards are available for rent at Lake Sammamish and Lake Washington. For adrenaline seekers, the Bellevue Zip Tour offers access to seven ziplines and two suspension bridges.

A great option for people who prefer the indoors is the Seattle International Film Festival from May 7-17th. The festival spotlights new voices alongside established directors with films from more than 70 countries, some of which have yet to break through to US audiences.

Whether you love nature and the outdoors or prefer the indoors, Bellevue and Seattle offer plenty of options for activities suited for anyone

the season of self-care

Aimee Ni – News Editor

With summer approaching, now is the perfect time to form new healthy eating and exercise habits. Of course, taking care of your body is important, but how do you do that? This article is a basic guide on healthy diets and activities you can do to keep your body strong and happy.

For food:

A common misperception is that having a healthy diet means cutting down on food intake, but let's be clear: starving yourself is not a diet. Paying attention to your diet should make you feel satisfied and healthy simultaneously. Focusing on balance is important, and your intake should include a variety of foods.

"Adolescents should eat nutrient-dense foods such as dairy, leafy greens, and iron-rich animal foods, while significantly limiting sugary drinks," physical education teacher Mitch Carabat said.

While it may seem hard to track what you eat, it's far less hard to simply form sustainable and accessible habits. For example, you can pack your own lunch by preparing meals like wraps with lettuce and turkey, or a poke bowl that has fish, rice and vegetables.

If this feels like too much, or you don't have time, that's okay! You can pack snacks instead to fill nutritional gaps. Although they can't replace meals, trail mix, yogurt cups, cheese sticks and fruit assortments are great to bring to school. Choose snacks which are convenient, tasty and healthy. Although you can

eat them anytime, be careful not to eat them too frequently, since it can kill your appetite for lunch or dinner.

For exercise:

Exercise may sound tedious and daunting, but there are options that don't require intense workouts to be effective. The simplest way to start is by taking walks outside. You could go to a park or take a loop around the neighborhood. Then, you can consider more targeted and specific exercise options. You could turn the walk into the run and gradually increase speed and duration or try other activities such as signing up some yoga classes jump roping and hiking. Pilates and at-home high-intensity interval training are also good exercise options. However, to have an effect, these activities need to be done consistently. You don't have to start out with a huge workload; hike once a week or jump rope 50 times per day. What's important is to do these activities until they become habit.

"If you wish to gain, regain, or maintain a high level of personal physical well-being, you must be prepared to give time and effort to attain your goals," Carabat said.

Don't worry if some methods don't work for you, since being healthy looks different for everyone. Trying different diets and activities is part of the process. The goal should be to improve your health and move your body, not to torture yourself to look "perfect".

hiking for beginners

Vansh Chopra – Business Team

One of the most fascinating things about living in the Pacific Northwest, especially Washington, is the amount of explorable protected land we have. Many Bellevue High students enjoy hiking, though taking the first step may seem overwhelming.

Some hikes have striking waterfalls, while others give way to gorgeous mountain views. Whichever one that you prefer, there is an abundant amount of variety in the area, ranging from a short walk to hikes that resemble outdoor climbing rocks. Whether you are a beginner or want to find new hikes that you haven't done, this guide will show you the best hikes and how to become a hiking pro!

Washington is home for many hikes that are more suited for beginners.

For example, Twin Falls, with a 2.6-mile round trip, is a short, beginner trail that has a nice surprise at the end. However, with any hike that has a waterfall and a lot of water, if you are planning to go during the warmer months, try wearing a swimsuit and shoes that can handle water!

"I really enjoy doing some shorter hikes because it doesn't take much time, so I can go more often and sometimes even enjoy a nice view," Sophomore Sreeansh Kokkonda said.

For our relatively advanced hikers, Lake Serene is an over 7-mile hike that has a lake view at the end.

"Lake Serene has views that I have never seen before in my life. Definitely worth the seven miles that I hiked for it," says junior Brandon Maldonado.

For our advanced hikers, Mount Si is an over 8-mile hike with a mountain view at the end.

"Mount Si was a difficult hike that took me and my friends almost all day. By the time we finished the steep climb, I had never been prouder," sophomore Rohan Kalaimani said.

When doing a hard or an easier hike, it is important to keep nourishment such as trail mix and water to keep yourself hydrated and well-fed. Depending on the hike itself, make sure to always search up whether hiking sticks, jackets, special shoes or anything else is needed for the hike by reading website reviews or Google reviews. Some hikers take energy gels to provide a quick boost of carbs to power them through the rest of their hike. Make sure to also research how to reach the trailhead or if a specific pass is necessary to park on premises at the park.

All in all, Washington hikes are a treasure that we are proud to have as a part of our home. Stay informed and enjoy nature!

keeping bellevue beautiful

Yash Kothari – Website Manager

If anybody can serve as a representation of the culture surrounding sustainability and the broader environmental mindset at Bellevue High, it's our renowned AP US History teacher Randy Litzenberger.

"He's definitely the most dedicated teacher in terms of caring about the environment," said senior Filipe Owen.

Randy Litzenberger has been a leading voice in the sustainability space and a guide for students looking to get involved. He's served as a co-chair on the District's Sustainability Design Team for the last two years and was also the former advisor of Bellevue High's environmental club, Earthbound.

Earthbound has been one of Bellevue's longest running clubs, with many a prolific advisor. It's also been one of Bellevue's most impactful, with consistently occurring quarterly trash pickups around campus, gardening throughout the year in the school's courtyard, and weekly activities during club meetings. An example of the real world impact they've made is when, during the 2022-23 school year, the club helped create and spur a petition for the Bellevue School Board to pass a first-of-its-kind sustainability-related policy, leading to the creation of the district's Sustainability Design Team and the policies that accompany it. However, Earthbound's impact isn't only in their big wins. A lot of it comes from the club's vibe. Students keep showing up primarily because the meetings feel so welcoming, and the goals feel achievable.

"Last week, we made our own lip balm using sustainably sourced mate-

rials that don't harm the skin barrier. I really enjoyed it!" retorted junior Elina Wilson.

Just as advertised, Earthbound's projects make sustainability feel impactful and localized. Trash pickups are a simple example. They clean up the campus, but they also make students notice how much waste gets ignored in everyday life. The garden works in the same way over time, because it requires maintenance, patience, and consistency. It becomes a living reminder that environmental work is not a one-day thing.

The club also keeps things creative. In meetings, members have done pinecone decorating and GreenGenius eco-house designing, where students make an "eco house" setup, kind of like gingerbread houses. Those activities might not sound serious on paper, but they do something important. They make sustainability feel approachable and make the club feel like a community instead of a chore. When students associate environmental action with friends and something hands-on, participation becomes much easier to sustain long-term.

That matters for the district too. The Bellevue School District can set sustainability goals, create committees, and write policies, but none of that automatically changes what students do at lunch or after school. Earthbound is one of the few places where those goals turn into habits. And at BHS, concern for the environment and sustainability practices are going to come from consistency more than hype. Earthbound has already figured that out.

