

Spark

Lakota East School
lakotaeast.com
November



TEEN ACTIVISM

A Piece of the Political Puzzle





YOUR SESSION. YOUR WAY.

aliwolfe
photography

aliwolfe.com



22 Get to Know the East Chess Club!

INSIDE THE ISSUE

Mrs. Fugate

9 East welcomes its new assistant principal, Katrina Fugate.

Dress Code

10 The new dress code allows students to wear hats and durags.

New Website

12 Lakota's new website improves user experience.

Government

26 More young people are getting involved with modern politics.

Roe v. Wade

45 Celebrities voice their opinions on the recent SCOTUS ruling.

Fall Fashion

48 Spark editor Jaclynn Mosley shares her fashion experience.

New Divisions

54 OSHAA announces its new divisional breakdowns.

Concussions

64 Is the current NFL protocol for concussions sufficient?

Spark is a publication that is produced at Lakota East High School. The magazine is completely student-generated and student-funded through the efforts of the Journalism I, Journalism II, and Journalism III-Honors classes.

The publication material may not always reflect the views of the Lakota Local School District or the publication as a whole. Content is controlled and edited by the staff editors. The staff will publish only legally protected speech adhering to the legal definitions of libel, obscenity and invasions of privacy.

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The purpose of Spark is to inform the students, faculty, subscribers and community members of news, information and issues that may influence or affect them.

Spark is a member of the National Scholastic Press Association, the Ohio Scholastic Media Association, the Columbia Scholastic Press Association, the Journalism Education Association, and the Quill and Scroll National Journalism Honor Society.

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LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

Dear Readers,

Spark strives to cover a wide range of topics involving our school and community. In this issue, you can expect to see detailed stories about the CRT Audit, Lakota's new website, and the new school visitation policy. A new change in place this year is that hats and durags are now allowed to be worn during school and in the school buildings. There is also a new bathroom policy implemented at East.

As well as there are feature stories on the chess club, Cincy Sammy's, and Spark alumni Lucy Hartmann. We highlight some East seniors' parking spots that they painted over the summer.

Spark sourced and developed a comprehensive in-depth on how students are making an impact while using their voices to address topics ranging from student government leaders, environmental concerns, human reproductive rights, and equal marriage rights. Students are taking action in their community.

Some cutting-edge reviews are included for the popular Netflix series Dahmer, the highly regarded Elvis movie, and the bestselling EP Guitar Songs from Billie Eilish. We chose fries from popular restaurant franchises and ranked them.

In sports, we cover how the new OHSAA divisions are affecting East and other schools, East senior Erica Cox committing to the Eastern Kentucky University soccer team, and students interning as athletic trainers. Spark dives deep into how Tomahawk Cheerleaders prepared to cheer for East at Tomahawk night.

Spark staffers comment through their columns on various topics such as the overturning of Roe v. Wade, Biden Student Loan Forgiveness, Deshaun Watson suspension, and NFL concussions and safety.

As a staff, the Editorial Board declined to cover the allegations against Lakota Local Schools Superintendent Matt Miller because we believed it was not supported by any substantiated facts. Other media organizations such as the Hamilton Journal-News, WLWT and WCPO decided not to cover this subject for the same reason. •

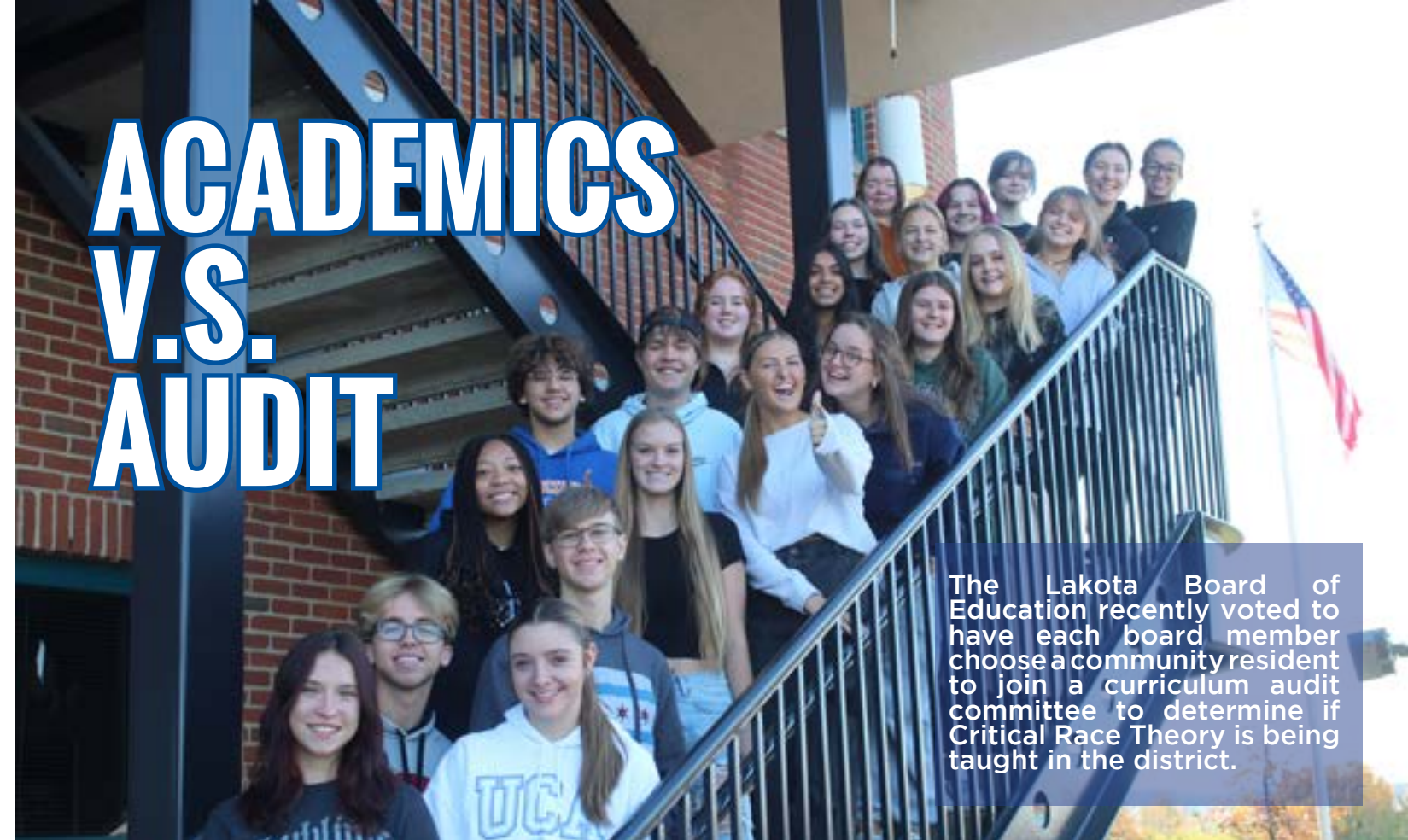
--- Spark 2022-23 Editorial Board

Spark encourages letters to the editor. Letters can be sent to the publication at sparkbusiness2023@gmail.com or delivered to room 118 at the Lakota East High School Main Campus. Letters must be signed, and the staff reserves the right to edit the letters for length, grammar, invasion of privacy, obscenity or potential libel. The opinion editor will contact writers for confirmation.

ON THE COVER designed by emily henderson



In this issue, Spark looks into the role of young people in democracy and how many different factors can influence teen perspective on government.



The Spark Editorial Board voted 21-0 that the Lakota Board of Education's decision to conduct a curriculum audit with select committee members regarding Critical Race Theory is unnecessary.

column **editorial board** | photography **kaitlin dwomoh**

**ria malhi did not vote due to her ongoing news coverage of related stories; see page six for the story*

After numerous accusations from members of the community, the Lakota Board of Education had planned to audit its curriculum in order to determine whether or not Critical Race Theory (CRT) was being taught in Lakota schools; however, it later on decided to ditch the idea for many reasons, one of which being that the auditing firm would cost the district \$82,000 or more. Instead of the audit, the board members voted 3-2 on an amended resolution during their Sept. 12 meeting in which each board member would choose a community resident to join a curriculum audit committee.

This has the potential for biased opinions and still requires time and energy produced by this committee. Plus, the Board can not define the issue.

Board President Lynda O'Connor stated that the new plan was flawed partially because "we as a board can not agree on what CRT is." The subject of CRT is an ongoing argument that the board struggles to make any progress with which makes the entire situation very pointless.

Spark agrees that the district could be using the money put towards the audit for many different causes considering the district is still facing a major teacher shortage, the cost of paper has increased, and providing increased funds to fill support positions.

Board member Julie Shaffer pointed out that the district already has a reporting system within the Lakota website for any parent or guardian

who wants to alert district officials of any possible CRT instruction in schools. If CRT was actively being taught in Lakota schools, parents and guardians could easily report the situation within the website rather than the board devoting time and money to conduct an audit when there is a resource at the ready.

In response to the constant allegations made by board member Darbi Boddy, who says she represents parents who believe it is being taught, district officials have continuously argued that CRT is not taught in Lakota schools. Trusting the administrators to know the curriculum is a better path than devoting time and energy to what could be better spent elsewhere. •



Board members from left: Isaac Adi, Lynda O'Connor, and Kelly Casper listen during a meeting.

INTERNAL CRT AUDIT

Lakota's Board of Education votes to conduct an internal CRT audit.

story **ria malhi** | photography **cara raiford**

The Lakota Local School District will be auditing its curriculum for Critical Race Theory (CRT) after a 3-2 vote on a motion to conduct an internal CRT audit. Board members Issac Adi, Darbi Boddy and Lynda O'Connor voted to conduct the audit while Kelly Casper and Julie Shaffer voted against it. The board has not given a definition of what they believe CRT is and what they will look for when auditing. This audit will allow each member of the board to select one community member to participate in the internal audit of Lakota's curriculum.

