"**Missed Connections**" by Brynne Barnard-Bahn

EDITORIAL: Country Day has a Wi-Fi issue. What's happening?

Click on the Country Day website, and prospective families will see that among the 12 listed "Country Day Advantages" is a "Campus-Wide High-Speed Wireless Network Connection."

However, in a Feb. 27 Octagon Poll, 97% of 38 high school respondents reported experiencing issues with Wi-Fi connectivity and loading speeds, along with other disruptions to classroom activities.

While these problems have persisted largely unexplained for most of the school year, it is not too late for transparency and open communication about the Wi-Fi on campus — and for these issues to be resolved.

In May 2021, then-Head of Technology Shelley Hinson Gougenheim told The Octagon that after extensive upgrades, campus Wi-Fi was in stable condition.

"The school shouldn't require anything from a network standpoint for the next seven to 10 years," she said.

Now, less than two years later, Country Day Wi-Fi is far from stable.

Wi-Fi on campus has remained poor since October 2022, with connectivity issues affecting academic learning.

In classrooms, both faculty and students frequently have trouble accessing the internet, resulting in a noticeable slowdown of classroom activities. Students report frequent difficulties in accessing online textbooks in the language classes, CavNet and other websites needed for classroom learning.

For instance, in Advanced Placement Computer Science Principles, students were unable to download Unity, a program necessary for instruction. At other times, YouTube videos will buffer or fail to load altogether.

Students working on the National History Day Competition and Sophomore Project faced similar challenges accessing websites, online databases and Noodletools, a research management platform.

Additionally, certain capabilities on student Wi-Fi have been blocked.

The Gender & Sexuality Alliance asked to use their student devices to AirPlay content for club activities, but were not allowed to. To share their screen on the TV, students had to type in their Apple IDs onto a teacher's device, which made some uncomfortable.

Despite these recurring issues, the Tech Department has not directly addressed the situation nor clearly communicated with the community with updates.

In October, the Tech Department responded to Wi-Fi complaints by "banning, blacklisting and blocking websites" that students "like and frequent in order to improve the network," according to an Oct. 4 help-ticket reply from the department.

This process included a combination of broad firewall bans on groups of websites as well as manual bans.

Students should be informed of which sites are inaccessible.

If the intention for blocking certain websites is to protect students and maintain academic integrity, those expectations should be made clear to all students and explicitly written out to minimize confusion.

If the intention is, however, to increase connectivity, then the process of selecting sites for blocking should be made clear.

It's not even evident that traffic to certain sites is the issue causing Wi-Fi troubles.

However, the process and rationale for blocking and unblocking sites remains unclear. Students have no idea what sites are inaccessible on student Wi-Fi until they try to access them.

Sites can be unblocked after a teacher or administrator makes a formal request, but students cannot do so on their own.

Not only is this an unclear inconvenience, but it also appears to be an ineffective one.

Director of Technology Michael Unti has repeatedly declined to comment on the school's Wi-Fi system this year.

A professional from the Networking Department at California State University, Sacramento, said that common network speed issues the university experiences are caused by the total number and physical locations of network access points around campus, which provide uneven coverage between certain areas.

In 2020, Head of Technology Michael Unti said that new access points had been placed around campus after increased demand on the network. At the time, those access points were sufficient enough to meet demand, including the high volume of Zoom calls during hybrid learning.

Wi-Fi on campus is essential. Students are able and willing to work with administrators and staff to help improve connectivity — but that's impossible to do without clear communication.

While we understand there may be certain security risks involved with disclosing specifics about the system, general information on the network's status and plans for future improvements are relevant to the entire community. By implementing more lines of open communication between the Tech Department and the community, we can work to solve this issue together.

97%
of students surveyed experienced Wi-Fi issues

Questions *The Octagon* wants answered:

1. What are possible problems that may cause the occasional Wi-Fi outages during school?

2. What more can the students do to help make the speeds faster?

3. How many access points are on campus, and how many more are needed?

4. How much has blocking certain sites sped up the Wi-Fi?

5. What is the policy for blocking sites?

6. Is there a method students can use to request that sites be unblocked?

7. When will the above issues be resolved?