Club oversaturation: less is more

BEN KOH

Photo/Graphic Team

Bellevue's expansive roster of 70+ clubs often begs the question of whether these clubs reflect the leadership and passion that clubs represent. The more clubs, the more overly specific each individual club is, and the more it seems that clubs are simply for a student's resume. As a result, limited turnout and rare meetings have resulted in an increased problem of club oversaturation at Bellevue - and people are noticing it.

On paper, starting a club is an impressive feat since students need to demonstrate passion and initiative to do so. But most clubs aren't big school-sponsored clubs like DECA but instead student-made ones that host rare and disconnected meetings. Add this to Bellevue's expansive club roster, some clubs get rarely enough members per meeting, meaning the actual performance of the club is lacking at best.

But how does this lead to oversaturation? When Bellevue's clubs are based on quantity, not quality, the actual club experi-

"We want quality, not quantity, and too many students are making or joining clubs just for their resume."

ence is diminished. Each club is less focused on real progress, making the average club value low. And recently, many Bellevue students seem to have noticed this trend.

"I went to a club's first meeting early in the school year but then noticed a huge decrease in member turnout mid-year," said sophomore Rohail Khan.

Khan attends many big clubs like DECA and Model UN and often sees a huge discrepancy between these clubs and the smaller student-run ones. Many students join a club in October but then slowly disassociate themselves with it as the year goes on. Club leaders themselves also recognize the problem.

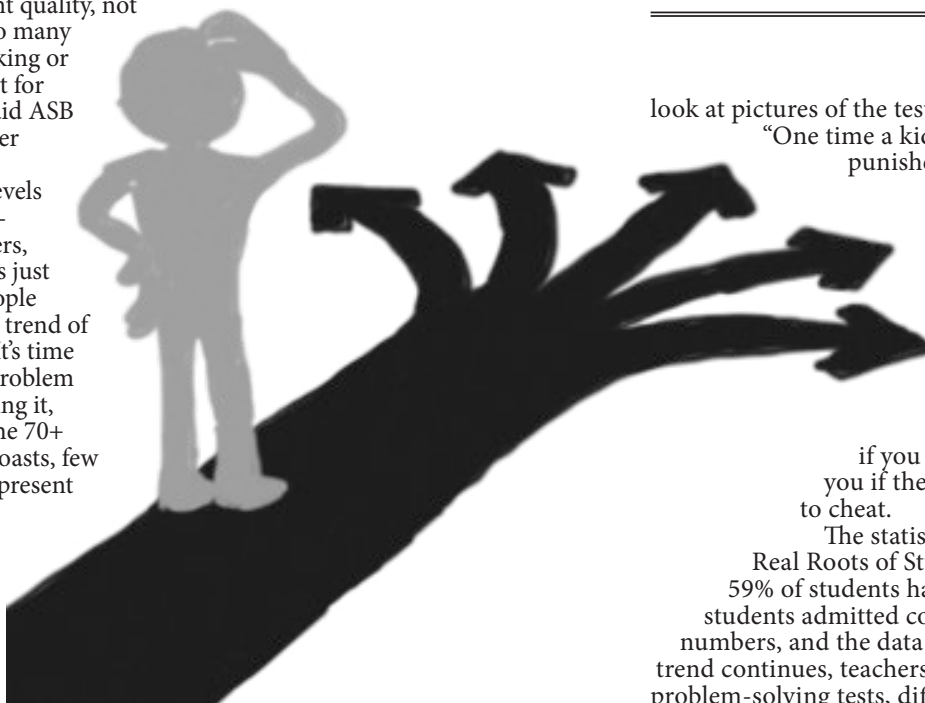
"I've been to some club meetings this year that have less than 10 members and meet every month," said senior Filipe Owen Scorsatto Botelho.

Botelho has been the proud leader of Brazil Club for two years now and often laments on the current club situation at Bellevue. It's not normal for a club to be averaging less than 10 members - clubs aren't meant to monthly hangouts with your friends but an official place to demonstrate your interests.

It's important to note that ASB thinks similarly.

"There's certainly club oversaturation at Bellevue. Many students sign up to be members but forget they need to pay the ASB fee. We want quality, not quantity, and too many students are making or joining clubs just for their resume," said ASB activities manager Sensei Hurley.

Across all levels of Bellevue - students, club leaders, and ASB officials just like Hurley - people are noticing this trend of oversaturation. It's time to address this problem instead of ignoring it, because out of the 70+ clubs Bellevue boasts, few of these clubs represent real passion.



How should teachers address cheating?

FINLEY GERRON

Photo/Graphic Team

Cheating is prevalent at our school, whether it involves checking in a fake phone or the use of AI. Some students are getting away with cheating on tests, and the punishments are not equal across classrooms. So, what should the rule be when it comes to cheating? Most of us would agree that

a student who cheats should get a zero on the test. However, there are also times when students cheat and do not get caught, so it's hard to give all those students consequences. This is where the problem arises; there is no consistency between classrooms, and it is not fair for those who choose not to cheat.

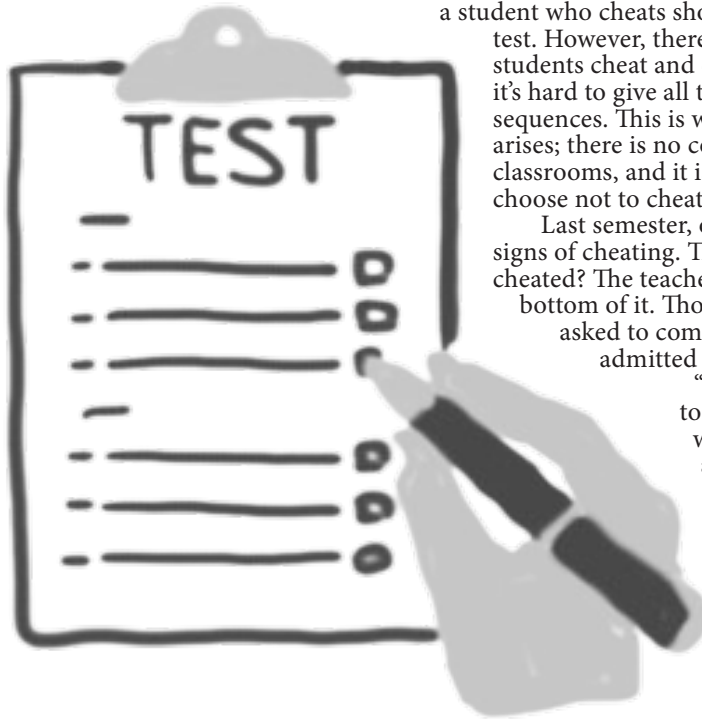
Last semester, one class showed clear signs of cheating. The question was, who cheated? The teacher could not get to the bottom of it. Those who cheated were asked to come forward, but no one admitted it.

"This teacher decided to change how the test was graded after it had already been taken. We thought the multiple choice would be graded the same as the written. After realizing students cheated on their multiple-choice section, that weighed way less than the written part," explains one student.

However, it's not fair for teachers to change the grading criteria, because it also penalizes the students who choose to study and not cheat.

"It can create an unfair advantage for some people and can create an environment in class where some teachers may start to change up tests and make it harder for the kids who are trying to succeed," says sophomore Olivia Bussadori.