CRT is defined by the American Bar Association, the largest voluntary bar association of lawyers and law students as a practice of interrogating the role of race and racism in society that emerged in the legal academy and spread to other fields of scholarship.

The Board of Education did consider doing an external audit similar to the one conducted on 7-10 English and Math during the spring of the 2021-2022 school year. The previous audit was conducted by the Hamilton County Educational Service Center.

"It is obvious to me that an audit that is genuinely interested in finding evidence for CRT in any curriculum needs to be conducted by a party that is outside of the system that created said curriculum," an anonymous community member told Spark. "What could possibly be the motivation for a system to audit itself and find problems?"

If the board chose this route, one option would have been to hire the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), an external company based out of Virginia, to conduct the audit. Many members of the community and

CRT Audit: Part One

board members were concerned with the price that would come with hiring ASCD to conduct this audit. It was said to be \$82,500 at the Sept. 12 board meeting.

"The Board voted 3-2 to approve an internal Critical Race Theory audit at its Sept. 12, 2022 meeting," Director, School and Community Relations Betsy Fuller told Spark. "As part of the approved motion, each board member will appoint a community member to an audit committee. Specific details of how the audit will be conducted have not been finalized by the Board at this time."

This audit is a subject of controversy among the Lakota community. Cost, time, necessity and success are factors that many people are concerned about regarding this internal audit. At this time the district has not given the community any further details on the audit.

"I cannot believe we're moving forward with this, to be honest," Lakota parent Kate Bredstege told Spark. "It is completely unbecoming to any rules, parameters, structure, or basis on which to even conduct it appropriately. This will be a complete waste of everyone's time and money even more than an external audit would have been."

Many parents are concerned with the board members being able to pick their own individual community members to represent them in this audit. There has been no mention by the board on any specifics of

these community members. It has not been said whether they will be paid to participate in this audit.

"We will have biased individuals who will end up on this 'community audit' whom may or may not have an audit experience or relevant credentials," Bredstege said.

Members of the district such as teachers were not aware this audit was a possibility prior to the Sept. 12 meeting of the board.

"I basically knew the day of that [the internal audit] was supposed to be something that they were talking about that meeting," East History teacher Samantha Miller told Spark.

Further information about the audit has yet to be discussed with the public.

"I have not heard anything about what it's going to look like or who's going to be involved," Miller said.

Many are concerned with the cost aspect of the audit. It has not been specified how much this will cost compared to the price of an external audit.

"I think that it is a terrible decision and a waste of money," Lakota parent Heather Cameron told Spark.

It has been frequently brought up that the district could use any potential money being spent on this curriculum audit elsewhere on areas that would benefit students, teachers and schools.

"We need to address our class sizes, and get more teachers and staff in our schools. We need to discuss mental health issues that have just gotten worse over the past few years, especially amongst our adolescents," Cameron said.

Time is also a concern as the district has many ongoing projects that could benefit from the time that would possibly be spent on this curriculum audit.

"We need to be talking about our master facilities plan and having more updated buildings. Some of our buildings don't have windows in some classrooms or they have just one bathroom for an entire early education building," Cameron said.

With the lack of definition of what CRT is and many different definitions of CRT being used, many members of the community have conflicting views on if Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is considered CRT.

An anonymous source told Spark "In short, SEL is CRT under a new name."

Bredstege mentioned that she believes SEL is not considered CRT.

"Social-Emotional Learning is an awesome program that helps our kids deal with everyday stressors and barriers that keep them away from being able to learn and pay attention and have a fulfilling day at school," Bredstege said. "Being able to talk through emotions they may have trouble comprehending, especially considering, developmentally speaking, that most kids do not process difficult emotions the same way adults do." •

WHO CAN VISIT?

Board revises school visitation Policy 9150.

story **riley grosnickle**

On August 9th, 2022, the Lakota Local School Board passed a revised school building visitation policy (Policy 9150) to clarify the current policy's meaning. The old policy required Board Members to only make proper prior arrangements before entering a school building.

Policy 9150, also known as the visitation policy, is a procedure that is required for any Lakota District visitors to enter the buildings of the district.

After two unannounced school visits, in which school board member Darbi Boddy disregarded the policy and entered East School and Liberty Early Childhood School, on May 4, the Lakota District implemented a change regarding the visitation policy.

The visits of Boddy to two of the district's schools led to the transfer of a Lakota Student who no longer felt comfortable within the school district after claiming to have been photographed during Boddy's visit to East without permission.

The policy change was immediately implemented, with a 4-1 vote of the Board, and states that to enter a Lakota Local Schools District school building the district's board members must give advance notice and notify the district superintendent or building principal.

Lakota community member and mom of two East students, Rachel Zipperian, finds the amendment of Policy 9150 as more of an update for "clarification," rather than a complete change.

Lakota Superintendent Matt Miller confirmed this.

"The recent change to Policy 9150 by the Board was only to clarify a policy that has been in place since 2013," said Miller who addressed concerning questions about future changes, "the Board will determine if any other changes need to be made."

Community member and Lakota parent Alyssa Louagie was in favor of the change.

"I want people in our community to be able to visit our schools," Louagie told Spark. "I think it is important for people who are not as familiar with our schools to get into our schools in the appropriate way, following the appropriate policies in order to get to experience the amazing things that are happening at Lakota."

Although, Louagie does find it essential for people who visit to follow the correct procedures and know the procedures in order to visit in a manner that protects both students and staff's safety. •



East sophomore Sydney Barger leaves her class to go to the restroom using the news hall pass procedure.

ADMINISTRATION INTRODUCES NEW HALL PASS PROCEDURE

East students start the year with a new hall pass procedure.

story **alex ross** | photography **maddie behrmann**

Starting off the school year, East has made a change many students and teachers have been pushing to see. East students will now have to follow a hall pass procedure when leaving the classroom and going to their locker, restrooms, the office, or classrooms of other teachers. This new procedure helps staff know where students are in the building and cuts back on the number of students wandering throughout the building.

In order to go to the restroom now, East students are required to complete a few extra steps. First, students are required to scan a QR code which takes them to a website where they sign out of their classroom. The website asks for their name, teacher, and where the student is visiting. The student then must grab a hall pass which is limited to one per classroom and designates which specific restroom each classroom is allowed to visit. Students must then keep their phone in the classroom and are then allowed to visit their destination.

The reception of this new policy from East students has been largely negative. In a poll of 93 East students, over 68% said that they have a negative or extremely negative opinion of the policy, while only 6.5% had a positive or extremely positive opinion. The strict bathroom and pass policies were developed to curb illicit bathroom activities and roaming students in the hallway.

East junior Binam Subedi is unconcerned with the new hall pass procedure.

"To be honest, I don't really mind [the new hall passes], the teachers let me go where I need to go," Subedi told Spark. "The

teachers just tell me to leave my phone, like they won't make me wait or anything because they know I'm gonna come back."

Nearly half (49.5%) of all East students surveyed have said that there was absolutely no change in the bathroom environment.

"No, no way," said Subedi, when asked if he noticed any change in the bathroom environment. "It's still the same people doing dumb stuff in there."

Teachers, on the other hand, have a completely different perspective. Twenty one out of 26 Lakota East teachers who were surveyed on their opinion of the new hall pass policy had a positive opinion.

"Love it!!! It really has cut down on the number of students leaving the room during instruction," an anonymous English teacher told Spark.

East social studies teacher Carl Longworth shared a generally positive opinion on the new bathroom procedures. He reported that both the frequency of restroom visits from students has decreased, as well as the duration of students' trips to the restrooms have vastly shortened. "We have less traffic and students are being held accountable for where they're at," he said.

East Principle Rob Burnside informed Spark that the hall pass procedure was developed in order to manage how many people were in the restroom at any given time.

"I think it's cut down on, you know, just the messiness of the bathrooms," Burnside said. "It's got less people in there unsupervised, and the feedback I've gotten from both staff and students is that the culture of our bathrooms is much better than this time a year ago." •



Lakota District Treasurer Adam Zink keeps minutes at Board of Education meeting.

“I was brought to Lakota six years ago by Ms. Logan in preparation for her retirement. The only promise she made to me was that she would have me ready to be the next treasurer if that was the direction the Board wanted to go,” Zink told Spark. He viewed his position as a great opportunity to “learn from the best.” If it did not work out, he would have an advantage in his career. It allowed for a smooth transition due to his involvement with the office processes, board dynamics, superintendent position, and community connection.

In his new position, Zink is in charge of all of Lakota finances. The Treasurer also acts as secretary for the Board of Education, keeping meeting minutes, agenda planning, and organization.

“As the Treasurer, I am responsible for oversight of all revenues and expenditures for Lakota. I ensure compliance with bargaining unit agreements, board policies, Ohio Revised Code, and federal laws,” Zink said.

His former position as Assistant Treasurer to Logan prepared him for this role. As the Treasurer, he is involved in the planning, which takes him away from the day-to-day work that the Assistant Treasurer does.

“As the Assistant Treasurer, I was more involved in the implementation and calibration of plans,” Zink said. “I am lucky to have Darian Ascoli, who transitioned from Finance Director to Assistant Treasurer. He has seamlessly transitioned into the role, keeping day-to-day operations going without a hitch.”

Assistant Treasurer Darian Ascoli would describe Zink as “committed to excellence.”

“Working with Mr. Zink has been a rewarding experience. He is well-versed in all things school finance. I have learned more from Mr. Zink in my time at Lakota than I have from many mentors before,” Ascoli told Spark. “He has high expectations that continue to advance our team’s capabilities and efficiency. He knows Lakota is the best school district in the state and works diligently to ensure that our finances are able to support our educational priorities.”

Lakota Superintendent Matt Miller believes Lakota is in excellent hands.

“Lakota is in very good hands with Mr. Zink as our Chief Financial Officer. He will make decisions that are right for our students while being fiscally responsible for our taxpayers. Mr. Zink is very dedicated to Lakota, our staff, families, and community,” Miller told Spark. “He is intelligent, forward-thinking, and looks at the big picture and the impact financial decisions will have on our students. Mr. Zink is very personable

and easygoing. He is a team player who always wants to do what is best for our students.”

