

I've learned a lot over the last three years.

I've also changed a lot over the last three years. The nervous, quiet sophomore who stepped into room 117 back in 2017 probably wouldn't recognize the senior she will become in 2020. Back then, journalism class felt akin to an enormous wave about to crash over me. I thought I'd drown, overwhelmed by my own ineptitude, but I was also determined to learn how to swim. It was exhausting work, teaching myself the ins and outs of Adobe software that sophomore year, but I developed a system that I found worked for me. The first infographic I ever made took hours. My first encounter with Adobe Illustrator actually made me cry tears of frustration. YouTube tutorials were once my best friend. But slowly, surely, I began learning to swim.

Designing spreads, however, is much different than taking on a simple infographic. Sure, the same elements of readability, aesthetics, and typography are all at play, but on a much higher level. My first experience wrestling with a spread came my junior year as a news editor, and, as can be expected, it didn't go well. I couldn't understand the changes my advisor was insisting on or why the software I thought I had mastered wasn't working. I'd jumped out of the kiddie pool and into what felt like a raging ocean of madness. However, as I began to design two, then four, then six-page spreads, my understanding of Adobe began to deepen. Gradually, I began to branch out from the basic, blocky spreads I'd first created to something more, something deeper. Once again, online tutorials and lots of peer advice became my lifejacket.

Over the summer of 2019, I took a class at a journalism summer camp completely devoted to design. At first I was unsure of my choice, however, I soon found a strong mentor as a teacher. Using his advice and a lot of inspiration from the other students in the class, I completely redesigned the paper's entire opinion section over the course of about four days. With the good grace of my advisor and my fellow Editors in Chief, I also selected a bold new font for the paper's headlines.

This year, my senior year, much of my time has been focused on mentoring my editors, writing stories, and yes, designing. I've come a long way for my first few infographics in sophomore year to designing four of the paper's five covers in one year. Though I'm no master of the seas, I know that my designs are not only readable, they are pleasing to the eye. They speak volumes regarding the stories, drawing readers to them in a way that makes the story stand out. I've learned that it's not always about the amount of content one can squeeze onto a page, but design is also about making something beautiful, something unique and something special.

There have been plenty of rough patches. Lost files, lots of late nights, a few missed deadlines, some staff drama, and plenty of blood, sweat and tears. However, that's to be expected. No sea is without a few waves, a few hurdles. But if there's anything I've learned over the past three years, it's that those hurdles can't stop me as long as I keep swimming, keep working, keep writing. And, most importantly, there's always a YouTube video.

- Design Sample 1 (*Yellowstone*)  
This four-page spread is a staffer's personal narrative regarding a trip to Yellowstone National Park. With the abundance of photos this story presented, I knew that there would be no way to fit them all in with the typical vertical layout, and thus decided to shift the perspective of the pages. In order to transition the photos, I also edited the photos with Photoshop to add the white, faded border visible in the spread.
- Design Sample 2 (*Issue 5 cover*)  
The challenge with this issue was that, since we completed it while on lockdown, there was no way we would be able to get a photo to serve as the cover, or any photos for the paper. Therefore, we decided to use art for the whole paper, and thus also the cover, which I drew in Photoshop. Not knowing what version the editors would want, I made three versions, one completely black and white, one colored in (both of these are visible on the table of contents page, which I also designed), and one with only the masks colored in, to symbolize the unity found in the impact of the virus.
- Design Sample 3 (*Sports Head-to-Head redesign*)  
The first four-page spread is a debate between two of our staffers from our first issue of the year, featured next to an older, two-page spread from last year's third issue, in the same format of story. As I mentioned earlier, I redesigned the paper's entire opinion section, so I thought it prudent to include a sample of what previous designs looked like. For my design, both of the articles were quite strong, so I decided to feature them on a larger spread I designed specifically to catch the reader's eye. I used InDesign for the majority of the spread, though I created the photo cutouts using Photoshop.
- Design Sample 4 (*Bringing Back Busing*)  
This was an important story to the Lakota District. I knew that people would want to know about the story, but I also knew that it would be likely they wouldn't have the attention span for the three-page piece. For this reason, I created several visual elements to add to the four-page spread, namely the two infographics, pull quote, and quotes from the board members.
- Design Sample 5 (*The Smokescreen*)  
This four-page spread was published in our fifth issue of my junior year. This piece, which I both wrote and designed, was about the ways in which Juul had exploited the advertising industry in order to explicitly market to youth and minors. Based on the focus of the story, when designing the piece, I wanted to evoke the imagery from the original advertising campaign- the bright colors and geometric shapes chief among them, since these were the most recognizable aspects of the campaign. In order for my intentions with the design to be as visually clear as possible, I also included a fair use photo of the original advertisement.



yellowstone.

personal narrative and photography **andrew marshall** | infographic **isis summerlin**  
photo illustration **alexandra fernholz**

I walked down the path alone, nothing but my camera and me. I listened to the grinding of the stones and crunch of the leaves underneath me. As I walked down the path I came upon an over looming tree branch. I ducked underneath the tree and I was taken aback. A perfect mirror on Jenny Lake the brink of mountain range casting a still image reflection behind it. This was the only photo I did not take while traveling around Yellowstone and Grand Tetons National Parks. It was a mark of beauty and simplicity that I could not and would not capture with my lens.

My family was 100 yards behind me at this point. This was no surprise; I've always been known for taking on the world by myself. I always try to take in every aspect of what's around me. My mind

seemed to be working in fast forward as I thought about my next photo. I was wondering what would show up next: a majestic elk, an elusive pronghorn, or a mighty bison. Then my mind came to a stop as I watched someone throw their plastic, single-use water bottle on the ground. I assumed that in a national park people would care or be a little more conscientious of their actions, but I was sadly mistaken.