Some teachers try to minimize the cheating by collecting cell phones at the door. They think this will eliminate any access to the internet or being able to



"59% of students have admitted cheating on a test in the last year. 80% of students admitted copying another student's homework."

look at pictures of the test from other students.

"One time a kid left a trap phone in the bin and the teacher almost punished all the classes," another student recalled.

Freshman Ivy Tran has even noticed people trying to sneak answers through AI on her test.

"I have seen people use ChatGPT on their phones during tests," says Tran.

If students used as much energy to study as they did to cheat, our school would be smarter and a little more honorable. There are many better alternatives than cheating, like picking up a book and creating a study group, both of which are better in the long run. It will serve you better in the future. Plus,

if you get caught, your classmates might turn their backs on you if their grade goes down because of someone else's decision to cheat.

The statistics for cheating in high school from the article "The Real Roots of Students Cheating" by Joseph E. Davis explains that 59% of students have admitted cheating on a test in the last year. 80% of students admitted copying another student's homework. These are large numbers, and the data should tell us that something is not working. If this trend continues, teachers should be forced to start giving in-class writing and problem-solving tests, different versions of tests, or more discussion or project-based assessments.

If Bellevue wants to reduce cheating, the school should consider clearer expectations and consistent consequences across classrooms, while students themselves must take responsibility for doing their own work.

Amazon's fresh blunder

NATE CHIANG-LIN
Business Team



BROKEN PROMISES: Sophomores Brooklyn O'Connor and Vansh Chopra browse Amazon Fresh's online grocery delivery service. Amazon Fresh is closing all of their physical locations in 2026, while keeping their online store, a disappointing ending to their original promises of revolutionizing the shopping experience.

In June of 2021, Amazon opened Washington State's first Amazon Fresh grocery store at the Factoria Square Mall in Bellevue replacing a Safeway that used to occupy the space. Hundreds of curious customers lined up on opening day, eager to witness what Amazon promised would be a revolutionary shopping experience. Four years later, that Bellevue location is closed, the technology it was built around has been quietly abandoned, and the whole venture stands as one of the most embarrassing failures in modern retail history.

The Bellevue store was a showcase for Amazon's flagship gimmick: "Just Walk Out" technology. Shoppers would scan their Amazon app upon entry, fill their carts, and simply leave without the hassle of checkout lines or malfunctioning self checkout machines. Amazon marketed it as a feat of artificial intelligence. Local residents and tech enthusiasts marveled at it and the public was impressed.

Freshman Isha Supreeth enjoyed the experience exclaiming "Amazon Fresh was a great option for groceries with a variety of options for healthy food. I really enjoyed going there every week!"

In 2024, a bombshell report from The Information revealed the uncomfortable truth: roughly 700 out of every 1,000 Just Walk Out transactions required manual review by a team of more than 1,000 workers based in India. These remote contractors were watching camera footage of customers, tagging items, and effectively assembling receipts by hand often hours after shoppers had already left the store. Amazon's internal target had been just 50 manual reviews per 1,000 transactions.

Amazon disputed the characterization, insisting the workers were simply annotating video data to train machine learning models, not functioning as remote cashiers. The Bellevue store has since closed, joining a growing list of Amazon Fresh locations that quietly shuttered after the company paused its expansion in 2022. Just Walk Out has been pulled from all larger U.S. Amazon Fresh stores. The replacement of a Dash Cart that scans items as you put them in is, ironically, closer to a traditional shopping cart than a technological revolution.

For Bellevue residents who watched their neighborhood Safeway close its doors in anticipation of Amazon's grand arrival, the outcome is particularly bitter. The tech giant swooped in, made bold promises, and left. What remains is a cautionary tale about the ego of companies that launch products before those products actually work leaving the communities dealing with the fallout when the hype collapses.

Schools don't do enough to develop soft skills

HARRY ZHAO
Opinion Editor

In many classes, a student's grade is typically calculated with a similar formula: 80-90% of the grade is based on tests, with the last 10-20% being based on assignments, classwork, or projects. With a student's evaluation performance in a class essentially determined solely by high stakes tests and quizzes, students put the entirety of their effort towards these tests. While tests can be useful to measure learning objectively, teachers simply "teach the test" leading to overly repetitive curricula, and students proceed to immediately forget everything afterwards, since they only need to know the information for 50 minutes. Students leave the test with their mind much emptier than when they started the test. Isn't it supposed to be the other way around? It's time we rework curriculum to encourage project-based learning to develop soft skills.

First, what are soft skills anyways? Soft skills are people-focused qualities and traits that are focused on one's interactions with others, in contrast with hard skills which focus on the ability to complete a particular task. Soft skills include leadership, communication, teamwork, critical thinking, etc. These skills are not measurable through standardized tests or through numbers, meaning they are left out of some curricula entirely.

That's a major concern as soft skills will be qualities that define the workplace in future generations, with the rise of generative AI. When AI threatens jobs in many sectors, soft skills remain qualities that AI cannot replace. An August 2025 study published in Harvard Business Review found that now, more than ever, soft skills matter in a workplace shaped by AI. In particular, those who scored higher on foundational soft skills were more likely to earn higher wages throughout their careers. Right now, many core classes like Mathematics, Science, Social Studies and even English classes focus on measurable hard skills but leaves out the development of these valuable soft skills.

Currently, few classes adequately teach soft skills, but various clubs and extracurricular activities can help students develop these skills when classes don't do it well. Clubs like Speech and Debate and DECA teach students

communication skills, critical thinking, and even teamwork. Team sports develop responsibility, teamwork and leadership.

"DECA was one of the meaningful activities I did because it taught me communication and collaboration that I couldn't have learned elsewhere," said sophomore Miles Shi.

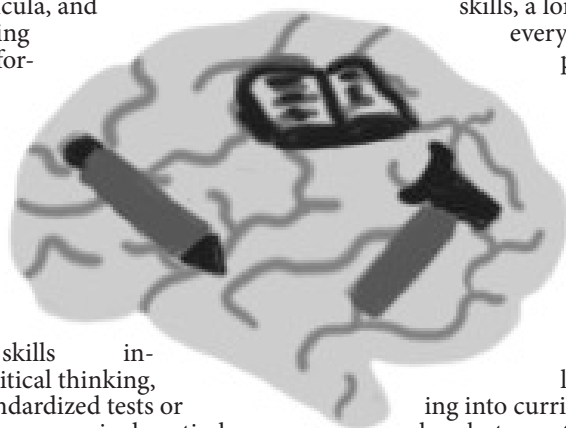
However, instead of continuously relying on activities to build soft skills, a long-term solution that is easily accessible is needed: curricula everywhere need to be bringing soft skills into classes through project-based learning (PBL). PBL involves students completing projects over an extended period of time, often in small groups, where students drive themselves about their topic of interest, with guidance from the teacher.

"I use a PBL curriculum almost the entire year in AP Government. I decided to use it because it makes the course more engaging for students and seems to result in deeper learning," said AP Government and United States History Michelle Beito.

PBL is not restrictive like standardized tests: students investigate open-ended questions, like in the real-world. Yet, teachers still have oversight over students to ensure that learning is being achieved. To introduce project-based learning into curricula, teachers don't have completely overhaul their curriculum but can start small.