Zink plans to continue having budget hearings in the spring with district administrators and the executive team.

“This process was put in place prior to my arrival by Ms. Logan. We found this was an excellent opportunity for everyone to understand the initiatives and challenges to align the annual budget with district goals. A change that has already taken place is the five-year forecast review I have hosted with the executive team,” Zink said. “We set a meeting to take a deep dive into the forecast in September, which was two months prior to board approval. I would like to continue this to regularly calibrate our projections, allowing the executive team to analyze and enhance programming for the students.”

His biggest goal would be to keep Lakota on the path of Fiscal Responsibility.

“To accomplish this, we want to continue receiving the Auditor of State Award with Distinction, sending communications to the community such as the Financial Prospectus, and presenting information to our stakeholders through Community Conversations and the District Parent Council,” Zink said. “An additional goal is to add a transparency portal such as Ohio Checkbook to the district allowing our community to review spending in real-time.”

Ascoli believes Zink can do just that.

“I know that Mr. Zink will continue to advance Lakota’s goals of providing a future-ready, student-centered learning experience for every single child,” Ascoli said. “I believe that his ability to think creatively about problem-solving will pay dividends for our District’s taxpayers and students.”

Zink is excited to start this new chapter in his professional career.

“Lakota has always been a district on the cutting edge for the state. I am honored to work with the wonderful team in the Treasurer’s Office that truly has a dedication to supporting the students, staff, and community,” Zink said. “I can never thank Ms. Logan enough for taking the time to mentor me into the professional I am today. She has left a remarkable legacy behind, and I hope to continue building off of that foundation.” •

Education

Accounting Degree (UC)
Ohio School Treasurer License

Previous

Project Accountant Ohio Auditor of State
President of Ohio Valley Chapter Treasurer/CFO various districts
Lakota Assistant Treasurer

NEST GAINS A NEW HAWK

Lakota East High School hires a new assistant principal, Katrina Fugate to start pride programs.

story and photography
colin kunz
infographic
maddie behrmann

Students walk down main street on the first day of school at Lakota East. For returning students, most things in the building look familiar to them, and things look the way they were only a couple months ago before they left for summer break, but as students begin to see the staff around the building, they notice a new face, assistant principal Katrina Fugate. She is beginning her first year at East. Before coming to East, Fugate was an assistant principal at Springboro High School and an English teacher at Middletown High School, as well as others before that.

This school year marks Fugate’s twenty second year in education. To begin her career, Fugate started teaching at Princeton High school, as an English teacher. After that she moved to Edgewood High School, where she spent a

Military

Active Duty Air Force (3 years)
National Guard (6 years)

Teaching

Princeton High School
Edgewood High School
Middletown High School



Principal Rob Burnside and Assistant Principal Katrina Fugate monitor hallways during dismissal.

majority of her time continuing to teach English for eight years. A majority of her time was also spent teaching at Middletown High school teaching English.

Before teaching, Fugate served in the United States Air Force, doing three years active duty, and served six years in the Ohio Air National Guard. Fugate chose to spend the second semester of her senior year going to basic training at Lackland air force base in San Antonio Texas. After completing basic training, she returned to graduate high school. She completed schooling while in the Air Force, and began teaching while she was still in the National Guard. Fugate rose to the position of Staff Sergeant, before leaving the Ohio Air National Guard to pursue teaching fully. Filling a role at such a big high school is a hard job, but Fugate was up for the challenge. She pointed out some things about East that she really liked.

“I feel like the school has a really good reputation, and I have always kind of been drawn to Lakota.” Fugate says.

She talked about liking how it is a suburb of Cincinnati, the amount of diversity in the school, and how local the school is for her.

In her time here so far, something that stood out to Fugate was how “Everyone is so polite, and that has been shocking and really amazing.” She also said it stood out to her how students take accountability for their actions and come back to apologize for their behavior.

A challenge Fugate faced was the size of the school. A big part of her personality is making sure everyone feels connected, and that is something that is harder with the size of East. She said that it would be a challenge, though not a gap.

A program Fugate wants to implement at East is a student leadership program, which she said could help with connectedness of the school. She explained that with the program she wants to define what an East student should look like, and how they represent a pillar of excellence. She also wants the program to use and elevate student voices, which would be a large factor in connecting the school.

One of the other new policies that East is implementing is the East way vs the Easy way. This is something that Fugate had a lot of influence in. The policy is mainly in place to get things back to normal in a post- COVID-19 world. Fugate says that things got a little too lenient during that time, and this policy is mainly to get things back to the way they were before that.

It encompasses many things, but one of the main parts is the dress code. One example she stated was “the way I present myself at home chilling on a Sunday, is different from how I present myself at work.” That was her main point, and how students should be showing up as if they were showing up to work. In terms of enforcing the dress code, Fugate said there hasn’t been that many problems, and everyone who has been dress-coded hasn’t been rude about it.

Another part of the East vs Easy way was that of the new bathroom policies. Fugate said that turning the phones in forces students to only do what they need to do, and cuts down on distractions. She added that this was just getting things back to the way they were before Covid, and making them a little more strict.

“I’m extremely excited to be here, I really want to get to know people, I’m always here and my door is always open.” •

THE MAN WITH THE PLAN

Adam Zink was hired as Lakota’s School Treasurer to continue Lakota’s legacy of Fiscal Responsibility.

story and photography
audrey allen | infographic
maddie behrmann

He leans forward to the microphone and announces each board member’s name, waiting for their vote. Though some people in the community might not know his name, he is the backbone of Lakota.

After the retirement of the past School Treasurer, Jenni Logan, Adam Zink has stepped up as the new Lakota Treasurer after the Lakota Board of Education hired him.



East students Audrey Cahrls, Renee Fabian, Emme Nguyen, and Shohida Hancaeba (left to right) sit at lunch.

ADDRESSING THE PROBLEM

Lakota updated its dress code policy to better match the new standards of the world.

story **maddie behrmann** | photography **max anagnostou** and **joesph benz**

In an attempt to better reflect current social situations, the age-old rules in the district concerning dress codes have been amended to allow students to wear hats and durags in the classroom. The district reviewed the dress code and made this change over the summer.

“The change had to do with matching the practices that we were putting into place,” East Principal Rob Burnside told Spark.

The dress code change was in the language used in the Student Code of Conduct based on practices that staff was already using. It was the removal of the sentence “Head coverings and sunglasses should not be worn inside any building.” Other changes in the policy include the removal of bans on “Form-fitting lower garments must be worn under a shirt, skirt or dress that extends to the thighs” and “Facial hair must be kept neat and clean.”

Compared to other area schools, this change is fairly progressive. Monroe, Sycamore, Middletown, and Hamilton high school dress codes have the same general rule that bans head coverings, hats, bandanas, sunglasses, or hoods except for religious and/or medical reasons. The Mason High School dress code only allows hats in some classrooms, and hats are required to be straightforward/backward when worn.

The Lakota dress code change was made after Assistant Superintendent Robb Vogelmann sent his routine email to Lakota building principals last year asking for their thoughts on the student handbook and Code of Conduct.

“I would like us to consider removing the language that bans hats and some of those types of things,” Burnside discussed with Vogelmann. “I don’t think that that’s a practice [banning hats, etc.] that we’re continuing to value in the same way that we used to 20 years ago.”

Burnside elaborated that there has been a cultural shift in how hats are viewed, and are more acceptable in today’s world. He explained that there are three standards followed; (1) it

should be entry-level workplace appropriate, (2) it does not disrupt the educational process, and (3) it does not present any risks to safety or security. His last point was that if the change was going to make students “feel better about coming to school,” it was worth it.

Out of a Spark East staff survey of 26 staff members, 69.6% saw the dress code change as a positive change. East Special Services teacher Jeff Combs is a part of the remaining 30.4% who saw the change negatively.

“I think when people are wearing things that draw a lot of attention to their head, or it’s just so big that it’s in the way in the classroom that can be distracting,” Combs told Spark. “I don’t think you should be wearing hats inside, in a formal setting.”

He noted a problem with students wearing ski masks which cover most of their face, and also that “now we’re allowed to wear hats, so everybody’s wearing hoods.”

East Staff had the opportunity to hear opinions directly from students on the dress code from the East Black Student Union (BSU) after they started a petition to change the school dress code to allow durags. The petition, put out in September last year, gained 607 signatures in three days. Burnside noted that he took the petition results into consideration to serve the needs of his students.

“We were trying to figure out how we could help black students at Lakota East feel more comfortable and have a home,” East graduate,



East student Mikaylin Carter sits on main street wearing bonnet.

former BSU president, and current Howard University student KayKay Baloyi told Spark. “The dress code isn’t just a piece of paper. It impacts more than just what students wear. It impacts their mindset; it impacts the way they treat other students.”

Durags are used to protect hair and keep the waves of the hair intact, and are used as a way of expression in the black community.

“There are many different colors of durags; there are different designs,” current East BSU President Samyra Feng told Spark. “That’s my favorite thing to see, when people are able to express themselves freely.”

A Spark Student survey of 93 students showed that 26.9% of students wear hats or durags to school. Only 1.1% of students had been dress coded for wearing a durag or hat.

Baloyi described a few circumstances where students had received a comment from teachers for wearing a durag. One of the instances was on the day BSU held a protest of the dress code.

The biggest problems BSU experienced were reflected by the petition, which was aimed at the administration. Feng explained how the administration told BSU last year “how we didn’t need to change it because durags were already allowed, but in the [written] dress code, that wasn’t the truth.”

“[The petition] sat on our principal’s desk for at least three months. At the end of the year, when I brought it up to the superintendent, he didn’t even know about it,” Baloyi said.

Yet, when the change was made, the student survey showed that 84.95% of students saw the dress code change as a positive change.

