Bear Witness

Best use of social media: Reporting
@bhsbearwitness
Click on any of the screenshots to see the original posts. These are just highlights of our social media, for more see @bhsbearwitness on Instagram, and Facebook.
Our goal in running our social media feed was to report each event as a complete story. We ask our reporters to interview at least one source, and in their caption provide the context. We also often run feature stories that take advantage of the carousel format that Instagram provides.

We aimed for both frequency and quality in our reporting. In the past year, we published 188 posts, a little more than 1 per every school day.
Goals/changes to social media reporting

- Headlines for every news story
- More creation of graphics and graphical elements to illustrate a story, especially due to distance learning.
- Addition of information + statistics to help provide context to every online story
- Collaborative efforts with newsmakers, such as those with our College and Career specialist and a student foodie.
Collaborations

With school shut down, we sought to amplify the voices of students and staff who needed a platform to share tips and stories.
We worked with College and Career Counselor Patricia Perez on a series that provided advice on life beyond high school.
We also helped Patricia Perez share videos of college and career advice.
Additionally, we partnered with sophomore foodie Derek Lee, who shared thoughts on ethnic food and culture.
Localizing hard news

Social media can be used for more than just light topics. We used our social media to cover serious issues such as the Washington D.C. Riot, the death of a teacher, and return of sports which were all lightning rods for student and community engagement.
In the week following the D.C. riots, we sought student and teacher opinions about their approach to teaching and experiencing the events.
This post in particular sparked a rush of debate, and vitriol - More than 2,000 comments before it was shut down. A sign that the Bear Witness served a good focal point for student and community voices. We issued a rare editors note encouraging a civil debate.
We interviewed students and staff about a new advisory council concerned with mental health during the pandemic.
Honoring those who passed away
Death of a teacher

We sought student and staff perspectives after the death of a beloved teacher. Students honored and shared memories with him. This particular post had our highest engagement, with more than 1,000 likes and hundreds 400 shared.
Tributes to Dietrich Lei

We covered the passing of beloved English teacher Dietrich Lei and the ceremonies held in his honor.
A story on the altar set up by the Latino Student Union, explaining the holiday and its meaning. We also shared the experiences of the club president.
When a Branham student's dad passed away suddenly, we shared his memories of his dad and his family's fundraising efforts on behalf of his children.
A small ceremony Friday afternoon, Branham staff and friends helped plant a tree in remembrance of staff and students the school lost over the past school year.

The idea came from Maria Medina, who had wanted to pay tribute to her son, sophomore Rylen Antoine Medina, who passed away in September. She approached Principal Cheryl Lawton about a small memorial not just for Rylen, but for anyone whom the Branham community wanted to remember.

“It’s a small way for us to honor any loved one we’ve lost during this,” said Principal Cheryl Lawton.

Dietrich Lei
1973-2020
Lei taught freshman English for 20 years, and was a union rep supported teachers.

David Hunter
1988-2021
The math teacher taught at Branham for three years.

Ryen Medina Antone
2005-2020
Ryen was a sophomore and remembered for being a joker.

With the deaths of three members of the Branham community during the school year, the Bear Witness covered a tree-planting ceremony in their honor.
Covering national events

We aimed to localize national issues by talking to our staff and students, including the anniversary of 9/11, Super Bowl, and Kamala Harris.
Covering AAPI hate crimes

The Bear Witness shared stories about how the Branham community responded to the stretch of hate crimes against people of Asian heritage, including rallies, student reactions and statistics.
We covered about the memories 7 teachers recalls their own experience of 9/11.
Honoring RGB

We covered a vigil remembering the late Ruth Bader Ginsburg who passed away last September.
We interviewed students and staff about their opinions of Kamala Harris and how they feel she represents them.
Super Bowl LV

We surveyed students about their reasons for watching the Super Bowl and shared reminders from the district and CDC about how to stay safe while watching the big game.
2020 Election

Coverage on the presidential election and the district alumni election, along with school ASB election.
When a former Branham student renewed his run for school board, we covered his pitch and interviewed the candidate about his experience with racism.
Many students had opinions on the election of President Biden in November. We shared updates and some of their thoughts in a number of posts covering the presidential race.
After a landmark election, the Bear Witness covered the inauguration ceremony in January, particularly student opinions on Amanda Gorman’s poem and President Biden’s address.
ASB Elections

Candidates for Service President

Alden Lister  
Junior

Lily Mintz  
Junior

Instagram: @aldenlister  
Website: aldenlister.com

Instagram: @lilymintzz

“Restore, rebuild, and reconnect Branham” as we return to Branham after lockdown.