"It can seem overwhelming to adopt an entire new curriculum, but looking for places to incorporate one unit is a great place to start. There are a lot of resources out there, and usually teachers who are doing it are enthusiastic about mentoring, too," said Beito.

Project-based learning is often criticized for lacking objectivity. However, in the real world, there are no tests that employees are evaluated on; employees don't sit in a room for an hour to show what they know. Instead, what remains is the same exact same thing that project-based learning seeks to replicate: creative self-driven work that requires soft skills. If schools are meant to train us for the real world, then it's time we start giving students the education they need.



Spend a **day** in the life with **Dr. Anderson**

HAIDEN ADAM
Photo/Graphics Manager

Pop quiz: which staff member at Bellevue has two sons, loves to play the trombone, goes dirt biking and has been in education for 35 years? If you guessed Dr. Anderson, you are correct!

Vic Anderson has been Bellevue High's principal for the past 10 years and counting. Follow along as the Barque follows a day in the life of our very own principal, Dr. Anderson.

The first thing he does in the morning is open his email. After that, he frequently continues to check his emails throughout the day. While most of us are rushing out the door to get to school, Anderson has already arrived on campus at around 7:30 am and is ready to tackle the day. He then begins his day with going all over the campus from classrooms to fields, to even both basements.

After his walking rounds are around done, he enters reoccurring meetings, particularly his meeting every Monday with the administrative team. After checking off the meetings from his list, he jumps to the next activity. He may be meeting with parents, chatting with students or discussing the day with teachers; he really does it all. Anderson also enjoys going to observe different class periods and seeing the different learning and activities going on. So, if you see him in your class one day, make sure to wave!

After his productive morning, then comes the chaotic lunch time.

"I supervise both lunches to support everybody and make sure that they are getting their lunches on time," Anderson said.

After both lunches go smoothly, it is his lunch break, during which he enjoys the provided school lunch three to four times a week. Anderson thinks that with its convenient location and delicious healthy food options, you cannot go wrong. In his office he also stores snacks from home to munch on throughout the day.

His go to place to buy snacks is Costco, with his fan favorites being Granola bars, beef sticks and little packets of raisins, berries, pumpkin seeds and nuts.

At 3pm when the day is winding down, Anderson makes his way over to the commons and spends time there to be around the students. However, the end of his days are not always routine. He occasionally has after school calls or may be busy sending emails and making phone calls. After the school day ends and his work is all finished, the fun is just getting started. Whether he is attending girls' volleyball games, school plays or band concerts, his nights are full of unpredictable exciting events.

"I enjoy watching students perform, and it gets more and more enjoyable when I get to know the kids. It is really fun seeing students in the environment that they love and putting their whole heart into it," Anderson said.

If you see him walking his morning laps, supervising lunch, or run into him at the shopping lines at Costco, make sure to say hi!



DR. ANDERSON AT A FOOTBALL GAME: Dr. Anderson often attends student activities and sports events, including football games. He poses with Elmer to cheer on the football team.

Librarian Sarah Bryan expands book selection

IFRAH NAAZ
Photo/Graphic Team



The Bellevue High School library is a place where many students like to study, hang out and spend their time in. It is one of the most populated student places in the school for various reasons.

"I like how there is space to split into groups and do things like mock roleplays for DECA in the library without making it too loud or distracting," junior Tara Saini said.

English classes such as AP Language frequently visit the library to choose books for their assignments and our librarian, Sarah Bryan, gives detailed presentation on how to navigate and find interesting books among all the various genres available. Likewise, it is compelling to understand how books in our library are chosen, shelved, replaced and categorized and Bellevue High's librarian has detailed insight on the same. Bryan loves to read and one of the perks of her constant reading allows her to choose varying books from different genres that can appeal to the teen audience.

"I like going to the library because it is a great resource when it comes to choosing academic and fiction books," sophomore Yingyuan Zhou said.

Further on, new books arrive every month from a decided category through a subscription. This way, the library is always getting new titles that are both popular and requested among students. Besides this, student and teacher recommendation also influences shelving of books, especially if it is high in demand. Fortunately, the Bellevue School District's policies regarding the shelving of books are loose and flexible; hence, it is pretty much up to the librarian's discretion when choosing books. Therefore, our library houses a liberal and diverse collection of books.

"Recently, the most popular books are young adult fiction in which mystery, thriller and romance genres are highly requested. Other prefer true crime non-fiction as well," Sarah Bryan said.

Our school allocates a significant portion of the building budget to the library, and a limit is given however, the limit is seldomly reached because Bryan is very particular in choosing what books to shelf.

Nonetheless, it is also important to understand shelf life and maintenance. Although new books are regularly added to the library, some titles must be discarded from the shelves. Mrs. Bryan decides to remove a book if it falls under a certain criterion which are as follows:

- 1) If a book is outdated, no longer relevant or contains offensive content.
- 2) If a book is broken beyond repair and falling apart.
- 3) If a book is no longer being circulated and taking up space.

"An important part of collection management is to remove books," Bryan said.

Furthermore, once a book is removed from the shelves, it gets sent to a district warehouse that disposes/recycles them. Even so, the lifespan of a book in our library also depends on factors such as how many times it has been checked out or if a student misplaces and loses it. Similarly, hard covers tend to last longer than paperbacks, but laminated paperbacks are quite sturdy as well.

The library has recently added requested and popular titles such as 'Crazy Rich Asians', 'Ctrl+Alt+Chaos' about teen hackers and 'Everybody Loses' about sports gambling, as well as some fun looking fiction such as 'Sundown Girl', a mystery about a town with a creepy history and the teen who will help solve a cold missing persons case, 'Beyond

Seven Forests' and many more you'll have to come in to the library to discover.

Bryan aims to include diverse authors that identify with different communities in our school. This makes our library a welcoming place to be where students can feel comfortable reaching out to our librarian when they are in a plight on what book to choose!



NEW BOOKS AT THE LIBRARY: The library shelves are always filled with a wide variety of novels, and the recent arrivals are placed on top of the shelves. Students can easily check out books of their interest as well as academic literature.

ALL PHOTOS AND GRAPHICS / IFRAH NAAZ

Students can help **family-run** restaurants **rise** again

ANGELA ZOU
Focus Editor



Bellevue has long been known for its mom and pop restaurants. The city's cuisine and familiar faces have been provided by neighborhood cafes, teriyaki shops, family pizza restaurants and tiny diners for years. However, many of these small establishments, like Shanghai House in Factoria and Thaal in Crossroads, have struggled or closed in the past years. National businesses and large corporations that build chain restaurants are taking over, and as a result, people's favorite childhood spots are closing.

"The internet pushes trends and chain restaurants more than family businesses because these big businesses have the budget to run advertisements and sponsorships. However, like most people, the best food I have had in Bellevue was from smaller hole-in-the-wall spots," senior Elliana Nan said.

The biggest factor to increased closures? Cost.

In the first half of 2025, around 450 restaurants closed in Seattle, and according to Anthony Anton, chief executive officer of the Washington Hospitality Association, "as many closures as we'd usually see in a full year."