“My biggest fear was that I’d leave Lakota East and no one would actually maintain anything that I came up with,” Baloyi said. “It makes me feel like it was all worth it. The sleepless nights were worth it. The times when I didn’t even have time to go on a date or hang out with my friends were worth it.” •

AROUND THE CLOCK CHANGES

Lakota High Schools returned to its modified block schedule this school year after considering its effects on learning.

story **maggie huss**
infographic **zak klaassen**

East students and staff returned to the 2022-23 school year with changes to their schedule. East decided to go back to their modified block scheduling. This schedule consists of a mix of seven-bell periods, but also block days.

The seven-bell periods are on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Fridays. East students have all of their classes, for 45 minutes each, on these days with 25 minutes of advisory time. This time a study hall, but everyone has it at different times during their fourth period, making it difficult for students to meet with teachers during the school day.

According to a Spark student survey, 46.2% of East students preferred having both the seven bell schedule and block days, while 38.7% enjoyed just the seven bell schedule and 15.1% preferred just the block day schedule.

Block days are on Wednesdays and Thursdays, and there are four bells a day for 80 minutes per class. One of those bells being fifth period and the other one is a study hall.

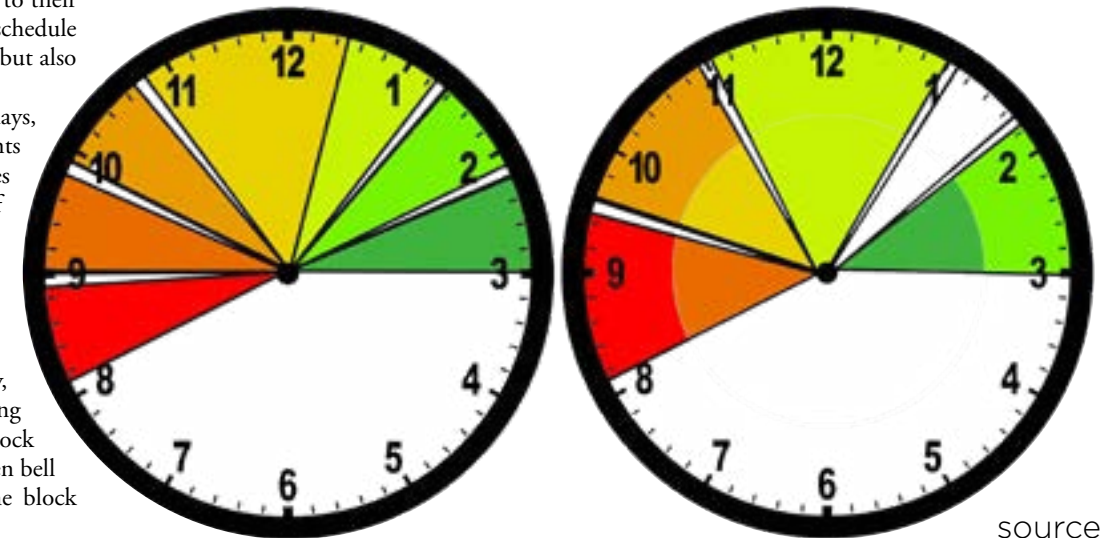
“[Students] have time for the most important part to then take that data, analyze the data, [and] communicate their findings to others, all in one setting, without having to break that apart into multiple days,” East Science teacher Elizabeth Gosky told Spark. “It relates to my belief that kids learn best by doing. It gives us the time and the flexibility, not only for labs but activities and projects.”

During a lab, Gosky can see her students needing more time to complete a certain task, and when the bell rings she finds herself needing at least “another half hour”. The extra time allows students to evaluate and ask questions about what they are learning while performing the experiment.

This time can also be used by teachers to teach new concepts, introduce assignments and work through projects. Gosky likes the idea that the students are “able to dig deeper and explore concepts more in-depth.”

The block days give time to do activities that take longer without pushing it off until the following day.

“I like that we can teach more in depth or complicated concepts on those days, and we do not get interrupted by the bell,” East math teacher Nichole Bruce told Spark. “You can teach a little bit, we can practice, and we can do an activity. You do not have to turn it off and then turn it back on the next day right away. It is nice to have 80 flowing minutes without interruption.”



source **lakotaonline.com**

Since students have fifth period both days, they have study hall on the off day. This is a time for students and teachers to get work done and to work on graduation plans.

“I like having the fifth period on both block days. I use the time as a study hall, and it gives me a good chance to get work done that I need to do,” East senior Zoey Dunham told Spark. “Our [advisory time] during fourth bell is fairly short, so I feel that fifth bell block days compensate for that.”

One of the greatest advantages that the teachers all mentioned was having Hawk Time back. All classes have Hawk Time for 35 minutes both days at the same time. This gives students time to catch up on make-up work, do their homework and collaborate with other students and teachers.

“It is a big benefit of having Hawk Time back,” East Spanish teacher Dana Chapman told Spark. “It definitely helps. For my kids who have been out, it is easy to get together and get caught up on quizzes.”

About 46.2% of East students believe that Hawk Time is too short causing them to not have enough time to meet with teachers, do make-up work, and any school related work.

“I like block days, but I wish we had Hawk Time everyday so we do not have to wait to make up assignments or tests for teachers,” Dunham said.

During the last few weeks of the 2021-22 school year, East practiced the modified block days. A survey sent out to students with about 300 responses. About 80% of the students surveyed preferred the modified block schedule. East Principal Rob Burnside told Spark that “getting the student voice sealed the deal.”

“There are probably some classes and some students who can struggle being in a place for 80 minutes,” Burnside said. “We have students who can struggle with the block days because that is a long period of time, especially if it is a class [a student] is struggling with.”

Burnside explained the “biggest benefit” of the modified schedule is having time to “expand to do labs and longer activities,” and “one day a week of not having to do homework.”

Since students have different bells on Wednesdays and Thursdays, they do not have to do Wednesday’s homework until the day before those classes.

Burnside mentioned the schedule is not perfect and he wants to “revisit fifth period,” and for “surveys to help promote the decision” of revising the fifth period. However, he believes that this schedule has been a successful shift.

“Our goal with the bell schedule was to find a way to provide the most powerful instructions for students and find the best way for teachers to help their students,” Burnside said. “[We] strongly benefit from the one day a week to go in-depth, Hawk Time to use for senior meetings, and other student meetings.” •



Pictured above: East junior Jasmine Ashford using the new website on her Chromebook.

A SITE TO SEE

The new Lakota website improves user experience and provides new accessibility options.

story **kyle smith** | infographic **olli tomtishen** and **cara raiford** | photography **maddie behrmann**

This summer, students, parents, and community members using lakotaonline.com were greeted with an unexpected message. It read, “Welcome to our new website! We are excited to share our new site with you!”

Launched in June 2022, the newly-redesigned Lakota website and mobile app cost \$15,300 to create. To execute the project, the district partnered with Finalsight, a website and app design company specializing that specializes in school districts’ digital services.

Betsy Fuller, the Lakota Director of School and Community Relations, was one of the leading main forces behind the process. She worked closely alongside Lauren Boettcher and Cindy Zahneis from the Lakota Community Relations Department. The motivation behind the redesign was to improve the site’s function for the community and make it easier to sustain.

“We wanted a more robust, user-friendly experience for visitors to the

website and mobile app,” Fuller told Spark. “Additionally, we were looking for a website that was more user-friendly for webmasters to maintain.”

To determine what users wanted in the new website, Fuller, Boettcher, and Zahneis surveyed parents, staff, and community members. They also held focus groups with the Lakota District Parent Council and Presidents’ Council to gather more feedback.

Fuller, Boettcher, and Zahneis began work on the project in February 2021 with a call for proposals. Four months later, after considering several options, the trio partnered decided to partner with Finalsight, which specializes in digital platforms for school districts. Finalsight is headquartered in Glastonbury, Connecticut, but is composed of employees all throughout the country and across the globe in order to offer services internationally. Currently, Finalsight serves 159 school systems in Ohio, including Mason City Schools and Norwood City Schools.

Joshua Sauer, Finalsight’s Director of District

Communications Strategy, assisted Fuller, Boettcher, and Zahneis throughout the design process.

“The six steps of the process are discovery, product training, design, build, review, and launch. The most critical step is discovery because this is where you conduct research and analyze your problems, goals, needs, timeline, budget, etc.,” Sauer told Spark. “The process is very collaborative from start to finish. Our relationship with Lakota is a true partnership.”

This support system was vital in the design process because although Finalsight offers more than 20 unique templates, Lakota opted to go the fully-custom route. As such, the partnership worked to develop a website from scratch.

“Lakota has one of the best school communications programs in the country, hands down,” Sauer said. “Betsy Fuller, Lauren Boettcher, and Cindy Zahneis are a strong trio and are made even better because Superintendent [Matt] Miller realizes the power of solid, strategic communications.”

According to the company website, Finalsight has earned more than 215 awards.

Finalsight has been designing and hosting school websites since 1998, and we know the ins and outs of what school systems need to serve their stakeholders and communities best,” said Sauer, who lists experience, high standards, and talented employees as key elements. “This track record helps us attract and retain the industry’s most talented designers and developers.”

One major factor in the decision to choose Finalsight was its visual options that it offers through AudioEye, a digital accessibility platform. Some options included in AudioEye’s

“Visual Toolkit” are cursor customizations, color contrast filters, font and text size alternatives, and margin spacing features. Fuller believes that these new options will enhance the new website.

“We felt that the service provided by AudioEye was more comprehensive than the one used with our previous site,” Fuller said. “Digital accessibility is incredibly important to us, and we wanted to make sure that our new website would meet the needs of all of our visitors.”

Every website designed by Finalsight must comply with standard accessibility guidelines as well as Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, which requires that Federal agencies’ electronic and information technology is accessible to people with disabilities, including employees and members of the public.