Stronger connections: Service and spirit classes, students and ASB can bring back a buddy system.

Game events around the student body more

“Creating a Space for You”  
Utilize student senate and feedback from students

Stronger connection with students and clubs  
Collaboration of spirit and service classes  
Involve students in more ASB events
COVID-19 Updates

The community was constantly updated with coronavirus information and how it affects the school.
Classes at Home

Classes now online warranted coverage from the Bear Witness, specifically classes more designed for in-person learning like PE and chemistry.
We continued our goal to be a platform for student opinions by sharing their thoughts on pandemic guideline adherence and the new school schedule.
School reopening status

With many steps for reopening, the Bear Witness covered much of the district’s plans and the colored tier system implemented by California.
Once school eventually did return, we made sure to recover the transition from home to campus.
Unlike toilet paper, there was no shortage of updates on the coronavirus and covering them all became a priority for us.
Vaccine became available for students in 2021, but two Bruins were already testing them in December 2020.
Awareness

Various heritage months, honoring days, and other important events were covered to raise awareness.
The Bear Witness covered the drive through for Dig Pink Week last fall in support of cancer awareness.
Even with a pandemic ongoing, diseases like AIDS haven’t gone away and the Bear Witness made sure to spread awareness on World AIDS Day.
After a year of racial reckoning, MLK Day was more important than ever for the Bear Witness, and we shared student opinions on race and equality.
The Bear Witness shared the work of the Black Student Union during Black History Month, as they made posters and worked to educate others on the meaning behind it.
Lunar New Year celebrations began in mid-February and we shared traditions and the history behind the holiday.
The Bear Witness covered the science department’s aim to diversify the curriculum and cover achievements and contributions by women and people of color.
Women’s History Month

The Bear Witness shared the many female role models of our students, from their mothers to women in the fields of science and art.
The discussions about racial injustice continued as we reported on Critical Race Theory and what it means.
One of our editors shared the story of her family’s struggles during the holocaust in remembrance and awareness.

Holocaust remembrance

My grandmother, Ronit Kamal, with my great grandmother Naya Goldberg, who was born in Poland. She later fled to Israel to escape rising anti-Semitism.

Even decades later, my family's story lives on

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On Holocaust Remembrance Day in Israel, an air siren goes off at 10 a.m., and people drop what they’re doing in a moment of silence.

The memorial day, which took place Wednesday and Thursday this year, is recognized by Jews and others around the world. It marks 80 years since the beginning of the genocide that ended in the deaths of 6 million Jews and 5 million non-Jews.

I was in second grade when I first learned about the Holocaust. My parents explained to me that during World War II, Jews just like me were killed for their religion. I remember

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A Holocaust memorial piece in Israel. The inscription reads, “May no tear on your nose be from fear.”

Holocaust Remembrance Day

Holocaust remembrance day takes place on the 27th of Nisan, a date in the Jewish calendar, in honor of the Warsaw ghetto uprising and full one week after Passover.

In Israel, it is recognized from sunrise on the 27th to sunset on the 28th. At 10 a.m., an air raid siren goes off to begin a moment of silence.

My experience

I am a third generation Israeli and first-generation American. My ancestors all fled Europe from anti-Semitic hate.

Living as an Israeli in the United States is not the easiest experience. You experience anti-Semitism prejudice, and are seen as an outsider.
The Black Lives Matter movement was a big part of 2020, and the Bear Witness covered the assaults on people of color by police and the trial of Derek Chauvin.
Local News

Events that happened outside of school campus but impacted our community was reported.
Alumnus working for Biden

Branham graduate Vedant Patel joined Joe Biden’s administration as an assistant press secretary, giving thanks to his high school teachers.
The Bay Area has always been warm, but when it reached extremely hot temperatures and odd weather last fall, the Bear Witness made sure to cover it. We used videos and explainers to provide context for what they were seeing.
With school online, power outages have a huge impact on a student’s ability to do schoolwork. We didn’t keep readers in the dark about the situation, reporting on the power outages and provided tips for students.
Forest fires in the mountains turned the skies an apocalyptic orange color for weeks last fall and some teachers and students were displaced by the threat of fires near their homes. We reported about the eerie sky and the reason why it was happening.
In 2021, Branham earned a state honor, the first school in the district to do so in almost 15 years.
We broke a story about a recent vandalism during a pool break-in.
Designed by Branham freshman Hannah McCarthy, the recycling poster was displayed on San Jose recycling trucks.
A student's artwork won 3rd place for the “Justice for All” poster contest about equity and justice with artistic detailed pointed out and explained.
Teacher contributions