I made a point to clean up the park as I walked the trails. Every time I found a piece of trash like a coffee cup, water bottle, or wrapper my initial astonishment grew into disbelief. People came to the parks—national landmarks—and trashed it. Why would people throw their trash

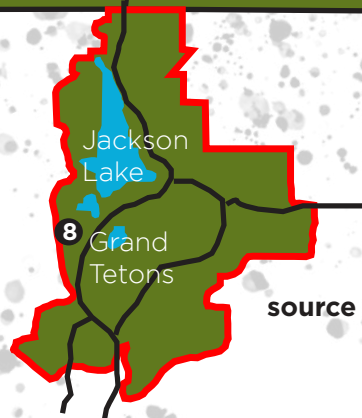
### grand tetons

*(Above) On an evening drive with my family we stopped at the base of the Grand Teton mountain range. I looked to my left and saw the sun setting on this majestic mountains highlighting the giant cracks and crevices this photo did not do it justice.*

### bridge bay campgrounds

*(Below) Taking this photo was probably the longest time commitment I invested while in Yellowstone. I watched these elk for about two hours while at the edge of Bridge Bay Campgrounds. Miraculously they came into frame for a picture perfect shot when they started grazing.*

### Andrew's Path



source nps.gov





### mormon row, grand tetons

*(Left) This picturesque “Moulton Barn” is found in Mormon Row located near Jackson Hole, Wyoming. This barn is the most photographed barn in America. With the beautiful Tetons in the background and the iconic looking barn it was a picture that simply couldn’t be passed up.*

### lamar valley

*(Below) Two bison calves spotted grazing in Lamar Valley. Lamar Valley is a popular attraction for viewing wildlife located in the north eastern part of Yellowstone.. This shot was taking from about 75 yards out as they were grazing at dusk.*



on the ground? Do they just assume someone would throw it away for them? They just didn’t seem to care about how their actions will affect the environment. I lost respect (for whomever) during this journey and respect for the environment in something many tourists seem to lack.

Yellowstone was the first national park established in the U.S.; it was recognized for its wildlife and geothermal features. Theodore Roosevelt believed that it would make an impact on the future’s youth. However, modern minds see it as their own personal playground, pretending that their actions have no consequences.

Since my trip to Yellowstone, I’ve been watching the news. A story that caught my eye was one of a drunk man falling into the thermal water near the cone of Old Faithful, one of the park’s most popular attractions. The geyser wasn’t damaged, but the man suffered severe burns to a significant portion of his body.

There have been multiple cases like this, where people blatantly ignore the signs telling them not to approach these landmarks, because they are unsafe and could severely hurt them. These geysers have been there for hundreds of years and are now known universally as one of the wonders of the world. These people not only disrespect the environment, but also themselves.

As I was exploring Yellowstone and the Grand Tetons, I was astounded by how many times I was informed of the safety regulations--stay at least 25 yards away from non-threatening

animals and 100 yards away from threatening animals. It made sense to me and I followed the rules. However, others did not. I was surprised to hear multiple stories of people getting too close to bison and being thrown and gored by the bison. These people ignored safety regulations put in place for their safety, so they continue to put themselves and the wildlife at risk.

I have no real solution to people's apathy and disrespect. I can only suggest taking a breath and looking around to witness the beauty of our world. Look at all the angles, all the photos anyone could take of all the wonderful things happening around us.

On this trip I was surrounded by animals I'd never seen before, but one of the coolest things was seeing a little chipmunk walking along the trail. It was so comfortable with people, it grew up unafraid of them. I grew up thinking that humans would take care of it. We need to keep that up so that my kids, their kids, and kids for hundreds of years can come and witness the same beauty that I saw and captured within my photos. •

---

### **west entrance, yellowstone**

*This Black Bear is commonly mistaken for a Grizzly Bear for its brown fur, but in Yellowstone the color of black bears varies. This picture was taken on my first day in yellowstone about 15 minutes in from the west entrance.*



### **grand tetons**

*(Below): This cow moose was seen off of Moose-Wilson Road grazing on vegetation in the wet marshlands a couple feet under the water.*

*This photo was taken by complete chance as we traveled this road to get to our house four times a day. On our second to last day in the Grand Tetons there was a large crowd parked off a cliff and I was the only one with a camera. This miracle moose was one of my favorite photos of the ones I took out west.*



# Spark

Lakota East High School  
[www.lakotaeastsparkonline.com](http://www.lakotaeastsparkonline.com)  
May 2020 \$5 Newsstand





# INSIDE THE ISSUE

ISSUE #193

news

8

testing positive

10

the politics behind the pandemic

feature

14

logging on to learn

18

pause the applause

20

the trio

22

a dream on pause

package

24

going viral

culture

26

positivity in a pandemic

32

short on supplies, not morale

sports

38

there's always next year

opinion

44

head to head

46

editorial cartoon



# HEAD TO HEAD

## Should female athletes be paid the same as male athletes?

It is July 7, 2019 in Lyon, France, home of the 2019 Women's FIFA (International Federation of Association Football) World Cup Final. The United States is looking to win their second consecutive World Cup, while the Netherlands is making their first ever appearance in a World Cup Final.

Consequently, the Americans went on to win the game 2-0 in dominating fashion. As the final seconds of the game began to wane, a sellout crowd of nearly 60,000 people began chanting "USA," their shouts echoing throughout the stadium. This win capped off an excellent tournament run for the U.S. Women's National Team (WNT), as they had successfully represented their country once again.

However, this win represented more than just another World Cup championship. It sparked conversation about the wage gap between male and female professional athletes. This encouraged a movement among the team to continue fighting for equal pay. And what better time to revive such a crucial debate than after bringing home the World Cup trophy for a second consecutive time?

These women and all other female athletes who are continuing to fight for equal pay need to be heard. They're fighting for equality, an idea that this country was founded on, and something written in our country's Constitution for over 200 years.

Many who oppose equal pay among athletes claim that because male sports bring in more annual revenue, that means they should get paid more as a result. While this is true among most major professional sports, it is actually not as common as many people think. In fact, the women's soccer team has proved otherwise.

The ratings for this year's Women's World Cup final were higher than the 2018 Men's World Cup final, as nearly 14.3 million U.S. viewers tuned in to the final match on television, compared to 11.4 million for the 2018 Men's World Cup Final, a 22% U.S.

viewership boost. It was also the highest rated soccer game in the U.S. since the 2015 Women's World Cup final, which was coincidentally also won by the Americans. Despite the common belief, there has been a growing interest in women's professional sports.