“The most appreciated aspect of the AudioEye tool is scanning and remediating any accessibility issues as they occur. AudioEye also includes tools for end-users to customize their screens to accommodate any special needs,” Sauer said. “Most people with disabilities already have other tools available, so AudioEye’s on-screen tools are just a bonus.”

The accessibility options on the new website have already come in handy for East junior Ethan Sheldon. He possesses red-green colorblindness, a common form of visual imparity. Sheldon can see colors, but they can be “hard to differentiate sometimes.”

According to AudioEye’s website, the color shift feature works by shifting the color wheel to allow users with colorblindness to perceive more contrast between colors.

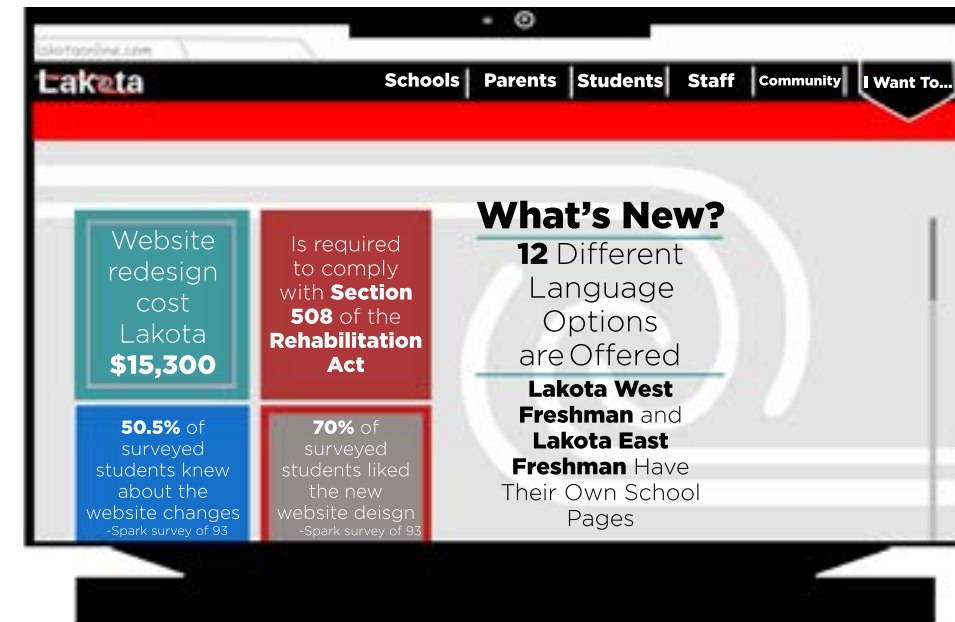
Sheldon also found the new options to be easy to use.

“I love the searchability of the site and the quick links to limit the number of clicks users experience when searching for information. As for the app, I love that it is customizable and easy to navigate. Now that it has launched, our work doesn’t stop. We will continue to update the information.”

- Betsy Fuller, Director, School and Community Relations



Pictured above is the new Lakota website.



source: finalsight

“It was just click-click, which is really nice,” said Sheldon, who found the color shift to be the most helpful tool. “You didn’t have to go through a bunch of crazy steps.”

Not only does the new design include benefits for visually impaired students, but also it is available in several languages.

“Lakota has a very diverse population, and being able to offer translation into our top 12 languages is definitely a benefit to making information more accessible to our families,” Fuller said. The available languages are English, Spanish, Arabic, Vietnamese, Punjabi, French, Chinese, Urdu, Nepali, Gujarati, Russian, and Uzbek.

Since the launch, users have begun to share their feelings regarding the redesigned systems.

“The feedback we have received has been very positive since the launch in June. We’ve also acted upon some of the suggestions we’ve received since the launch,” Fuller said. “For example, both our high school pages now have a dedicated freshman school page, and we’ve added athletic information for both high schools under the parent and community quick links, as well as under the ‘I want to’ menu.”

Of the students polled in a Spark survey, 50.5% knew were aware that there was a new Lakota district website. Additionally 70% of the students liked how the new design looked.

Sheldon also felt optimistic positively about the new digital platforms.

“I just thought that it was really easy to navigate overall. The old one was kind of crazy and clunky, and it was really hard to get to certain things that you want, but now everything is put in a separate format and a separate place,” Sheldon said. “It’s just so easy to get where you want to go now that everything is labeled and in certain spaces, which I really like.”

As an individual, Fuller enjoyed the new efficiency as well.

“I love the searchability of the site and the quick links to limit the number of clicks users experience when searching for information. As for the app, I love that it is customizable and easy to navigate,” she stated. “Now that it has launched, our work doesn’t stop. We will continue to update the information so that our visitors have the answers they are looking for at their fingertips.”

LIMITED LUNCH

The USDA lunch waiver expired, but free and reduced lunches are still offered.

story **noor hamidullah** | infographic **kaitlin dwomoh**

The Ohio Department of Education will no longer offer a United State Department of Agriculture (USDA) program that allowed all students free lunch as it expired in June, 2022; this means that students who are not already eligible for a free school lunch and on the free and reduced lunch program will have to return to paying for their meals.

COVID-19 created shockwaves of economic and social instability, one of which impacted many families' access to affordable food options. The state of Ohio partnered with the Departments of Nutrition, Education, and Agriculture, to form a waiver to allow schools to provide free lunch for all students, regardless of their eligibility.

The Child Nutrition USDA Waivers during COVID were beneficial for many families during the crisis. But it was a limited span.

"Unfortunately, the USDA had to eliminate many of the waiver options making families go back to the application process they had to do before the free waivers were offered," Craig Hatfield Senior Director of Business Operations told Spark. "This change was a decision by the federal government, which has challenged School Nutrition Programs to promote other assistance programs, such as SNAP."

COVID impacted the nutritional health of citizens in the US, according to a study at New York University (NYU). NYU researchers found that 17.5% of households with children were food insecure during the pandemic.

Under Division B, Title I of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, Congress allowed the USDA to create new waivers to relieve families of financial burdens. Shortly after being passed, Representatives Ilhan Omar (D-MN), Chellie Pingree (D-ME), and others wrote and signed a letter urging the USDA to use their powers to implement a waiver to make school lunches free during the pandemic.

This waiver provided funds to schools to cover the cost of a standard meal, which includes meats, vegetables, fruits, and grains, as well as a fluid milk component. Schools are also required to follow standardized recipes.

The waiver ended due to lack of funding, 90.3% of students polled in a Spark survey believe that the free lunch option is convenient. Although the majority of students at East are able to afford school meals, the student survey showed that the current program leaves some students without lunch. There are many students

who rely on the availability of a nutritious meal from the school, regardless of their ability to afford lunch.

Some students mentioned that having the free meal lifted a burden off of their daily schedule. Instead of skipping lunch this program allowed students to have a meal without getting into debt.

"It's impacted me because personally, my family's not terribly broke or anything but it's like difficult paying for that much a day," East junior Abby MuCullough told Spark.

She mentioned being able to use the free USDA lunch about 5 times in a month.

With the increased number of students buying lunch, schools need the staff to support these numbers. Over the past two years, cafeteria staff have been overwhelmed with the number of students. Before COVID, 32% of East students got lunch. The number of students rose to 43%

Go to Lunch application.com

Making the Menu

Report:

- Household size and accurate monthly income
- Participation in any SNAP, TANF, or other government assistant program
- If your child is homeless, migrant, runaway, or a foster child

What makes a Meal

17.3% of Lakota is on free lunch

source: school nutrition and fitness.com

1 fruit 1 milk 1 veg
1 meat 2 grains

servicing size

once the waiver was introduced. According to Lakota Nutrition Field Supervisor Laurie Straub, the school also was a pickup area for VLO students, which led to higher numbers.

"When people are like 'my fries aren't as hot as they need to be,' it's because we have to prepare ahead of time," Straub told Spark. "We're feeding approximately 175 kids in 10 minutes."

Since the dropping of the waiver, the number

of students getting lunch has decreased to 29%. Kids now must either bring lunch from home or purchase it at school. Lakota allows up to \$12 in lunch fees to be charged to an account without money.

Straub said it is difficult to even get the products and people needed to provide any sort of lunch let alone free lunch for everyone.

The recent supply chain stoppage is preventing the school from providing their usual foods, forcing them to provide substitutes, which can become an issue with those with specific nutritional needs.

"We're still having an extreme supply chain issue not only with food, but on our paper goods," Straub said.

Our cafeterias are also having a shortage of staff members, with about eight regular members and five subs.

"But we're getting back to the point now a lot of people have put in their applications, and so there's a lot of people back on the free and reduced lunch program," Straub said. "So it's not as much of an issue right now than it was at the beginning of the year."

18% of East students are on the free and reduced lunch program currently.

"Beginning in the summer, our District and Building Administrator teams worked diligently to promote the Free/Reduced Application for those households that might qualify for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits," Hatfield said. The application was included in FinalForms as parents completed back-to-school forms and waivers.

A different program called Community Eligibility Provision (CEP), allows entire schools to provide free lunches to all the students who attend. This program is for schools in low-income areas, where at least 62.5% of students are in the free and reduced lunch program will allow the school to qualify. Both East and all the other Lakota schools in the district do not qualify for this program.

Each household must re-apply to the free and reduced lunch program in order to receive benefits for each upcoming school year. Placing an online request to their school district allows households to apply anytime. Lakota residents can apply at lunchapplication.com which will be sent to the Child Nutrition office. According to the Lakota Schools website, the two aspects of an application are household size and total household income.

"Our Lakota families have been very positive throughout the new school year's changes by completing a new Free/Reduced Application form in a timely manner so they would be able to stay on the program," said Hatfield. "This was very beneficial so that students were able to get resources and support for school meals and fees." •

A PAPER PREDICAMENT

Lakota Schools is facing a shortage of paper causing effects on learning and teaching.

story **ria malhi** | infographic **riley grosnickle**

Writing an essay on rhetorical devices. Filling out a Spanish worksheet. Solving precalculus word problems. All assignments typically done by students on paper until now. Lakota Local School District is facing a "paper shortage," as it is being referred to by administrators, staff, and students. This shortage has reached teachers and students across the district who are simply trying to teach and learn.