Being a Seattle suburb on the Eastside, Bellevue has also been hit by closures. An increase in rent can mean the difference between a family-run business remaining open and closing. For larger chain restaurants however, costs can be dispersed among hundreds of outlets. Additionally, they have more money set aside for staff training, remodeling, and marketing. Smaller restaurants depend on consistent customers, but this is difficult to sustain when labor, food and rent prices all increase simultaneously.

Simultaneous to the mass closing of smaller businesses, casual eating chains discovered a new strategy to maintain their prominence. Deals, online ordering and large menu items that are popular on social media were promoted by eateries including Applebee's, Chili's, Red Lobster and Olive Garden. Whether it is BJ's Brewhouse's viral pizookie, the Chili's Tripper Dipper or the endless pasta deal at Olive Garden, chain restaurants have the wow-factor that other spots do not. Students and young adults reached by these posts on social media and view a chain restaurant as a comfortable place to hang out with friends.

"Most mukbangs and food reviews I see on Tiktok are of fast food and chain restaurants which are more eye-catching as a viewer. I would definitely click off faster if it was not a recognizable brand," senior Elaina Hannon said.

Bellevue's culinary light has not disappeared, though. In order to adapt, some family-run restaurants are changing menus, enhancing takeout with apps like Doordash and Uber Eats, and creating an online presence.

Students and families can help these local businesses thrive by trying a new spot, leaving a review, and bringing friends, especially because these family-run businesses enhance the multicultural landscape of Bellevue with their dishes. Some places to try include the expansive collection of Chinese food spots in the Factoria area like Top Gun Seafood Restaurant and places in downtown like Old Mediterranean Kitchen. These choices help maintain Bellevue's multicultural landscape.



CASUAL EATING CHAINS IN BELLEVUE: Olive Garden is a popular restaurant for many BHS students. Their deals and marketing strategies has been a great success.

Students **lack** interest in **TOLO**

BROOKLYN O'CONNER
Photo/Graphics Team

For the past few years, Tolo the annual March dance has been canceled. Students have shown little interest in attending dances and have often chosen other options, such as hanging out with friends or attending a party, instead of Tolo. Tolo has failed to attract enough student ticket sales to host a dance, this raises the question: Should Bellevue High continue Tolo as a tradition, or has the ship sailed?

"My friends and I will probably end up doing our own thing that night and wouldn't be going to the school dance either way, so just need to see who decides to host something and what people end up doing instead," sophomore Tatum Pak said.

Many students cited their participation in several extracurricular activities as a reason for their lack of interest in school dances. With so many after-school commitments, attending a dance is just one more activity to add to their schedule. Others also pointed out that their level of disappointment in the school dance including homecoming, is another reason they are not interested in attending Tolo.

"I was really hoping it would actually happen this year, so I was bummed out it was canceled this year, since a lot of people were looking forward to finally having it," junior Beau DeRoux said.

Still, some students think that if students do not want to attend, the event will naturally fade out.

"The main reason Tolo was canceled was because not enough students were buying tickets," said sophomore Moriah Kim. "If students want events like that to keep happening, we have to show that interest by supporting them."

Others have begun hosting their own events as a replacement for the canceled dance. Rather than waiting for the school to start organizing events for students, students took initiative and began making changes themselves. The question is whether Bellevue students will continue to take the initiative to make it a reality or leave it to fade away.

Know your **rights** when confronted by ICE

CECE WANG
Features Editor

Everyone in the U.S., regardless of immigration status, is protected by constitutional rights. If you ever have an encounter with the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), it's important to understand your rights.

1. **Right to Remain Silent:** When approached by ICE, you may simply state that you are choosing to remain silent and refuse to answer their questions by referencing the Fifth Amendment. Regardless of what they say, you do not have to answer questions about personal information such as birthplace, citizenship and immigration status.

2. **Right to Counsel:** Do not sign any document without speaking with an attorney. You may speak with a lawyer, and before that, you do not have to say anything or agree to anything.

3. **Do Not Open the Door:** When ICE officers are knocking on your doors, you have the right to keep them outside your home without a valid judicial warrant under the Fourth Amendment. An ICE administrative warrant is not a judicial warrant, and it doesn't give ICE the authority to enter and search your home.



If they claim to have a judicial warrant, you may ask them to slip it under the door without physically letting them in.

4. **Remain Calm:** Do not run away from ICE, as that gives them a reason to arrest you. However, do not consent to any searches or seizures and do not provide false documents. You may respectfully ask if you are free to leave and calmly exit the scene when allowed. Otherwise, keep your composure and try to get a lawyer as soon as possible.

5. **Document What Happened:** Write down the date and time, exact location, number of officers, names and badge numbers, license plates, what was said, what document was presented and as much as you could remember. This is helpful information if you need to speak with a lawyer.

6. **Know Your Rights Card:** Document these rights on an index card. You may carry and present a card to ICE officers to let them know that you are exercising your rights.

Finally, remember to never provide false documents or physically interfere with officers. Knowing your rights will keep you safe and secure.

Students jam out at local jazz fellowship

BROOKE BEDE
A&E Editor

Seattle has always had a deep-rooted history with jazz music. Starting in the 1920s, jazz clubs began to populate Jackson Street, birthing iconic legends like Ray Charles and Quincy Jones. Even after several clubs closed during the pandemic, the spirit of jazz is still thriving in Seattle, kept alive by the Seattle Jazz Fellowship.

The fellowship is a non-profit organization dedicated to keeping the jazz culture alive in Seattle. Located on 103rd Main Street in Pioneer Square, it's within walking distance of Seattle's aquarium and the infamous gum wall. The stairs to the club's entrance can be found on the side of the street.

What makes the fellowship is that they're a non-profit and host jazz nights that are completely free to attend. They do heavily encourage donations at the door, which usually range between \$15-20. Each show starts at 7:30 PM, with the doors opening at 6:30. They're open to everyone, regardless of age, which gives students a great opportunity to go see some jazz, without the barrier of their younger age getting in the way.

"Every show is two-hours. It's a great way to have a night out, a space to experience jazz and just to have a great time!" said senior Alex Li.

One renowned performer at the fellowship is Thomas Marriot, an acclaimed jazz trumpeter who started his career in 1992. Marriot was influenced by the local jazz in Seattle, and now is the youngest inductee into the Seattle Jazz Hall of Fame. He's on the board of the fellowship and has told the Seattle Times that his intention is to mentor younger generations and grow a bigger jazz community in the city.

"Marriot and the rest of the house band host both a jam session and a professional half-hour set every Monday night. It's a great chance to get to enjoy and play music," said Li.

These jam sessions provide a unique opportunity for students to get involved. It's an opportunity for students who want to go into a professional music career to gain real experience improvising on stage.

"Playing at the Seattle Jazz Fellowship is exhilarating. All of the music is entirely spontaneous. It could be any of a multitude of tunes in a variety of keys and you're expected to know how to play. It's pretty scary sometimes because you don't know what you're going to play until you're in front of an audience," said junior Ozzie Kato.