Many members of the Women's World Cup team decided to speak for themselves about their opinions on the wage gap in professional sports, including star forward Megan Rapinoe, who said that the World Cup win meant so much more than what was on the field.

"It's really more about the investment in the game. Is the investment equal? We're talking marketing dollars and branding, investment in the youth, investment in the players, investment in the coaching staff, says Rapinoe." "I don't think that that [equality is] there. I don't think that that's ever been there."

And even despite the fact that less money is invested into women's professional sports, the U.S. women's soccer team's games have generated more revenue than the men's team over the past three years, according to a review by the Wall Street Journal.

This has been an ongoing issue for months before the U.S. Women's soccer team brought home the FIFA World Cup trophy in July. It all started back in March 2019, when the team filed a complaint against U.S. soccer that states: "Female WNT players would earn a maximum of \$99,000 or \$4,950 per game, while similarly situated MNT players would earn an average of \$263,320 or \$13,166 per game."

This fact alone shows how backwards the system truly is. The U.S. WNT has consistently brought in more money over the past three years, and yet each female player earns just one third of the yearly salary that each male player would receive. The only question is how long will it take for female athletes to finally receive equal pay? •

**These women and all other female athletes who are continuing to fight for equal pay need to be heard.**

column **mason wise**  
photography **fair use**

The U.S. National Women's Soccer Team (USWNT) stands for the national anthem in September of 2017 at Nippert Stadium against New Zealand. The team won the match 5-0.

Sports writers Jake Ratliff and Mason Wise debate one of the hottest topics in professional sports.

**T**he 2018 NBA Finals Championship kicked off on May 31 of last year, in which the Cleveland Cavaliers faced off against the Golden State Warriors. Tensions were higher than ever as the two teams fought to settle their long-time rivalry, and fans were excited to see the matchup.

During Game One of the Finals alone, over 19,500 people attended the game live, as well as 17.7 million viewers that tuned in to the broadcast live on ABC Sports.

Flash forward a few months later to game one of the WNBA Finals on Sept. 7, 2018. The Washington Mystics went head to head with the Seattle Storm.

In comparison to the NBA Finals, Game One only totaled a viewership of around 12,000 live attendees and 226,000 viewers on ESPNNews, where the game was aired live.

This drastic difference in viewership directly correlates to the wage gap between female and male basketball players, as well as athletes throughout most other professional sports.

The greater the number of viewers of sports events, or any form of entertainment for that matter, the greater the revenue the organization or company will earn. The WNBA in comparison to the NBA is a great example of market economics in the way that one product can be substituted for another, similar product that satisfies the consumer more, which drives the revenue of the more valued product higher. In this case, the product is the game itself and viewers are more drawn to the NBA over the WNBA, making it the preferred substitute and thus driving its revenue significantly higher than the WNBA.

However, the percentage of shared revenue that gets paid to the players is the real issue that is causing so much controversy.

Players in the WNBA receive 20% of shared revenue within their league, while players in the NBA receive 50% of their shared revenue.

From a business perspective, however, the WNBA is not going to want to pay their

athletes as high a percentage if they do not have money to spare. Sports organizations must have money to pay their athletes, and if they aren't making as much money, they simply cannot pay as much as another organization that makes more money.

Statistically, the NBA makes 1,000 times more revenue than the WNBA does. The total revenue of the WNBA in 2018 came to be only around \$25 million, compared to the total revenue of the NBA in 2018 which came to be around \$24 billion.

The NBA is able to pay a higher revenue percentage to their players because the prices for other items that need to be paid for with their shared revenue are often stagnant and easier to pay for with their greater sales. The surplus of money is so great that they can afford to pay their players such a high wage.

“Shark Tank” host and owner of the Dallas Mavericks Mark Cuban commented on the issue in an interview, claiming that the wage gap is not gender based, but based in economics.

“The difference is the total amount of revenue,” Cuban said. “It’s not a gender issue. It’s just like we paid a lower percentage to the men until the revenues went up. And when our revenues went up, we were able to pay a higher percentage.”

**E**conomic knowledge is all that is necessary to see through the political side of this argument. The demand for the WNBA simply does not generate the revenue needed to increase salaries to meet the criteria that these female athletes are asking for. The percentage of earnings that goes towards wages is based on the percentage surplus available after other costs that are more detrimental to the league and its success.

The skill of female athletes in the WNBA is indisputable, but the league that they play in prohibits them from earning what they deserve. The power to improve their wage will forever lie in the hands of the ones watching them from the sidelines. •

**The WNBA simply does not generate the revenue needed to increase salaries to meet the criteria that these female athletes are asking for.**

column **jake ratliff**  
photography **fair use**

Minnesota Lynx Center Sylvia Fowles looks for an opening as she is guarded by Dallas Wings Center Liz Cambage.



# SHOULD COLLEGE ATHLETES BE PAID?

Everybody can see that athletes get special treatment from schools. Athletes can get away with more than any other student at college, and are adored by universities. They take advantage of benefits varying with each university.

These benefits can be as small as more lenient treatment from professors, or as big as full ride scholarships based solely on athletic talent. In some cases, they also receive illegal payment due to their athletic abilities.

Some students study every night and work two jobs through high school to prepare for the college costs. They lose many hours of sleep to try to get into a good college, and many of those students still have a hard time receiving significant scholarships. Many athletes get scholarships for just their athletic ability, have

their entire college paid for, and still have the audacity to complain about not being paid like a professional.

Many athletes fantasize about scoring the winning touchdown in the College Football National Championship. Getting the opportunity to simply play college football, let alone receive scholarships, is a blessing for the athletes.

"I don't think athletes are being exploited. I think there's a symbiotic relationship there. Without the university platform for them to compete, there is no exposure for them. None," says Judy Rose, the athletic director for the University of North Carolina at Charlotte.

So why should they need to receive more money? Many athletes are already being paid by the colleges to follow this dream. Playing

college sports is a privilege, with only two percent of high school athletes receiving any form of athletic scholarship to play in college.

College athletes should not be paid to play college sports.