Over the past couple of weeks, teachers have been advised to limit their paper use. Although it has not been specified how much paper each teacher is allowed to use or what will happen if teachers do not follow instruction, administrators are trusting teachers to "do their best" at limiting their use of paper, according to East principal Rob Burnside.

"The way I phrased it when I addressed it with our staff was for it to look for ways to just be mindful of how we're using paper," Burnside told Spark. "I haven't told people you have to cut your copies by 'insert number' or make copies of this, don't make copies of that. We've tried not to be that direct and to trust our teachers as professionals."

This shortage of paper is a result of different factors. The long-lasting effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the supply chain are one reason for the lack of paper, according to Chris Passarge, Chief Operations Officer of Lakota Local School District.

"Like many industries, this is another example of the impact of coming out of COVID and workforce issues," Passarge said. "It's something we have been dealing with for the last 18 months or so."

Along with supply chain issues, the cost of paper has also increased due to inflation. The district has to pay more for the same amount of paper it was using in previous school years.

"We have seen the price steadily increase over the past couple of years. We were paying \$29.15 per case in March 2022. That same amount increased to \$44.15 this summer," Passarge said. "However, the price has slightly decreased and is currently at \$38.42 per case."

The district has had to increase the budget for paper since 2020.

"We have had to increase the paper budget since the pandemic. This is due to a surge in pricing for fuel, as well as labor and supply shortages," Passarge said. "However, since the pandemic, the overall usage has decreased, especially due to the use of 1:1 devices (Chromebooks per student) and Papercut." (regulatory software implemented in late 2019)

Passarge summarized Papercut as a software carried on the building copiers that require the user to launch jobs by using their employee badge. If the job does not get released, it is deleted from the copier.

Paper is being purchased in large amounts by the district.

"We purchase approximately 5-6 truckloads of copy paper per year. From July through September of 2022, our buildings ordered 1440 cases, which equates to 36 pallets," Passarge said. "There are 500 sheets per ream and 10 reams per case, with 40 cases per pallet."

The budget for supplies like paper is determined by the district.

"The district conducts annual budget hearings with the treasurer to discuss paper, supplies, and other expenditures," Passarge said. "Departments and buildings use this hearing to discuss and determine the budget for supplies. It can vary depending on the needs identified in the hearings."

The district has had trouble finding suppliers during the shortage.

"Previously, we were able to obtain quotes with pricing locked for a full year. However, with the market changes, suppliers typically won't lock pricing but for a brief time (if at all), and lead-times have increased significantly (from 1 week to up to 2 months)," said Passarge, who added that the district has several suppliers that spot check the market periodically to make sure they are able to secure the best prices.

Among these suppliers are Office Depot, Staples, and W.B. Mason, which they have used for the past few years. Local co-ops have secured copy paper prices at \$49.90, according to Passarge, who adds that the district was able to secure the last two loads with a National Co-op at \$38.42.

"We anticipate these prices to increase with our next order at the start of the calendar year," said Passarge. Teachers and students have had strong opinions on the recent shortage of paper. Many feel that although there are solutions to this problem, such as Kami and Canvas, it may not be in the best interest of teachers and students to use other resources besides paper.

"I feel conflicted in that using less paper is not necessarily beneficial for math students. Most of the feedback from my students is that they want to

be able to have the paper in their hands and write on it to comprehend it better," East math teacher Nichole Bruce told Spark. "However, I understand the district directives on trying to use less paper and therefore using our canvas resources whenever possible."

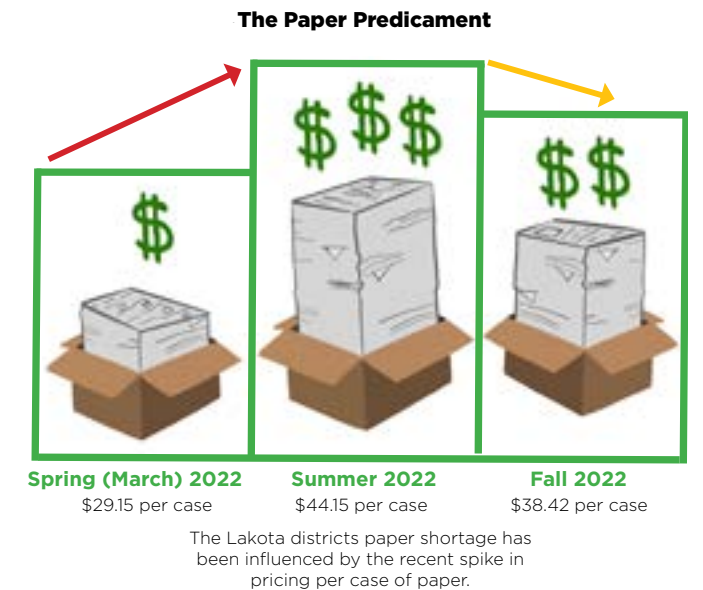
The concerns for students come from teachers across all subjects.

"Students I think learn better if they do stuff on paper they're tired of looking at screens all the time," East Science Craig Gleason told Spark. "It would be helpful if we could use more paper."

Many students prefer paper as well, such as East senior Samantha Mullen.

"Personally, the paper shortage at school is irritating for me and many others," Mullen told Spark. "Doing everything online is difficult, and it makes things harder such as being able to focus or memorize things."

Although this has been an adjustment for both staff and students, the transition is being made in many classrooms. Teachers have uploaded documents that previously were printed on paper onto their Canvas pages for students to access. Students can open these pdfs in extensions such as Kami to be able to annotate them directly with their



styluses instead of using pen and paper.

"I hope that we have found different ways to engage kids and develop more engaging instructional strategies as a result of not being able to use paper as much," Burnside said.

This adjustment is not one that is entirely new to students, as many used online resources when Chromebooks were introduced to them and throughout the pandemic.

The paper shortage is ongoing, but progress is being made. Costs have decreased, and administrators do not believe the problem is as large of an issue as it was when it started.

"There seems to be some relief now, and our suppliers are no longer worried about a shortage moving forward," Passarge told Spark. •



Hound Dog Dino (left) and Corgi King Eddie (right) show off costumes at Howl event.

King Eddie was walking down the gravel path, his short legs striding proudly in support of the crown on his head. A bee was buzzing around, but it was not looking to pollinate. A spider was crawling all over the park, his eyes scanning the event. These creatures caught everyone's attention but not for pollination or royalty. Or even web-slinging. They were acting as Man's Best Friends.

At Voice of America Park (VOA), dogs of all shapes and sizes can be seen adorned in costumes of many kinds. Activities and treats for the four-legged friends were stationed just outside the entrance of Wiggly Field Dog Park. Dogs excitedly bark at each other as everyone waits for the costume competition to begin.

On Saturday, October 15, the annual "Howl" event took place from 4-7 p.m. at VOA, while a costume contest occurred at 5:30.

"The goal of the event is to provide family-friendly events with [the families] four-legged friends and to be out here and enjoy the dog park," Becky Vanderool, the Senior Manager of Park Connections, told Spark. "The event is a Halloween-themed, dog-centric event with vendors, dog activities, and such."

LIONS, DRAGONS, AND PROPOSALS, OH MY!

Tails were wagging in every direction during a dog costume contest at Voice of America Park.

story and photography **cara raiford**

Dogs—and some owners—dressed to impress three judges for five different categories, including the cutest costume, the scariest costume, the most original costume, the best duo costume, and the judge's choice.

The winners for the cutest costume were Mr. and Mrs. Paws. Mrs. Paws, also known as Aurora, is believed to be a five-year-old beagle-smooth collie mix and Mr. Paws, also known as Old Dan, is a nine-year-old Redtick hound. Owners Holly and Michael Brown explained why they participated in the event.

"I participate every year. The dog I normally use, I had to retire because he was getting cranky," Mrs. Brown told Spark about the enjoyment of the event. "We like to do [the contest]. It's about seeing all the cute costumes, and [the dogs] can socialize."

The winner for the scariest costume certainly was a fright. The winner was a six-year-old Boston terrier named Ava the Zombie. While the costume won scariest, there was no fear left once one realized that she was not planning to eat

anyone's brain during the competition. Her owner, Kristina Gordon, felt joyed that the effort she put into Ava paid off. "I love going to dog events, and I just love dressing her up!" Gordon told Spark. "I'm excited! I'm happy. I put a little effort into the costume, keeping it on her and keeping it intact."

The winner for most original was definitely not your average costume, being a piece of art that was hand-crocheted in a month. The three-year-old Maltipoo, Mai, wore a piece made by her owner, Ashley Nottingham.

"I decided to get back into crochet because when my grandma died, she had knitting needles and crochet hooks. I picked up crochet, and I sucked at it. Then I got [Mai], and I actually started to do better," Nottingham told Spark. "I do this now so she can come out, see all these other puppies, have fun, and hopefully win."

The best duo winners were easy to spot as they stood out in the crowd. Four-year-old Chiweenie, Colsie, and her owner, Mary Colgate, planned on going home being a Weiner with a hotdog stand costume. "Well, Colsie, she doesn't know she's a dog, so she's like my best friend," Colgate told Spark. "It's kinda cool that we won [best] duo together because we do everything together."

The judge's choice winners were to die for. Elaine Gatewood brought her two dogs, Thor and

sponsored by Earthwise Pets, who provided rewards for the costume contest winners. The rewards consisted of buckets of treats and goodies. Everyone could participate in activities like Paw Painting, Braided Rope Toy Making, and Hide and Seek Healthy Treats. In addition, Angelic Bakery, pumpkin pup cups, and goodie bags were also provided for the dogs while a food truck was stationed at the front of the event.