We made sure that teachers’ stories were covered, especially their efforts in connecting with each other during distance learning.
Online learning (and teaching) can be stressful, so the Bear Witness covered Spanish teacher, Erica Marquez’s paint night for teachers. Although most of our readers are students, methods of how teachers relieving stress was shared for representation and to view their perspectives.
We reported on a group baking session over Zoom that meant to increase bonding between distanced teachers. Moments of staff bonding was reported along with the recipe of the cookie the teachers baked in the post.
English teacher Mike Espinoza won the Teacher of the Year award for 2020, and the Bear Witness shared what he means to his students and colleagues. Mike Espinoza was named the teacher of the year in the school and students congratulated him in the comments.
Seniors and graduation

The Bear Witness devoted much of its May coverage to honoring seniors, who spent almost the upperclassmen years in remote learning.
Spotlight on Seniors

We provided spotlights on seniors who responded to our survey asking about their future plans.
Celebration Events

With the end of the year imminent, there was no shortage of activities and events. The Bear Witness did our best to cover them. Because most of the year was online, seniors had a rush of events at the end, and the Bear Witness constantly updated the readers.
Senior Night

Being the first in-person award ceremony in 2 years, seniors voted by teachers for each category received an award.
After four years at Branham, the seniors graduated on the football field. We covered the ceremony at the end of the year in June. The graduation ceremony was reported in different parts: teacher’s speech, spotlight on decorative caps, and the celebration.
Clubs and Electives

Student groups contribute a lot to campus and hold their own events. These are not only great photo opportunities, but allow the Bear Witness to cover a variety of events.
The first virtual club rush where clubs pitch their purpose and attract members was advertised to increase student participation.
Best Buddies is a club that connects one-on-one friendships between individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and those without. Our posts show how Best Buddies maintained the friendships and adapted for the virtual year.
SPARE is a club that stands for students promoting awareness of recycling and the environment. By covering their events, we helped increase student representation and participation.
The Bear Witness reported the shortage of senior quotes in the yearbook and helped the yearbook (not part of the journalism program) to meet its quota.
Student spotlights

Student achievements, awards, and personal stories were covered.
Student Awards

The year's first Bruin of the Month awards honored 23 students who teachers said exemplified this month's theme: "Thriving and Resilient." The theme was chosen for students because, despite the hardships brought on by distance learning and the pandemic, many have risen to the challenge and have made the most of their difficult situation.

Among them was junior Joseph Serrano Maya, who special education teacher Beth Wilson said has been taking care of his toddler sister while attending his Zoom classes. "I am in awe of his maturity and the..."
Four National Merit Scholarship semifinalists were spotlighted and encouraged in the comments.
The Bear Witness series sought to highlight student personalities in longform interviews a la Humans of New York.
School Events

By keeping our ears and eyes peeled to what’s going on on and off campus, we were able to find unique stories and photo opportunities.
To highlight creations from different makers, musicians to artists to video game level designer showed off their skills during Makers Week and Bear Witness acknowledged those creative Branham students.
Activities and interactions included tie-ins with local businesses and “Among Us” game nights, keeping the Branham community close-knit.
Teacher Appreciation Week

The Bear Witness asked for student submissions during teacher appreciation week.
In-person Events

We covered nearly all in-person events, limited as they were.
Winter Wishes is a Branham tradition where students submit their wish and the ASB grants selected wishes. Bear Witness reported on several wishes being granted at students’ homes in a series of related posts.
Visual arts performances

We shared stories of the various shows and performances put on by the visual arts department.
On the left post, a group of student volunteers painted the “Equity Mural,” featuring images and ideas that symbolize the term. On the right, Bay Area artist John Espinola paints a Branham logo on the wall. Since not all students went back on campus, students distance learning could get an update about the appearance of the Branham campus through Bear Witness.
Sports

With fourteen sports playing simultaneously at the end of the spring semester, we focused on breadth. An addition this year were scores and summaries to provide more information on sports results.
Baseball

Jr. Liam Thompson strikes out Leland’s Lou Odom at the top of the second inning.

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BHSbearwitness It’s going to be a busy week for Branham athletics this week with 14 sports in competition, starting with softball, badminton, boys volleyball and and boys soccer on Monday, and ending with Competitive Stunt Cheer, softball and baseball on Saturday. We will be highlighting as many as we can throughout the week.

#bhsbearwitness

Michael James

#RECOGNIZEWIM

BHSbearwitness Branham’s teams were a triple threat on Wednesday hosting track and field, baseball and softball games, and winning all. Click through to see how they performed.