There are so many negatives to paying these athletes that it simply doesn't make sense to pump in more money to athletes.

Financially, it doesn't make sense for universities to give college athletes a salary. Not only does it take money out of the university's pocket, but the money being used to make athletes happier could be used on more important things like renovated classrooms and facilities around campus, as well as more money for academic scholarships.

Reggie Bush was a Heisman-winning running back for the University of Southern California (USC). Bush was later drafted by the New Orleans Saints and had a prolific NFL career before retiring in 2017.

However, Bush's legacy is tainted by the scandal that forced him to forfeit his Heisman trophy. This scandal involved around

## NO WAY

\$280,000 in payments to Bush's family from USC as well as a house for the family to stay in.

Imagine what the University could do with the \$280,000 they gave to Bush's family. They could provide some of the top high school academic prospects who may need financial aid with scholarships. Instead, they blew hundreds of thousands of dollars on Bush's family on top of his full ride scholarships.

There are many cases of colleges paying players money on top of a full-ride scholarship. It's baffling how universities would risk their reputation and spend hundreds of thousands of dollars of extra money just so that an athlete will play football for them.

When colleges start paying some athletes, they'll have to pay all of them. The university wouldn't just be able to pay football players and basketball players; they would have to pay all athletes from all sports.

Paying all these athletes would put many universities way over budget. Tulane University has 377 student athletes, which is a large number of students to pay to play college sports.

Tulane University gave out the highest average athletic scholarship in 2017. Tulane gave out an average of a \$48,849 scholarship to their athletes. Adding a salary on top of that would force them to have to make monetary cuts from other hard working students and staff.

College athletes shouldn't be paid to play college sports. The University's main focus should be on improving the quality of education of their students as well as maximizing their revenue. If Universities pay college athletes, they will be wasting money for an unnecessary and avoidable reason.

"There's no more money. Everybody is working as hard as they can to generate as much revenue as humanly possible and all, but a handful of schools operate in the red," says Steve Patterson, the athletics director at the University of Texas. •



Broc Nordmark and Stephen McKay debate what colleges should do about the ongoing issue of the legality of payments to their athletes.

columns **stephen mckay** and **broc nordmark** | art **caroline bumgarner**

# FOR SURE

The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) currently makes about 11 billion dollars annually from college athletics. This is more than what the total estimated revenues for the National Basketball Association (NBA) and National Hockey League (NHL) make per year.

This statistic would not be possible without the high levels of skill and dedication shown by all college athletes over the country. The NCAA and many colleges and universities make millions of dollars because of the efforts of these players. Coaches such as the new head football coach at Ohio State are making up to 4.5 million dollars per year just to be a coach. It is time that these athletes get what they are owed: a paycheck.

"If you go to Chapel Hill and try to go to a Carolina-Duke game, good luck trying to find a ticket. It's nationally televised. There's so much money that goes behind just one basketball game," former University of North Carolina and current NBA basketball player Marvin Williams says. "I do think the players from both sides should definitely see some type of benefit."

The typical Division I college football player devotes 43.3 hours per week at practice, watching film, and at meetings for football. This is 3.3 hours more than the average American spends per week at work, but these athletes are doing it for free. They do not have time for a job throughout the week.

While the NCAA and many people are opposed to these athletes getting paid because they are students, many of these athletes are required to miss their classes because of their sport. For some college basketball players, their path through the annual March Madness basketball tournament requires them to miss up to one-quarter of their classes during the spring semester.

The time that these athletes spend participating in their athletic programs is deserving of pay. These athletes have to miss too much class time and are on the road too

much to say that they are getting paid is their education.

The positive effects of successful college athletes and teams is also very obvious based on student scores at these universities. The year after former Boston College quarterback Doug Flutie won the Heisman trophy, Boston College's undergraduate admissions increased by 25 points and the average SAT score of their freshmen increased by 110 points. The schools are able to market the success of their athletic teams to high school students and it makes the universities look more attractive to students.

While these universities do give food and other forms of payment to their players, it is not nearly enough for them to get by on a daily basis. However, these athletes are not allowed to make any extra money because of the NCAA restrictions on the jobs these athletes can have, and how they can make money.

"When you're on a football scholarship, you get a stipend that's supposed to cover your rent and a few incidentals," former Brigham Young University kicker Jason Chaffetz says. "It was \$360 a month. This was the late 1980s, and the NCAA has a very interesting rule where you're not allowed to supplement your income with a part-time job."

Boise State University is known for their blue field and strong football program. If not for this, Boise State would have a hard time attracting students to attend their college. Students consider the athletic programs of universities before making a decision on where to study in college, so having a strong athletic program that has had recent success can make millions of dollars for a university like Boise State.

The athletic departments of these universities and the NCAA also treat college athletes as if they are typical

employee. Their social media accounts are constantly being monitored and regulated by the university and the NCAA as if they are employees, and they are used as marketing tools in advertisements to generate even more money.

Jerseys, autographs, hats and other merchandise are constantly being bought and sold because of the performances of these players, and the athletes get no royalties from these profits; the NCAA gets to keep all the money for themselves, which is extremely unfair.

"The NCAA makes so much money off of their kids," former University of California and current Green Bay Packers quarterback Aaron Rodgers says. "And they put ridiculous - absolutely ridiculous - restrictions on everything that they can do." •





Buses sit empty in the service center parking lot outside of Liberty Junior at the end of the school day.

# BRINGING BACK BUSING

In its first major decision since election day, the Lakota school board voted to reintroduce busing to the Lakota freshman campuses beginning in the 2020-2021 school year.

story, photography and infographic **alexandra fernholz** | additional photography **riley higgins**

**J**an. 18, 2020 will mark the ninth year since busing was available to Lakota high schools. However, due to a recent board decision, this situation is set to change.

On Nov. 18, after nearly 30 minutes of debate, the Lakota Board of Education voted unanimously to reinstate busing to both Lakota freshman campuses starting in the 2020-2021 school year. The plan, which was formally presented to the board at their Oct. 28 meeting, calls for an estimated \$2.7 million dollars to fund the reintroduction of busing for Lakota freshmen.