However, even if students don't feel comfortable performing, the best part of the fellowship isn't performing, it's experiencing the community it has built. I had the privilege of going to a performance during a weekend in January. Despite getting there early at 7:00, the seats were absolutely packed with people, so I had to grab a spot near the back. I was one of the younger people there, but everyone I sat

next to was happy to talk with me and share about their experience with the fellowship, and what jazz meant to them.

"The first and only step in getting involved with the fellowship is to come down and listen," Kato said.

So, next time students think about heading down to Pike Place and playing tourist, I'd encourage them to look past the fish markets and great coffee shops and explore a new taste of Seattle culture. While jazz is an old genre, its influence is still heavily present in the music, the streets and the communities of our city.



SOURCE / OZZIE KATO



JAZZ HANDS: Young jazz musicians spotted improvising on stage at the fellowship on a Monday night. Admission and participation in these events is completely free!

Barque tries all your favorite boba spots. . .

MINGZE SHI
Website Team

Over the years, boba shops have come and gone under the cruel judgement of consumers' purses. Of those open today, which are most worth visiting? To find out, BHS senior Cece Wang and juniors Aimee Ni, Arseni Dzeravianka and I asked for recommended drinks from seven popular stores downtown then ranked them based on both the average taste rating of the drinks and our collective experiences.

1. Chicha San Chen was the best, which makes sense, since they won awards from the International Taste Institute. The most popular was the Black Tea and Honey Milk Boba, and while basic, it tasted high quality and authentic. Its sweetness was perfect and I could taste the natural ingredients. Taste: 8.375/10; price: ~\$10.

"You also don't have to talk to anyone, since chicha has a digital ordering screen. I also liked the free samples," Dzeravianka says.

2. Molly Tea and Ug Tea suggested the exact same drink: Jasmine Milk Tea. It's less strong than any of the other drinks, so I felt the taste shine through instead of being hit by it. Ug is arguably better, as their service had a better attitude and a wait time of just two minutes. Tastes: 7.875/10; price: \$7.71 (Molly) and \$6.61 (Ug).

3. Heytea generally has good drinks.

"I love the Mango Coconut Boom. I think they make it better than all the other stores. You can taste big chunks of mango and coconut jelly," Wang says.

But they recommended the Mochi Yinde Black Milk Tea, though. It was warm, cold, sweet and salty at the same time. The mochi tasted like viscous fluid. It was very confusing, but at least they had a sense of humor, since the waiter recommended this only after I asked him to not give the most expensive one. Many customers ordered online, so I had to wait around 15 minutes in a cramped and humid store. Taste: 5.5/10; price: ~\$8

4. Choo Tea is the closest to BHS and their Osmanthus Milk Tea is most popular. While I liked it, other tasters thought osmanthus had a controversial alcohol-like taste that they thought didn't fit. I drank a lot and my stomach felt sick later. Taste: 7.75/10; price: ~\$9

5. Macu Tea was the most creative, suggesting the King of Mango Smoothie, which is more of a dessert than boba. But some of its fruit drinks are seasonal and mango clearly doesn't taste good when it isn't summer. Taste rating: 5.875; price: ~\$9

6. Happy Lemon was ranked the lowest because the drink tasted extremely artificial. They suggested

the default boba drink, which is a stark contrast with Chicha San Chen's. Taste: 6.375/10; price: ~\$9

"It's more of a fast-food version of boba, unlike the more expensive brands that use real tea and milk for their drinks (but hence take longer to complete the order)," Ni says.

I believe these rankings have a lot of truth to what you might expect if you order from these stores. Let us know what other stores or items we should rank.



A TASTY TREAT: Sophomore Hailey Andersen and junior Olivia Anderson drinking boba at Bellevue Square Mall. Happy Lemon is a common boba spot for Bellevue High students, but is also regarded as the "fast food" version of boba.





Drama club produces Grease

LUCY BREWTON
Business Team

The BHS Theater Department is bringing hand-jives, leather jackets, and 1950s style to the stage this spring with its production of "Grease." Originally a Broadway musical, it became a hit movie and has been a fan favorite for years. Now, Bellevue High School students are ready to add their own twist to this production.

Set at Rydell High in the 1950s, the story follows Danny Zuko, played by Ethan Lee, and Sandy Dumbrowski, played by Abbie Chen, along with their friends, as they navigate love, friendship, and the ups and downs of high school life. With songs like "Summer Nights," "Greased Lightnin'," and "We Go Together," the show is full of music, dancing, and laughs that will have the audience joining in on the fun.

"I am so grateful to be Sandy in 'Grease,' it's my first lead role, and I am ready to put in all my hard work to help make this show the best it can be!" said junior Chen.

Students say preparing for the show has been challenging and exciting. During rehearsals, the cast works on developing their characters, practicing harmonies, and learning the choreography. Whether in a lead or ensemble role, everyone agrees the experience has been rewarding, and they feel the energy and humor that has made "Grease" such a classic.

"As a Latina student from another country, I didn't grow up with theatre being a big part of high school culture," said junior Alina Rubi. "Being in 'Grease' is exciting because it gives me the chance to experience something completely new."

Behind the scenes, the tech crew, responsible for set design, transitions during the show, and sound cues, is equally busy planning the sets, costumes, and lighting to bring Rydell High to life. From leather jackets to poodle skirts, every detail is designed to take the audience back to the 1950s.

"I am so thrilled to be the assistant customer for 'Grease' this year," said sophomore Melissa Wang. "I've been looking at outfits from the 1978 film 'Grease' and fashion magazines from the '50s. I really hope to effectively incorporate the iconic looks into the show."

This year's production is co-directed by senior Madelyne Masters and long-time drama teacher David Kline. For Kline, this will be his last show before he retires, making the production especially meaningful.

"After directing over 35 musicals at BHS, you would think I would be done. But not with this cast and crew!" said Kline, "They are amazing, talented and wonderful, and this is the best way to end my time at BHS."

"I am so lucky to be able to be the student director on this show, and I am enjoying executing my creative vision for the project," said senior Madelyne Masters. "This is my first time in a directing role, and I am so honored."

With its catchy songs, memorable characters, and energetic performances, "Grease" is set to be a highlight of the BHS theater department. Performances will take place April 22-25. Don't miss cheering on your classmates and enjoying a fun, nostalgic night watching "Grease."



HARD AT WORK: Bellevue's drama club working overtime on stage to make this performance perfect. They practice every day and are in the middle of tech week, which means they stay at school for hours after school closes.

The Barque ranks favorite childhood TV shows

ZIA SHAIKH
Copy Editor

Children nowadays have their minds polluted with slop. The reason is the TV shows they consume. Recently, children have begun to mindlessly consume Cocomelon and Peppa Pig. However, I remember a time where cartoons were educational, and instilled strong values in children. Whether looking to get into early 2010's tv shows, or catch up on some nostalgia, below are notable shows from my generation's childhood.

Doc McStuffins:



This show portrays a young girl named Dottie, who aspires to become a doctor. Although Dottie may not understand student loan debt, she still attempts to help "patients" which are really stuffed animals or toys. It especially stresses

the importance of treating people well no matter who they are, as Dottie treats all types of patients in the show.

Junior Nethra Chitiprolu remarks that "Seeing the [show] influenced me to take care of my younger siblings because of the impact it had on the community."