Reporting by Jazzy Nguyen

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Branham High School

Jazzy Nguyen

BHSbearwitness

Branham's teams were a triple threat on Wednesday hosting track and field, baseball and softball games, and winning all. Click through to see how they performed.

Reporting by Jazzy Nguyen
Basketball

Recap: Quinn Godfrey led the team with 12 points against the Mustangs on Thursday. The team, led by guards Holley Haggard and Maya Medric, went 7-2.

Girls basketball: The girls basketball team earned a lopsided win over Gilroy on Thursday, bringing its overall record to 7-2. Freshman Quinn Godfrey led the team with 12 points, followed by seniors Avenie Chen and Kaitlyn Williams, who brought in 9 points each.

Swim and dive: The varsity teams split their games against Sobrato on Thursday, with the boys winning 120-44 and the girls losing 66-115. Team leaders include senior Brandon Mayekawa, who placed first in the 100 yard butterfly and 100 yard breaststroke. Sophomore Katie Hannigan placed second in the 50 yard freestyle.
Sophomore flyer Sophie Jakob performs an arabesque at Saturday’s meet.

SPORTS RECAP

Competitive Sports Cheer

Sophomore flyer Sophie Jakob performs an arabesque at Saturday’s meet.

The Branham Competitive Sport Cheer team hosted their first and final home game of the season and earned every point possible against Prospect High School with a 21-10 win.

Before the game, the team held a ceremony for its seniors Bridget Laugesen, Esme Toro, Susan Montoya, and Maddie O’Kennon.

It has been an unusual season for the CSC league. To adapt to the shortened season, teams have been scheduling and hosting their own events, with coaches choreographing the new routines and agreeing on point distributions instead of hiring outside choreographers.

Recap: In an unusual season without referees and scores determined mutually among coaches of both teams, the Branham cheer team earned every possible point against the Panthers.

joshing_u24님의 225명에 흥에요!
Cross Country

SPORTS RECAP

Led by junior Antoine Moret, Dominic Clima and sophomore Spencer Zinjar, the boys varsity cross country team swept the top three spots Wednesday for a victory against Independence High School at the school’s first competitive meet in more than a year.

Sophomore Isabellie Moret topped the girls varsity race, finishing nearly 3 minutes ahead of the second-place finisher. Since there were only three members on the squad, the team did not score.

The F/S team also won its dual meet match at Independence.

“The cross country season went well even though it was very different. This year we ran one school vs. one school on the school campuses, which was pretty cool as we hosted three races at Branham, which had not been done in a very long time,”

Chris Jensen, coach

In a blink and you missed it fall sports season with no playoffs, teams competed not just against their rivals but a shortened schedule.

Still, coaches for the field hockey, water polo and cross country teams found reasons to celebrate the time with their athletes and being back on the field and in the pool for competition.

Reporting by Carly Waldorph
Field Hockey

My favorite part of the season was the girls. Every single one had a great attitude, worked hard and did their best when they were on the field. We also had a lot of fun. We are looking forward to continuing the progress that we made this year and to focus next year on the mental part of the game.

Tina Parrot, coach

In a blink-and-you-missed-it fall sports season with no playoffs, teams competed not just against their rivals but a shortened schedule.

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Reporting by Carly Waldorph

Field Hockey

Varsity: 5-1-1  JV: 1-3-1

Field Hockey Final Record

Branham vs. Christopher

VARSITY GIRLS 0-4(L)
JV GIRLS 0-3(L)

Team captain Melissa Guerta, a senior, says drills Tuesday at practice.

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Both varsity and JV field hockey teams dropped their first games against Christopher High School in Gilroy today, with varsity blanked 0-4 and JV losing 0-3. Varsity coach Tina Parrott credited the performances to first-game jitters, and said that teammates are just getting used to playing with each other.

Parrott said the games served as a good practice for the teams, and since Christopher did not have a complete JV team, Branham’s Lady Bruins faced off against a team comprised of some varsity players.

The team hosts Leland on Tuesday.

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In a blink-and-you-missed-it fall sports season with no playoffs, teams competed not just against their rivals but a shortened schedule.

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Reporting by Carly Waldorph
Football

Branham's varsity football team ended the season the same as it began, with a 34-0 loss. This week, the Bears lost to Christopher for the second time, dropping the Bears to 0-3 in league play.

Both teams scored twice in the fourth quarter. Things looked up for the Bears through the second quarter when a fake punt by the Lightning set up an 80-yard running touchdown. They scored another rushing touchdown just before halftime to take 10-7 into the break.