“I’m in the community. I hear people talking-people want transportation,” Board Member Brad Lovell told Spark. “[Busing has] gotten some momentum because we have such a strong cash balance. There’s really no reason why we wouldn’t be doing it right now.”

For Lakota freshman personnel, this comes

as a relief.

“Just about every year I get a number of questions, concerns, complaints about the fact that we don’t have busing,” West Freshman Assistant Principal Jason Jackson said.

The board was originally forced to cut busing down to state minimums in 2011 after the Nov. 2, 2011 levy failed with 53.46 percent of votes against the levy. The failure of that levy forced the board to cut the budget by \$12 million, eliminating staff members, classes, and busing to the high schools.

“[The board] wanted to keep as many dollars geared toward the classroom as we could and not have to cut more staff than we did,” said 12-year Board Member Lynda O’Connor, who was on the board at the time of the levy fallout. “That’s why we made the cuts that we did. It was really hard.”

Since that time, high school busing has

## OHIO TRANSPORTATION MINIMUMS:

- busing to all K-8 students within two miles of community schools
- busing to all K-8 students enrolled in nonpublic schools inside the district’s borders
- a shuttle from the high school to a member vocational school
- transportation for students with Individual Education Plans (IEP)



**Board President Julie Shaffer:**

“This is an investment that people in our community want to make in our students and our schools. It’s a pain point for families”



**Board Member Brad Lovell:**

“As being a principal in the district, [I’ve seen] the impact that it’s had on our families. We need to be doing this.”



**Board Member Todd Parnell:**

“Seeing [busing] in the context of the five year forecast, this does seem rushed. We’re burning up cash.”

been an ongoing question for the now 16,500 student district, the largest suburban public school district in southwest Ohio. Currently, Lakota transports more than 9,900 students to 18 different K-8 buildings.

2019 marked Lakota’s seventh consecutive year with a balanced budget. Additionally, the district has a surplus cash balance of more than \$107 million, a balance which is conservatively projected to grow up to \$111 million by 2021. This cash balance has more than quadrupled since 2012.

“[Lakota is] pretty healthy,” Lakota Superintendent Matt Miller told Spark. “Our finances are probably the best they’ve ever been in a long time or maybe they’ve ever been. So financially, [busing] was something viable that we could look at.”

In light of Lakota’s improved financial situation, the board surveyed over 4,800 parents in the district. Over 86 percent of freshman parents and 87 percent of sophomore parents surveyed said they’d use the service if it were provided. However, only 57 percent of junior parents and 34 percent of senior parents responded that their students would use the service. According to O’Connor, these survey results may be higher than any actual usage rates.

“If I were a parent being surveyed I’d say yes [because] I’d like to know I had the busing option,” O’Connor told Spark. “So even though that number was what it was, I’m

not sure that it would not be lower than [the number in the survey] in actual usage. Because families want to have those options and that’s understandable.”

For East freshman Julisa Muñoz, the decision came just one year too late.

“When I first heard of [the board reinstating busing], I got kind of mad. [I’ve] had to change my sleep schedule, and my parents had to accommodate the fact the fact that they had to drive me,” Muñoz said. “Not only does my dad have to change his routine, but my mom has to go into work super early so that she can pick me up from school. I don’t think that’s going to be easy to keep up with for three more years.”

Five possible busing plans were presented to the Board at the Oct. 28 meeting, though on Nov. 18, only three of those options were laid into a scenario with Lakota’s five-year forecast.

The freshman-only busing plan estimates an annual cost of \$1,870,000 for the transportation of all Lakota freshmen. The plan also estimated an additional cost of \$825,000 for the transportation of area private school freshmen, whom Lakota is required by state law to transport to and from school if the service is provided to Lakota freshmen. Currently, the district transports more than 1,240 students to 19 different K-8 non-Lakota schools, as long as they are within a 30-minute distance. The plan passed by the board assumes an additional seven non-Lakota schools would require transportation, including Moeller High School, Cincinnati Hills Christian Academy,

and Bishop Fenwick High School.

“I can see how it is beneficial, and I’m glad that the freshmen of next year won’t have to struggle with time and things like that, which a lot of us freshmen struggled with,” said Muñoz, who has gone to Lakota schools her entire life.

One of the three options proposed reintroducing busing not only to freshmen, but also to their peers in the main campuses. This plan presented its own challenges, however.

“Probably [one of] the biggest obstacles [to implementing busing at the main campus] we’ve seen historically is that rider access at the main campus is significantly low,” East Principal Suzanna Davis said. “It’s definitely a conversation that looks a little different at the freshman campus and the main campus, simply because of student drivers.”

According to a Spark survey of 131 East students, 40 percent said that the board should have implemented busing for all high school students. About eight percent of students thought busing should not be provided to high school students. 77 percent of students surveyed said they would not use busing services if it was provided to their grade.

“I think [the main campus] should have busing,” East senior Muhammad Anwar said. “It would be easier on the parents and students because they’ll never be late. Students [wouldn’t] have to disturb their parents and wake them up to go drop them off. I bet their

**“Our finances are probably the best they’ve ever been in a long time or maybe they’ve ever been. So financially, [busing] was something viable that we could look at.” -Matt Miller**



**Lakota Superintendent Matt Miller:** "I think because the freshmen are standalone buildings, it makes sense, just to do freshman."



**Lakota Treasurer Jenni Logan:** "We have operated with a balanced budget for seven years. We are predicting that we would continue that until 2023. In [this] budget we could do [busing]."

parents work and they probably don't feel like getting up."

The third option presented a plan to reinstate busing to all grades 9-12 but with a change in schedule at the main campuses - moving the time classes began from 8:05 a.m. to 8:40 a.m. In this scenario, the school day would have ended at 3:15 p.m. rather than 2:40 p.m. This would allow buses to run multiple routes between schools, allowing for more efficient use of the vehicles. However, Board Member Kelley Casper was leery of the issues this plan would have posed for the schools.

"In that scenario we don't know if we'd be able to keep the zero period," Casper said. "I don't want to take educational opportunities away from kids for transportation."

Additionally, according to Lakota Chief Operations Officer Chris Passarge, the change in bell times at the high schools would pose an issue for the transfer of staff between buildings.