Although it is less popular than others on the list, it is still a revered show for many and creatively drives home lessons on morals. As a result it earns the 4th place spot.

Arthur:

"Arthur" is a show about an aardvark, who for some reason lives with other creatures that look slightly humanistic and goes to school with them. Arthur deals with an annoying sibling, relationships with friends and elementary school. The show especially stresses the importance of morality and kindness, rather than simply being entertaining. Although some may find this boring, many enjoy the elevated complexity of the show compared to other popular cartoons.

"Arthur" excels at stressing the importance of morality as aforementioned shows, because Arthur exemplifies the classic trope of navigating the show, it feels creatively limiting. Overall, it deservedly gets the third place spot.

"Curious George":

This show is one of the most popular for 2010's TV. Curious George is a monkey whose owner is descriptively called "The Man with the Yellow Hat." Throughout the show, George explores and inquires about life and human nature. In kindergarten I remember watching "Curious George" the movie, in class. At a certain point Curious George is at risk of being evicted (having a monkey in an apartment is illegal). This terrified me, and became one of the most intense moments of my life.

Junior Catie Kwon explains how the show impacted her, remarking "I learned the importance of learning through your experiences and mistakes."

While entertained and laughing, a deeper message of curiosity was understood by [the] five year old me."

All in all, "Curious George" taught us about being inquisitive, and whether or not to house monkeys in apartments. As a result I will rank it second.

"Wild Kratts":

This show is a classic, scores of 2010's kids grew up watching Chris and Martin shapeshift into various animals, and raise awareness on niche facts about random creatures. For me, watching the Wild Kratts fostered an innate interest in animals and nature. Seeing the two defeat a chef desperate for endangered species, or a fashionista looking to add new animal pelts to her collection made me realize that environmentalism was cool. Others share similar impacts.

Junior Elina Wilson remarks how the Wild Kratts "influenced [her] into volunteering at a local aquarium."

As a result of the show's relevancy in pointing out deep issues through creative and digestible methods for children, it is able to persuade children into action in ways rarely seen by cartoons. Thus, it is worthy of our first place spot.

The 2000s-2010s saw a renaissance in children shows that have not yet been replicated by the newest editions of cartoons. Until we get appropriate placeholders, we highly recommend you watch these recommended shows for nostalgia's sake.



CARTOON CONNOISSEUR: Sophomore Giuliana Schulam watching Doc Mcstuffins. Sometimes during periods of high stress, childhood shows can be comforting.

Bellevue and Mercer Island sustain decades-long rivalry

DANIEL DEBENPORT
Business Team

Anyone going to a game between Bellevue and Mercer Island can tell there is a rivalry between the two high schools.

"The games usually start with loud chants and cheers from each team, but the energy can change quick and become louder taunts and jeers at the other team," says senior Andy Zhu.

What some might have only heard about, through previous students or siblings, is how long this rivalry has been a thing, and the rivalry's historic past.

Not one incident pinpoints the start of the rivalry, but some would argue it started back in the 1990s or even earlier. An article in The Islander, a student-run newspaper, reported that back then, authority figures like security guards and police had to be present at any major sports competition or game due to heated matchups and fights. In 2022, at one of the most recent historic peaks of hostility after a game between the two schools, Bellevue High fans urinated on the Mercer Island High School field. Similarly, students from Mercer Island retaliated and came to Bellevue High School's stadium and disrespected our Liberty Bell. These kinds of disrespect and misconduct fuel the direct hatred one has for the other.

With the close proximity of the two schools and towns, the rivalry is heightened. Separated by just a lake, the two are more alike than they would like to admit. The two have very similar demographics, tight-knit communities, and even socioeconomic statuses.

"Since our schools are so close, students know one another outside of school, and when one school wins, the other would hear about it quickly," says senior Dawson Fader. This could rub the losing team wrongly, and they could take the other team's celebration as a personal mockery towards themselves.

Prior to this rivalry, Lake Washington High School was actually Mercer Island's and Bellevue's strongest rival. However, after finally losing to Mercer Island and tying with Bellevue in the 1961 football season, the two teams became rivals trying to outcompete each other for the top spot, and their school paths matchups would cross many times.

This heated rivalry would not be such an ongoing issue, but it is encouraged to continue by older students who want something to do.

"The tradition would die without older students who keep it alive," says Hugo Kim, a junior.

This tradition is passed down, and the energy does not fade, despite the fact that what ever happened between Bellevue and Mercer Island has long been forgotten. The hostility amasses as each class brings new energy to this rivalry.

In the end, the rivalry is about pride and bragging rights. The two neighboring towns compete fiercely on and off the fields and stadiums: trying to prove who is stronger, faster, and overall better. Bellevue and Mercer Island will continue competing with one another and the crowd will bring the energy with every new matchup. Despite the rivaled history, it can be good fun and a way to show school spirit to come to the games and cheer for your team!



Bellevue wrestling dominates the mat

ROWAN GERRON
Editor-in-Chief

The northern auxiliary gym has looked unusually sparse since the wrestling season came to an end. After months of rolling out the mats every practice, enduring brutal conditioning and fiercely competing, the Bellevue High School Wrestling team finished the regular season with a 10-1 record and won the KingCo Championship for the first time since 2015. The roster had 15 wrestlers place at KingCo and four members were crowned champions. The victory was a testament to their resilience after losing many key seniors.

Prior to the season, the team had a clear goal to take back the KingCo Championship from Mercer Island High School. Luckily, they were guided by head coach Nick Simeti and captains Logan Lorenzo, Shaan Kahlon and Andy Chen. These three strong captains helped lead by example and push their teammates during practices and competitions.

"This season marks the graduation of 14 seniors, a group that helped launch the program's 'new era.' With five state qualifiers and one state placer returning, the culture continues to strengthen, and the program is positioned to keep climbing," Simeti said.

Individually, sophomore Will Serres represented the podium for Bellevue at State. He had an outstanding regular season record of 21-4 and put a lot of his energy into refining his technique throughout the year.

"I already felt confident in my strength, but I really worked on getting better at shooting, especially my double leg and single leg. Executing those moves more effectively helped me score takedowns and place at state," Serres said.

Bonding through food, many of the wrestlers' season highlights were going out to eat as a team. A great way to rebuild gains and laugh about nonsense after a hard day's work.

"I'm going to miss sitting down with the team at Taqueria El Rinconsito after tournaments the most," senior Reed Koenderman said.

"My favorite memory was IHOP with the guys after Santa Slam. The vibes at team dinners after matches are indescribable and I can't believe it's over," Lorenzo said.

For many wrestlers on the team, not having to worry about weight classes anymore is a major relief. This is because routines often involve fast-ing, long sessions in the sauna and intense cardio to stay in the correct weight region.

As the season concludes, Kahlon and Chen look forward to mentoring the new incoming freshman and chase a future state title. Hopefully the 2025 KingCo championship banner will be in the rafters soon and people sign up to join the "new era" of Bellevue wrestling.



Inside Hayden Ritchie's daily routine

While most Bellevue students are still asleep, sophomore lacrosse player Hayden Ritchie is already starting his day. His alarm goes off at 4:50 a.m., a time most people only see if they accidentally stayed up too late. For Ritchie, it is routine.