The Bears finally got on the board in the fourth quarter from a remaining 2:05 on the clock after the Bears got a touchdown on the next play, 10-14 to 0-0.

Branham's defense next faced Independence's offense and took on the task of containing quarterback Joe Miller for the remainder of the game. Miller had a strong performance in the game and was responsible for all but one of the team's scores.

The Bears defense was able to hold Miller to 133 yards passing and 3 touchdowns, limiting the offense to 17 points.

Branham will face a tough conference in the upcoming weeks, with games against Saratoga and Wilcox next on the schedule. The team will need to focus on their defense and develop a strong running game to have success in these matches.

This week's game was particularly special for the Bears, as it was senior night. The team honored their upcoming graduates and their dedication to the program. The seniors were presented with gifts and certificates, and the team gathered to say goodbye to their seniors.

Senior night is a significant event for any team, as it celebrates the contributions of the seniors and looks forward to the future. It is a time to reflect on the season, express gratitude, and wish the seniors well as they move on to the next chapter of their lives.
Soccer

Boys Soccer

Branham vs. Leigh

Girls Soccer

Branham vs. Sobrato

Girls Soccer

Branham vs. Piedmont Hills

Girls Soccer

Branham vs. Leland
Softball

Recap: Softball edged out the Mustangs on Wednesday, their third game of the season. They are hosting Westmont on Friday.

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Branham High School

Branham’s teams were a triple threat on Wednesday hosting track and field, baseball and softball games, and winning them all. Click through to see how they performed.

Reporting by Jazzy Nguyen

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4월 15일
Swim and Dive

Freshman Alex McAllister dives in for his 50-yard freestyle.

Sports Recap

Tim Duziko/Special to the Bear Witness

The boys swim team split their games against Sobrato on Thursday, with the boys winning 120-44 and the girls losing 66-115. Team leaders include senior Brandon Mayekawa, who placed first in the 100-yard butterfly and 100-yard breaststroke. Sophomore Katie Hannigan placed second in the 50-yard freestyle.

Girls basketball: The girls basketball team earned a lopsided win over Gilroy on Thursday, bringing its overall record to 7-2. Freshman Quinn Godfrey led the team with 12 points, followed by freshmen Annie Chen and Kaitlyn Williams, who brought in 9 points each.

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3월 15일
The girls tennis team went down fighting during a tough game against Evergreen Valley High School on Tuesday, its final home game.

The team also recognized senior Khira Feucht, who contributed one of the wins during the match, was honored at the team’s Senior Night.

With a 3-6 record, the team has struggled in the A League this year due to last year’s undefeated season in the B League. They have a shot at another win against Prospect on Friday, their last game of the season.

Reporting by Megan Morrison
Track and Field

Branham High School

Branham's teams were a triple threat on Wednesday hosting track and field, baseball and softball games, and winning them all. Click through to see how they performed.

Reporting by Jazzy Nguyen

Branham track and field had another dominant home meet win over Sobrato on Wednesday, with the girls winning 113-13, and the boys winning 93-35. Senior Trent Algesa showed his versatility by placing third in the 1600 m, second in discus, while also running the second leg of the winning boys 4x400 meter relay.

Senior Kendall Fowler placed first in both the discus and shot put, winning discus by 35 feet, and shot put by 12 feet. Branham heads to Prospect for their first away meet Wednesday at 3:30 p.m.

Reporting by Dominic Clima
Volleyball

After a full season conditioning, Branham’s girls varsity volleyball team took a decisive first win of the season against Evergreen High School in three sets, posting wins of 25-10, 25-20 and 25-17 against the Cougars.

Today’s game against Westmont has been canceled due to an inconclusive COVID test from a Westmont player. It has been rescheduled to Tuesday.

Reporting by Lily Middleton

#bhsbearwitness

In a tough point-for-point game against Leigh which saw them drop their first game, Branham’s girls volleyball team rallied in the next three sets to win the face-off against their rival. The team also honored seniors Sofia Norong, Olivia Schroeder and Emilee Bateman, who put up 7 consecutive points in the fourth set to cap their win. The team heads to Evergreen on Thursday for the final game of the season.

Reporting by Lily Middleton

#bhsbearwitness

Girls Volleyball

Branham vs. Evergreen

VARSITY 25-18 (W) 25-20 (W) 25-17 (W)

Branham vs. Leigh

VARSITY 25-27 (L) 25-20 (W) 25-18 (W) 25-16 (W)
The best part of the season was introducing the sport of water polo to 9 new players, and developing the players while juggling the challenges of COVID guidelines to find ways to help them succeed in becoming water polo players,”

Tom Dasko, coach