"If there are different times [between buildings] that spreads out the day too long for that teacher," Passarge said. "[Different start times] may be efficient for transportation, but it may cost us more on the staffing side to provide the educational opportunities we currently have."

However, according to Petermann General Manager for Lakota Transportation Sue Prewitt, providing transportation to all high school students would not be possible without changes in the high school's schedule.

"If [Lakota doesn't] do the bell time changes, we cannot [provide busing] because it would take twice the vehicles to do that," Prewitt said.

Lakota has outsourced its busing services to transportation company Petermann since 2005. According to Passarge, the decision to outsource busing was made in order to save the 63 square mile district the rising operational costs of having to service its own fleet of buses.

"It saved about a million dollars a year for

workers compensation," Passarge told Spark. "Basically, [Petermann] buys the buses; they hire the staff; they run the daily operation, but they still report to me. They follow our board policy, they follow our rules. They do everything that we want them to do but they're not on our payroll."

Currently, Lakota budgets a base cost of \$12,250,000 each year for busing. Factoring this expense into Treasurer Jenni Logan's five-year forecast, the district is expected to enter a spending deficit in fiscal year 2023, the first time it has done so since 2013. With the additional \$2.7 million annual cost of freshman-only busing, the district is projected to enter the spending deficit a year earlier, in fiscal year 2022.

"It is a shame the district does not have at least freshman busing," Board Member Todd Parnell said at the meeting. "And I came in here ready to support that. Seeing it in the context of the five year forecast, however, this does seem rushed. We're burning up cash."

East PTSO parent Erin Short echoed Parnell's concerns in a statement to the board.

"This vote feels rushed to me. Why next year? Why not take the time, really understand the numbers and our scenarios that are ahead of us and push it to the year after?" said Short, who has two high school students of her own. "It's worth looking into the long term effects. I don't feel it is responsible to add a recurring expense to a forecast that already shows a deficit."

However, Logan emphasized that the five-year forecast is a notoriously conservative estimate of future expenses. According to Logan, part of the difficulty in forecasting the district's budget five years ahead is that the state's budget runs on a two-year schedule, meaning Logan must make estimates about how much state funding the district will receive.

"We can't forecast what's going to happen in

## CURRENT BUSING PLAN:

NUMBER OF CURRENT ROUTES **167**

## TRIPLE TIER ROUTES

ANNUAL BASE COST: **\$12,253,177**

ANNUAL OPERATING BUDGET: **\$177,000,000**

**18** DIFFERENT LAKOTA K-8 SCHOOLS

**19** DIFFERENT NON-LAKOTA K-8 SCHOOLS

**9,901** LAKOTA STUDENTS

**1,246** NON-LAKOTA STUDENTS

BUSING PROVIDER: **PETERMANN**

source lakota district

## FRESHMAN ONLY BUSING:

NUMBER OF ESTIMATED ROUTES **216**

## SINGLE TIER ROUTES

EST. ADDITIONAL COST PER YEAR **\$2,696,433**

**\$1,870,994** FOR LAKOTA FRESHMEN | **\$825,439** FOR NON-LAKOTA FRESHMEN

**2** ADDITIONAL LAKOTA SCHOOLS

**7** ADDITIONAL NON-LAKOTA K-8 SCHOOLS

**1,345** LAKOTA FRESHMEN

**34** ROUTES FOR LAKOTA FRESHMEN | **15** ROUTES FOR NON LAKOTA FRESHMEN

BUSING PROVIDER: **PETERMANN**

source lakota district



**Board Member Kelley Casper:** "If we can make [busing] work and we can sustain it. I don't like the idea of doing it and three years down the road we have to take it back. I won't do that."

two biennium budgets," Logan said. "It's based on the information we have as of today. And we know we might know something different tomorrow. So as the assumptions change, the numbers will change."

Community member Jeremiah York, who has no students in the Lakota district, favored the board's decision.

"Busing is one of the most basic and helpful services a school district can provide. And yet this service was cut in 2011 and [has been] terminated for the last eight years," York said. "This is a dreadful shame. School busing should never be cut."

Lakota parent Jessica Williams, who has two children in the district, has considered other options for her children's schooling due to the lack of high school transportation.

"We've talked about online school, honestly," Williams told Spark. "We know enough people who've had good experiences, if I can't get my kid to school and she's old enough to stay home, maybe that's an option we will take advantage of."

One of the main costs of the new transportation plan is the required expansions for the busing service center next to Liberty Junior School.

"We would probably have to do some expansion to the service center," Casper said. "Part of the problem is just parking. If you start hiring 60 more bus drivers, [there's] already an issue with overflow parking into Liberty Jr."

An additional problem Lakota will have to contend with is a shortage of bus drivers.

"We have 167 [bus] routes right now and we're having a hard time keeping 167 fully staffed at times," Passarge said. "It's a statewide issue. I've talked to all my peers at different districts. Finding bus drivers is really hard right now, at least good ones."



**Board Member Lynda O'Connor:** "I'm concerned about our long term fiscal planning. You can only spend this once. If we do [busing] we should be doing it for the right reasons"

Currently, Petermann employs 200 drivers, 41 aides, and 25 substitute drivers to handle Lakota's transportation needs, but with the additional routes freshman busing will require, the company is looking for another 45 drivers and 10 substitutes.

"[The district and I have] had several conversations over what it's going to entail," Prewitt said. "[Petermann is] recruiting as we speak. We've got nine [drivers] in our pipeline right now. I've already hired about 23 or 24 new drivers."

In the past, the board has investigated other options, including requiring families to pay a fee for busing. However, this option is not legal in the state of Ohio, since not every school district faces the same transportation issues. Lakota, the eighth largest school district in the state of Ohio, is the only district in Ohio's top 10 largest districts not to provide high school transportation.

"Regardless of where people fall politically, this is an investment that people in our community want to make in our students and our schools," Board President Julie Shaffer said. "It's a pain point for families, it's a pain point for businesses around our schools."

About 98 percent of Lakota's 1,324 eighth grade students will be eligible to receive transportation beginning next fall. Currently, private busing services are available at the high schools from Pride transportation. Busing service will not be available to any upperclassmen with zero periods, even though the classes would start at the same time as those at the freshman campus.