Multiple animal-related vendors showed up at the event as well. Animal Friends

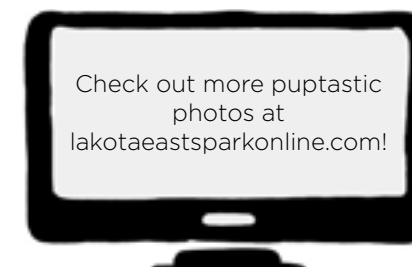


Humane Society showed up with their adoption truck and dressed up a few adoptable dogs to participate in the costume contest. They advocated to just about every person at the event to adopt or volunteer for them. Care Center Animal Blood Bank encouraged dog owners to sign up their pets to become canine blood donors.

After the costume contest concluded, Paws and Remember a company concerned with grief support and memorialization for pets owner Adam Stall, who was running the stand with his girlfriend, Tracy Wolford, took her into the center of the path, got down on one knee, and asked her the life-changing question with a paw-print diamond ring. No need to worry—she said yes.

"This is the park and the event that we first met at last year," Stall told Spark. "She's a vet tech, who works with all kinds of animals. She's with all kinds of rescues. Her house is filled with rescues, as is mine."

As the event came to an end, one activity was still left. The park inflated a screen and projected the movie 101 Dalmatians for all families to watch, ending the night for dogs, with dogs. It was, well, spot on. •



**JUDY BUCKENMYER
FOOD DRIVE**



photography **cara raiford**

Teachers and students gathered in the East parking lot from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. to collect the final donations from the public for the third annual Judy Buckenmyer Food Drive. Pictured East Seniors Meredith Blake, Kelsey Retzsch, and Avni Patel. “[East administration] established [the food drive] in my wife’s honor. She was always looking to help other people, so it reinforces her legacy here at East where she always

tried to help other people,” Mike Buckenmyer, Judy Buckenmyer’s husband, told Spark. “We just wanted to keep that going and try to find a way to help people here in our community.” All donations were taken to the Faith Community Food Pantry throughout the public event. Student and staff donations were accumulated during the week of September 12, 2022. •

-Cara Raiford

GIRLS SOCCER



photography **used with permission**

The East Girls’ Soccer and Basketball team held its annual mattress fundraiser in the upper gym from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Pictured East Senior Sophia Perino and East freshman Kayley Welage. As a result of the event this year, the girls shared a total of \$7000. With these funds, the girls can purchase new equipment and experience team bonding activities, such as trips. “It is amazing to us how many people need and buy mattresses

every year. This community is so extremely supportive of our programs here at East!” Daniel Wallace, Head Coach of girls’ basketball told Spark., “Through both Boosters and Fundraising, the Lakota and Liberty Township community continues to amaze me with how supportive they are. All that they do to help us provide positive experiences for these players!” •

-Kaitlin Dwomoh

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Danish exchange student **Anna Husted**

HYGGGE

Hygge is a Danish word that means cozy living, one that exchange student Anna Husted’s American host family quickly learned.

story **jaclynn mosley** | photography **used with permission**

As the car came to a halt, Lakota East Sophomore Anna Husted raises her phone. The light of the camera flashes, capturing the bright yellow school buses entering the school.

“I have a really bad habit here of taking pictures of everything,” Husted says. “At least once a week, I take pictures when I see a row of school buses coming.”

For the Danish student, school buses are not the norm. She enjoys documenting all of the new things America has that her home country does not. Husted is a Denmark citizen staying with a host family, the Pienings, for the school year. When she returns to Denmark, Husted will still have to complete her sophomore year, as her year in the United States doesn’t transfer to Denmark academically.

“She (Husted) is just like an older sister,” Husted’s host sister, Elle Piening says, “So that’s really fun.”

As one can imagine, things are quite different in Denmark than here in America. Husted has the opportunity to experience these differences, as the family makes plans on the weekends to show her everything about Cincinnati. A person must be 18 years of age to be able to drive in Denmark. In her hometown, Husted could ride her bike or take public transportation to get around. There isn’t as much of a rush to grow up.

“I feel like in the United States, people have plans early on what they want to do because they have to apply for college,” Husted says. “In Denmark, you don’t really have to choose where to go before you’re done with high school. You can wait a year and then you apply for something.”

In Denmark’s school system, they do not have electives, dances every year, and they refer to their teachers by their first names. However, Husted can speak four languages: Danish, English, Norwegian, and German. Students in Denmark start to learn English in second grade and then



Each issue Spark selects a student at random for feature.

in fourth and fifth grade, students can choose between German and French.

Husted isn’t the only one learning new things. The Piening family gets to learn from her as well.

“She has brought a different dynamic to our family,” Husted’s host mom, Jaime Piening says. “We’ve learned a lot of Danish words. We’ve learned different norms in culture.”

For the Pienings, this isn’t a completely new experience. In 2019, they hosted a student from Thailand that was originally supposed to stay with their neighbors. Unfortunately, the year got cut short because of COVID, but the Pienings had such a great experience, they wanted to do it again.

“(Husted is) adventurous and kind and energetic and happy,” Elle says. “My favorite thing about hosting an exchange student is showing her all the nice things about America.”

As a 15-year-old, traveling to a new country by herself was quite the undertaking. In 2016, Husted’s older sister was a foreign exchange student in Wisconsin.

“She was kind of the reason I got here,” Husted says, “And I think that really helped me hearing all that she said.”

Husted is admired by her host family for her adventurous spirit and bravery it took to become an foreign exchange student.

“She’s moved halfway across the world away from her family and friends to live in a different country is pretty incredible,” Jaime says. •

WHAT'S THE SCOOP?



story **andie madding** | photography **audrey allen**

Bud and Jennifer Strudthoff achieved their dream of opening up their very own ice cream shop.

It started out as a random phone call to friends, but it ended up the realization of a dream.

"{We had friends} that owned a brewery in Cherry Hill and just said, 'We had this idea to make ice cream sandwiches with homemade cookies. Do you mind if we test it out at your store?'" Strudthoff says, "And they said, 'Go for it,' so that started our entire process."

Strudthoff acquired a mobile food service license and sold their creations during the summer of 2021 in the brewery. A customer recommended that Bud and Jennifer open up a store in a nearby space in Mason.

"I'm a full time teacher and my wife was a full time attorney at the time. So we didn't really want to invest all of our money into a space if it was something that we just didn't like doing," Strudthoff says.

As it turns out, the pair loved running a business, so much so that they opened up their Mason storefront in June of 2022. The shop is named after one of their family dogs, Samson, who loved to eat ice-cream and birthday cake. Each of their dogs is commemorated through the art that is hanging in the store –

even in the names of sandwiches that are sold – incorporate their dog's names. Their mom, Jennifer Strudthoff, left her position as a full time attorney to run the shop, and the entire family is involved in the management of their small business.

"Our two oldest kids love to run the cash register. My four-year-old greets people when they come in here and if you ask her she'll tell you our whole life story," Bud says.

His coworker, Mason High School English teacher Lori Roth, remembers when the couple first brought in samples for staff to try. Each person gave their feedback on what could be improved, and the pair went back to work.

"Bud and Jessica have vision. They understand and care about the community they are serving. They just aren't selling a product (although the product is delicious). They offer an experience different from other cookie and ice cream establishments," Roth says, "It's a family environment and it's clear that it's family run."

Roth explains that the couple juggles many roles in their lives such as being teachers, parents, photographer, small business owners, and a family. She says that they're the only people for the job, as they have an incredible amount of energy and drive.



Above is one of Cincy Sammy's desserts, the birthday cake cookie, with cherry ice cream and sprinkles for seven dollars.

Bud advises, "I think I've learned that it's definitely okay to take risks. I'm a very timid person as far as life choices go. When it comes to doing things that are life altering, I let the world pass me by and I like to stick to the straight and narrow. This experience taught me to take risks and not be afraid to ask for help."

Though the Strudthoffs have faced challenges while opening up their first business together, namely turning the larger vision into reality including renovating and advertising, they still believe it's paid off. Bud says that the chance to turn your passion into your job is an incredible feeling and well worth the obstacles.

Jackie Smith is the owner of a neighboring small business Moss & Ivy, a plant-based gift shop. Smith has supported the couple since the beginning, and the Strudthoffs have done the same.

"I've enjoyed having them next door. We root for each other and want the best for each of our businesses," Smith says. "Bud set my garbage out on a Sunday evening so I didn't have to drive to the store to do so myself. They're the best neighbors."

The support of the community, as well as family and friends, was an integral part of the success of Bud and Jessica's dream. •

Each of the Strudthoff's dogs Clark, Ruth, and Samson are commemorated in art that hangs in the store.



CLARK

pitbull retriever mix



RUTH

pure bred blue merle great dane



SAMSON

great dane staffordshire terrier

PAINTED TO PERFECTION

The East student body voted for their favorite senior parking spots on Spark's instagram, @lakotaspark. photography **ella huelskamp**



CAITLYN SPAULDING

story **aisha moien**

One of the top-voted painted parking spots this year was a painting of Dory from the Disney movie Finding Dory. This masterpiece was created by senior Caitlyn Spaulding. The movie Finding Dory, which she describes as "one of my favorite movies," connects to her on a personal level. Similar to Dory, she struggles with ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder).

She explained how her family has an ongoing Dory joke for whenever she has "another Dory moment," and overall she felt this movie resonated with her and was a perfect idea for her senior painted parking spot.

It was difficult at first, but with the help of her mom and guard sisters, she managed to pull off the design. Other than Spaulding's painting skills, she is also part of theater, the National Hope Squad Council, and color guard.



PEYTON VORDEMESHE

story **olivia taylor**

Several people adore Disney, and senior Peyton Vordemeshe portrays her affection for the franchise with a tribute to her favorite tropical childhood movie Lilo and Stitch through her parking spot.

"I've been going to Disney ever since I was a baby," said the East cross country team manager. "I've always had a love for dogs, and Stitch is like a dog to me." Vordemeshe's creation encompassed a Hawaiian "Lilo and Stitch design with a sunset background," taking her and her boyfriend a whopping "seven hours" to complete.