"Your alarm clock is the first test of your discipline," said Ritchie.

His mornings start with what he calls his "go-to" fuel: a banana with honey and salt. It may sound questionable, but he stands by it.

"Small habits, strong starts: banana first, excuses never," he says.

After that, our big-time gym bro drives to the Bellevue Club for a lift before school. By the time most students are getting ready for first period, Ritchie has already completed a full workout.

He heads home to shower, eat eggs and get ready for school. By 7:30 a.m., he is on his way to Bellevue High School, switching from athlete mode to student mode. Balancing academics and athletics is a major part of being in season.

"Balance is hard, but the love of the game is worth it," added Ritchie.

Right now, the boys' lacrosse team is in preseason preparation as they prepare for their season opener on March 14. Until then, Ritchie's afternoons are structured. After school, he has lacrosse practice every day. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, the team focuses on conditioning. Wednesdays are dedicated to team lifts. The schedule is demanding but it is designed to prepare the team for the grind of the season.

"It's definitely a lot some weeks. I don't have a lot of free time, but I do have a lot of purpose," according to Ritchie.

He understands the purpose behind it. The consistency builds not just strength but team chemistry heading into the season.

When lunchtime hits, his choice is predictable: Chipotle. "It's mandatory," he says. Whether it is superstition or simply tradition, it's part of his daily routine.

"Chipotle isn't fast food for me, it's recovery," Ritchie states about his standby meal.

After practice, conditioning or lifts, he finally heads home for dinner. That's when homework comes first.

"I look at a student-athlete through this lens: grades earn your future, but the effort in your field earns your respect," he explains.

Being a student-athlete means managing both responsibilities equally. By around 10 p.m., he's heading to sleep because another 4:50 a.m. alarm is waiting.

"Some things don't have a price on them, bringing the culture back to Bellevue lacrosse is one of them it is where my dedication stems from," exclaimed Ritchie.

For most lacrosse players, game day is the main event. But for athletes like Hayden, the real work happens long before game days, in early morning lifts, conditioning drills and consistent preparation. With the season starting soon, the grind now sets the tone for what's ahead.

When Hayden was asked how to close out this article, he said, "I luv u, oh sorry, jeez, lemme cook. In a world full of Rowan Gerrons, be the Vaughn Ederer!"

STELLA O'CONNOR
Editorial Editor



LOCKED IN: Sophomore Hayden Ritchie prepares for a tough match up. He stays focused and ready to charge down the field to score and help the boys lacrosse team win.

Athlete of the Issue: Zach Henn

KAYLEIGH TUBB
Sports Section Editor

For the past four years, senior Zach Henn has been a crucial part of the Bellevue boys' soccer team and is ready to finish his high school career strongly. From club tournaments to travelling around the world, Henn has done it all.

"I started soccer when I was in preschool playing as a center back. Ever since then, soccer has taken up most of my time," Henn said.

Being on different club teams like Eastside FC, Henn has spent most of his time practicing, travelling for tournaments and having to balance schoolwork on top of it all. His schedule is often packed with post school practices, late-night homework sessions and early morning games on the weekends instead of relaxing. The dedication required to perform at this high level taught him time management, discipline, and how to work hard.

His junior year, Henn got the experience of a lifetime travelling to Barcelona, where he spent one semester playing overseas. Here, he was able to learn different coaching styles, how to play with new teammates and immersed himself in a new culture.

"We practiced twice a day for five days a week and one game at the end. Meeting an entirely new team took me out of my comfort zone and brought competition that made me a better player. By the end, I became more mature on and off the field" Henn said.

Through these experiences, Henn grew physically as a player but was also mentally challenged. Pre-game nerves can be difficult to handle, but Henn found the perfect solution.

"Before games I listen to my pre-game playlist to get energized so I can play my best," Henn said.



SOURCE / ZACH HENN

GAME TIME FOCUS: In the middle of his game, senior Zach Henn stays focused, determined and gives his everything on the field. With Henn's effort, he helps his team go home with a well deserved win.

By listening to his favorite artists such as Drake, Gunna, Lil Baby, and Veeze, Henn can get in the right mindset to prepare for whatever his games will bring. Music allows him to sharpen his mindset and boost his adrenaline.

Ever since the outset of his high school career, Henn has had an essential role on the Bellevue boys soccer team. He brought his experience from club and Spain to be a leader, to encourage his teammates to work hard so the team can succeed during their season and hopefully make it to the playoffs.

"Zach's a passionate teammate and leader. He always leads by example and is very encouraging on and off the field," senior Josh Depalma said.

Henn's teammates recognize his positivity and impact on the team chemistry. With his encouragement, he hypes up his teammates and helps them learn how to be better players.

With Zach's help, the boys' soccer team will show out during their 2026 season. For his senior season, Henn will continue to work hard and push through the last few months of the school year and (hopefully) make it to the state championship in May!



Athlete of the Issue: Hennessy Owensby

VIDULA RAJESH
Business Team

Spring sports have started meaning the girls' water polo team are back in the pool including, junior Hennessy Owensby. She not only plays for our school team, but she also does club water polo. Owensby has been playing water polo for five years. She started in seventh grade and got into the sport upon garnering an interest in water sports through swimming.

"Once a swimmer tries water polo, they are hooked," said Owensby.

Being in the sport for so long, she has many memories and accomplishments.

"My favorite memory is of the U.S. Club Championship Tournament in Chicago," but her proudest accomplishment was "...getting selected to represent the PNW region at Nationals for the USA Water Polo Olympic Development Program," said Owensby.

Water polo is a very physically demanding sport, as you have to swim, tread water, wrestle opponents, and shoot the ball, all without touching the pool bottom.

"The thing I enjoy most about water polo is the physicality of the sport," said Owensby.

She is a center defender, so she has to defend the goal and prevent her opponents from scoring while keeping her hands visible to the referees which is extremely difficult.

"I enjoy challenging myself, so this is a great position for me," said Owensby.

Owensby shares wishes to create a cohesive team that works together as well as has fun in the new season.

"My hope is that I can help my teammates discover a love for water polo, to learn some new skills, and develop as a strong team this season," said Owensby.

Water polo comes with long hours of practices and games, but Owensby is determined to prioritize school and water polo.

"Honestly, academics always comes first," she said. "Balancing schoolwork with water polo and all the things I do isn't easy because I often spend between 10-20 hours per week between games, workouts, and practices," she said.

Being a junior Owensby had to learn how to balance taking multiple Advanced Placement (AP) classes with tons of homework.

"I find time to do homework and study during the breaks between things. I do work on the buses to away games, on flights to tournaments, or on the pool deck, especially during busy tournament periods," she said.

But the hardest thing for her is balancing other extracurriculars and her social life.

"I have a lot of goals and interests outside of water polo, too, so this means that sometimes I have to make sacrifices like not seeing friends as much as I'd like, or missing practice to be present at another commitment," said Owensby.

Owensby will be showing off her hard work in the pool this season.



ALL SMILES: Bellevue girls water polo team poses poolside after a hard-fought game. Their teamwork and dedication helped them push through and end with a win.