"I've been [at the freshman campus] for close to 10 years and [have seen] the stresses that the transportation issue puts on our parents and their kids," Jackson said. "If there's a possibility of helping [parents] out in some way, I would encourage [the board] to try that." •

# THE SMOKE SCREEN Part 2

The newest teen epidemic has many concerned, and studies blame JUUL's marketing strategies.

story **alexandra fernholz**  
infographic **gracie estep**  
photography **isis summerlin**

*\* denotes name change*



Riley became intent on having a replacement. After agreeing to split the cost of the Juul, Madison and Riley drove to an old gas station somewhere in Mason to pick up the device.

“[We went to] a gas station. The guy who worked there knew [Riley] from one of her friends,” Madison said. “It was really sketchy. I thought ‘what did I get myself into?’”

After purchasing the Juul, Riley wasted no time in testing out the device.

“She broke it out like right then [in the car],” Madison said. “She was like, ‘ready?’ and I was like, ‘what?’”

For millions of teens, a Juul is not an uncommon device. According to the 2018 National Youth Tobacco Survey (NYTS), almost five million youth, or 20.8 percent of adolescents, currently use some form of tobacco product. Of these five million, 3.6 million reported using e-cigarettes.

Despite the popularity of e-cigarettes, only 37 percent of surveyed youth and young adult users knew that a Juul pod always contains nicotine, according to a recent study by the Truth Initiative, a national tobacco prevention campaign. Stanford University Professor of Pediatrics Bonnie Halpern-Felsher, who also works as part of the Stanford Research into the Impact of Tobacco Advertising research group, has spoken to many adolescents on the subject.

“[Teens] think that [pods are] basically harmless, or just water vapor, without realizing that there’s a significant amount of nicotine and other chemicals in the Juuls,” Halpern-Felsher told Spark. “We’re basically creating a generation of people who are now addicted to

tobacco or nicotine through e-cigarettes rather than through cigarettes.”

E-cigarettes were first introduced to the US market in 2006, but the FDA was not authorized to regulate tobacco products until the Family Prevention and Tobacco Control Act was signed by then President Obama in 2009. And up until 2011, it was still uncertain whether e-cigarettes should be classified as tobacco products.

In April of 2011, the FDA announced its intention to regulate e-cigarettes as tobacco products. This meant that any retailer who sold e-cigarettes would have to check the ID of any customer under 27 and refuse to sell to any customer under 18. The new decision also prohibited sales of e-cigarettes from a vending machine (except in adult-only facilities), and prohibited free samples or parts to be given away to consumers.

In Juul’s infamous 2015 Vaporized campaign, there are no clearly visible warnings about nicotine or the possibility of addiction in the advertisements, unlike those present in ads for other tobacco products. These labels warning consumers of the potential dangers of an e-cigarette were not required by the FDA until Aug. 10, 2018.

“Juul didn’t make explicit claims that e-cigarettes are harmless,” Yang said. “[But] those marketing ads are pretty persuasive in terms of making young adults think that e-cigarette use is less harmful and a safer option to smoking.”

In a recent survey, of 300 East students, 72 percent have seen a Juul ad within the past year on social media.

Madison has observed e-cigarettes around

**A** plume of vapor rises from the lips of a young model who stares sultrily into the camera, one hand on her hip and the other holding the now infamous Juul. Wearing leggings and a grey jacket pulled aside to reveal a white crop top and a belly button, hair pulled into a high ponytail against a bright, eye-catching yellow background, this photograph of the model is one of many from the 2015 ‘Vaporized’ campaign (pictured below). The campaign was funded by PAX Labs, the maker of the Juul and owner of Juul Labs, a subset which broke off as its own company in 2017.

These original ad campaigns by Juul were all of similar styles, featuring young, trendy looking models, bright colors, and the seeming idea that juuling was something done by “cool people.” However, Juul is now under scrutiny by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for potentially luring its customers into something much less harmless than it seemed—especially the underage consumers.

“In its early marketing efforts, about 2015 or 2016, [Juul] actually had a pretty explicit intent to target young adults,” Annenberg School of Communication Doctoral Candidate Sijia Yang told Spark. “Social influence is one of the biggest reasons [teens] cited for why they wanted to use e-cigarettes.”

For East junior Madison\*, this was exactly the case. She first tried a Juul at the beginning of her junior year, after Riley\*, a friend of hers, expressed interest in getting one. Riley had previously juuled, but after her parents found and confiscated her device,

photography fair use



An original advertisement from the July 2015 Vaporized campaign.



# “We’re basically creating a generation of people who are now addicted to tobacco or nicotine through e-cigarettes rather than through cigarettes.”

—Bonnie Halpern-Felsher, Professor of Pediatrics

her, not only at school, but behind closed doors, and sometimes around dumpsters at her job at a popular chain restaurant.

“I know other people who do it and that’s all they do,” Madison said. “Everyone openly talks about it, because no one cares.”

When Vaporized first launched in July 2015, Juul spent over \$1 million to market the product online, expanding its presence on social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter.

“One of the things Juul did differently than others is that [they] very explicitly targeted social media as one of the major outlets for its marketing efforts,” Yang said. “Young adults heavily rely upon social media all the time—that definitely got to them.”

Other key parts of the campaign in the summer of 2015 included a series of launch parties featuring youth-oriented bands, free tastings, and a key feature: flavored pods.

According to the 2016 National Youth Tobacco Survey, 31 percent of surveyed youth cited the availability of flavors as the reason they started using e-cigarettes. Some even believe, incorrectly, that the flavored devices are not harmful at all.

From talking to youth, they have said to us that they really like to have something that’s tasty, without calories or without as much harm as they think it has,” Halpern-Felsher said. “We’re meant to eat cheese, we’re meant to eat milk chocolate, we’re not meant to heat them up and inhale it. And so the buttery flavors, the cinnamon flavors, and the vanilla, can be very harmful to your lungs and to your respiratory system.”

While cigarette flavors, other than menthol, were banned by the FDA in 2009, stopping the sale of kid-friendly flavors like chocolate and strawberry, other tobacco products were not subjected to the same law. For this reason, cartridges of e-liquid flavored and packaged as Swedish Fish, Juicy Fruit gum, Skittles, and even Thin Mints were available online and in stores.

Taking advantage of this legal discrepancy allowed Juul sales to jump nearly 800 percent from 2017 to 2018, and as of December 2018, after American tobacco giant Altria acquired a 35 percent share in Juul stock, the company was valued at \$38 billion, more than both SpaceX and Airbnb.

Despite public concerns, Juul continues to grow. According to Bloomberg News, Juul’s 2018 revenue stood at \$1.3 billion and the company made a profit of \$12.4 million that year, making it one of the most successful startups in the world. And in 2019, sales growth is predicted to balloon another 160 percent.

“Nothing is happening, with [Juul] being forced to stop selling certain flavors,” Madison said. “Even if they do stop

selling, people are still going to find a way to get it.”

According to Halpern-Felsher, Juul is popular for a variety of reasons.

“They are marketed as being cool, and they’re marketed as being flashy,” Halpern-Felsher said. “Youth tell me that it’s also because they can hide it [easily].”

Though Juul Labs has reportedly invested \$30 million toward youth and parent education and independent research, it insisted in a July 2018 press release that the company marketed its product “responsibly” and followed “strict guidelines” to market the product to adult smokers.

“We

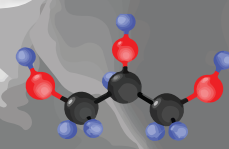
## THE DRAW TO JUUL

Out of 100 East students surveyed, 65% claim to juul. Below, they say why.

22% Because of the flavors

19% Because they thought it “looked cool.”

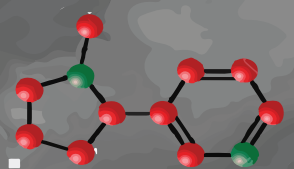
60% Because their friends do it



Glycerol is a compound found in sugar additives.



Anti-freeze is used to make Juul pods.



Nicotine is used as a stimulant.

source US National Library of Medicine

have never marketed to anyone underage,” Juul said in the July 2018 press release. “Our growth is not the result of marketing but rather a superior product disrupting an archaic industry.”

In Madison’s experience, Juuls are popular among her friends, classmates, and co-workers because of its size.

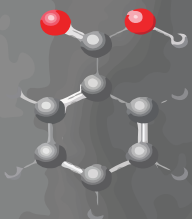
“[Juuls are] small and you can carry [them] in your pocket,” Madison said. “I know a lot of people do. It’s very portable. It’s everywhere here.”

For Riley, portability meant accessibility. And having access to a Juul led her to nearly constant use.

“Back in December, [Riley] would ask me constantly for it. I started taking it from her to get her to stop,” Madison said. “She couldn’t

function without it.”

Up until that time,



Benzoic acid is found in vinegar due to its acidity



Food grade flavoring is used for different tastes.

Madison says, she and Riley had switched who bought pods, alternating purchases and sharing each pack. Then, Riley started using more and more.

“There’s like four [pods] in a pack. And it would be gone within two days,” Madison said.

According to Vice President of Prevention and Public Health of the Health Policy Institute of Ohio Amy Bush Stevens, one of the biggest concerns among officials is the likelihood of dual-use among adolescents who use e-cigarettes. Dual-use, which is the use of both e-cigarettes and traditional tobacco products, is reportedly common among e-cigarette users. The 2018 NYTS survey found that among adolescents who used tobacco products, 40 percent used more than one.

“Once you become dependent on nicotine, then people will often move to dual-use, using both e-cigarettes and traditional tobacco,” Bush Stevens said. “Up to this point, you see really good reductions in traditional cigarette smoking among adolescents in the US and in Ohio and that’s fantastic. It’s really concerning because it threatens to undo all of the progress that we have made.”

But times have changed since the original Vaporized campaign in the summer of 2015. In September of 2018, then FDA Commissioner Scott Gottlieb declared youth vaping to be an “epidemic” and gave Juul and several other major e-cigarette manufacturers 60 days to submit plans to prevent youth vaping to the FDA.

Then in November, Juul halted sales of mango, crème brûlée, cucumber, and fruit-flavored pods at over 90,000 retail stores, and shut down both its Facebook and Instagram accounts in response to the FDA’s crackdown. And in March of 2019, Washington became the ninth state to raise the legal smoking and vaping age to 21, after Hawaii, California, New Jersey, and others. The previous minimum age issued nationally by the FDA was 18.

In the wake of pressure from the federal government and negative media scrutiny, Juul has also rebranded itself, featuring images of former smokers who quit traditional cigarettes using a Juul. Rather than their former campaign of young and trendy models, it now places an emphasis on juuling as a viable option for adults who want to quit smoking rather than a new trendy fad. However, this new version of Juul may not be entirely accurate, either.

“There is really no good evidence to show that adults really successfully quit,” Halpern-Felsher said. “Instead a lot of the evidence shows that adults who try quitting with e-cigarettes wind up using cigarettes and e-cigarettes, which is a bigger problem.”

Yang also emphasized the

difference in age between adult and young adult users. Adults who had previously used tobacco products reacted differently to the nicotine than those who had never experienced it before.

“Scientifically speaking, the long-term health impact still remains largely unknown,” Yang said. “We don’t quite understand [Juul’s] long term impact on people’s health, but we know for sure that for young adults it causes an addiction [to nicotine].”

According to Bush Stevens, education is just as important as long-term research.

“We want to make sure that we prevent as many kids from starting a nicotine [dependency] before that addiction is fully established,” Bush Stevens said. “We need to continue to educate and improve that knowledge and awareness. That’s really important.”

In Madison’s experience, her peers know all about juuling but may not have known the dangers behind it when they started.

“Everyone started hearing about it because it was advertised everywhere on all the social media, places like Snapchat and Instagram. We grew up watching these people around a similar age, or a couple of years older than us [smoking and juuling]. That’s what they were all doing,” Madison said. “I’m planning on getting rid of [my Juul], because I don’t want to use it [anymore].” •