She makes it clear how much she enjoys Lilo and Stitch, portraying somewhat of a "connection" with the film. With her senior year progressing, she looks forward to all the experiences and senior flex, along with "just kinda taking everything in and giving it my all for one last year." Vordemeshe's connection to the film helped her to embrace the flame of her inner child.



ABIGAIL RUTHERFORD

story **addison stallsmith**

A tradition that senior Abigail Rutherford was excited to partake in was painting her parking spot, which was voted as one of the best at Lakota East on Spark's Instagram.

For her design, Rutherford said that she, "wanted something that was recognizable but not overused," so she chose Rapunzel's mural from above the fireplace in her tower as a reference.

Besides enjoying the movie Tangled, she says that her spot represents her eventual starting a new life at college, similar to how Rapunzel discovers new things and starts again in the movie.

She says that this painting gives her "excitement for the future." Rutherford shared that painting her spot took around 12 hours to complete. Rutherford says that she is very pleased with the end result of her parking space painting, and she is proud to be a part of a tradition that she looked forward to years prior.



BRIDGET REXHAUSEN

story **elise hanna**

One parking spot was made by senior Bridget Rexhausen, and features the hill from Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas, with Christmas substituted by "college."

This play on words was inspired by Rexhausen loving the movie. She explained that the movie reminded her of back-to-school season, and it seemed like everyone was tying their parking spots to graduation in some way. Rexhausen designed the spot herself, and only made minor changes as it came to life, such as making the moon smaller or the text more centered.

The long, seven and a half hours she spent painting with her family wasn't as bad as she imagined. Her mom brought dinner, and they painted under a shady tent. Rexhausen wasn't sure she was going to paint a spot, but knowing others liked it made it all worth it.

Chess team member Brady Beerman moves his rook in a match against his teammate.

CHECK MATE

Get to know the Lakota East chess club as they prepare for the upcoming GMC matches.

story **ezri colpi** | infographic **riley grosnickle**
photography **andie madding**

In a small high school classroom, two opponents sit at a desk, facing each other in a battle of the minds. Carefully, a set of hands strategically picks up a piece and moves it to the winning spot, declaring him the champion. Veteran advisor Pat Kreider has seen many such moves and knows his squad is ready for the GMC tournament.

Kreider said that the meetings at the beginning of the year consist of learning different chess strategy openings, and talking about “end game” or “tactics for the middle of the game.” It’s about practicing and playing other people, said Kreider, so that they are ready for when competition season rolls around.

“We still do a lot of learning, we’ll watch videos and try puzzles from chess.com, but we just have fun,” said Kreider.

Along with being the advisor of the chess club, he also teaches CP Precalc and AP Calculus BC at Lakota East. Kreider was first introduced to chess by his father and later played with his siblings growing up. About 9 years ago, Kreider noticed the lack of a chess club at East and took immediate action. He consulted Richard Bryant, the former Athletic Director, and after getting approval, he kickstarted his own GMC-qualifying chess club. In the GMC, Chess and Academic Quiz teams are considered League sports.

“[In regards to chess] I’ve always enjoyed it,” said Kreider. “There was a two-to-three-year period in 2012 and 2013 where we [East] didn’t have a team, so I decided to pick them up.”

Brad Warren, one of East’s new English teachers, works alongside Kreider to build a chess team that is well-prepared for the GMC tourney. Kreider “more

than willingly” invited him in, to which Kreider responds that Warren has become a “huge asset for the club.” Warren was first taught to play chess by his mother and played with his father as well. Warren, as a high school student at a school for performing arts, happened to meet a family who had emigrated from Ukraine who all played piano, and enjoyed chess.

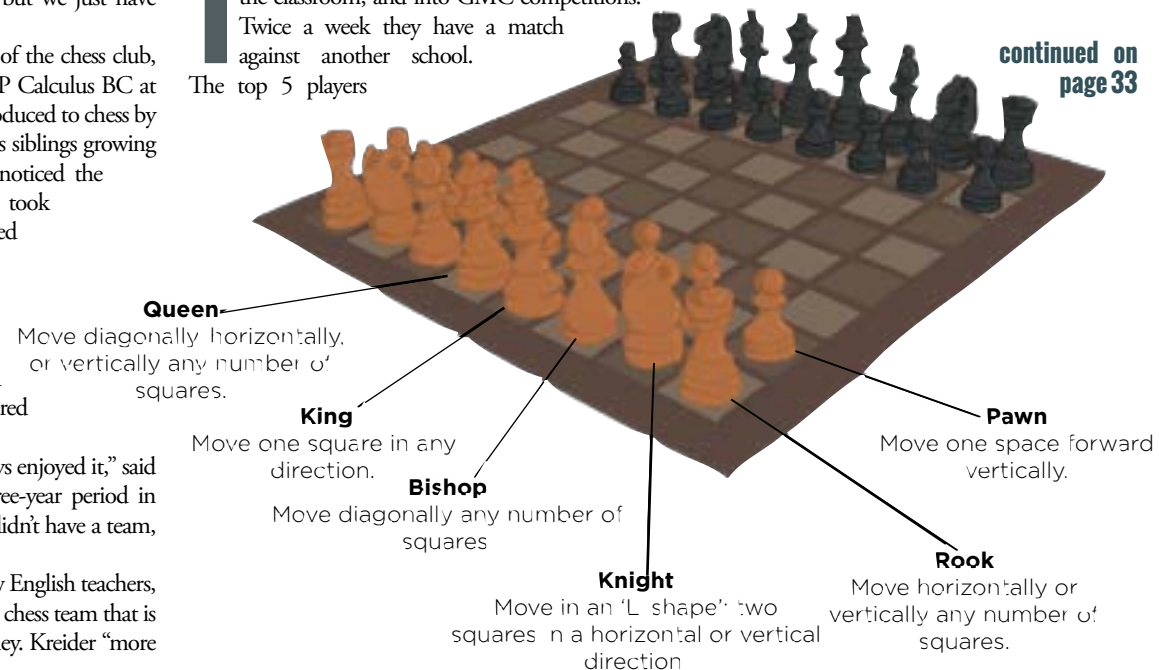
“During lunch, the boys would play chess. So I made friends with one of the piano players and we started hanging out playing chess,” Warren said. This is what “sparked” a deeper interest in chess for him.

The East team’s talent stretches further than the classroom, and into GMC competitions. Twice a week they have a match against another school.

The top 5 players

from East will play the other schools’ top 5 players in a best-of-five match. “You have to win at least three boards in order to win that match,” said Kreider. The tournament is over in late November.

Sean Huggins, a senior chess club veteran, will be leading the team at Board 1. “The top five play for actual points, anyone else can go, but only top five boards count for the points,” Huggins, who is one of the top three players that are “pretty much set in stone [for the competitions],” said Kreider. The top player this year is sophomore Ryan Everding, and according to Kreider, it’s mainly sophomores and juniors that the club consists of, with very few freshmen.



What year did you graduate from East?

I graduated Lakota East in 2019.

Where did you go to college and what degree did you pursue?

I am now a senior at the University of Cincinnati pursuing a Bachelor’s in economics. I hope to go to grad school to become a teacher after my degree. I am an assistant toddler teacher at a daycare now and absolutely love it.

Do you have any passions/hobbies you pursue on the side?

In my free time I enjoy painting, drawing, journaling, and decorating! I’ve loved art since I was young and just recently found my love for painting again! I’ve been trying to make my small Clifton apartment as appealing as possible!

How many/what years were you in Spark?

I joined Spark my sophomore year and continued junior year. I didn’t finish senior year because I took college credit courses.

How were you involved in the paper?

I was a photographer and an infographic designer.

Did it shape you as a person? If so, how?

Spark definitely shaped me as a person.

Journalism class taught me time management skills, improved my writing skills, made me more professional, and introduced me to tons of awesome people.

Why did you join the Spark program?

In all honesty, I joined Spark because my mom told me to but I also had an interest in photography so I knew I’d at least enjoy that part. I didn’t know what to expect when I started. I thought I could just take photos but I got involved in a little bit of everything. I didn’t know that I would enjoy graphic design and writing too!

What interested you about journalism?

I find journalism interesting because it helps teach and inform people on things they never would have thought to research on their own. I didn’t realize how much time and effort and teamwork goes into producing a single story when I started but the process made it all the more interesting as well.

What are your favorite or most memorable stories that you reported during your time in the program?

I would have to say local motives were my favorite. It was exciting to visit unique local places and hear their stories. My favorite was

a pumpkin patch we found! I still go there to get pumpkins! I also learned new information about a lot of places that I had been before. I also enjoyed writing reviews. Sharing your own informed opinion about a song or good to help others decide if they want to try also was inspiring.

Is there anything you would do differently with that story if given the chance?

The only thing I might have done differently with local motives and reviews would be to include more of them! They seem like fillers for newspapers and magazines but they have always been my favorite part!

Besides your favorite story, what would you say is your most memorable experience in Spark?

I have a lot of memorable experiences with spark. I will never forget all of the workshops, field trips, and school events. The most unique experience though would have to be the end of the year banquet and the extraordinary speech by Mr.Hume.

What advice would you give to current and future members of Spark?

I would tell the Spark members today, thank you for all the hard work you put into this paper, keep it up and keep the Spark lab clean! •

GET TO KNOW THE ALUMNI

Graduate of 2019 and Spark staff member, Lucy Hartmann, shares her experiences after highschool.

interview **cara raiford**
photography **used with permission**

graduate year: 2019
position in the paper: photographer and infographic designer
years on staff: 2017-2018





An overview of Port-Au-Prince, Haiti as a helicopter flies overhead.

A TRIP TO REMEMBER

story **kaitlin dwomoh** | photography **used with permission**
infographic **riley grosnickle**

Senior Abby Kuntz reflects on her time spent in Haiti with her family and newfound friends.

It's mid-July, and with sweltering temperatures rising Abby Kuntz, a senior at Butler Tech majoring in Vocal Music, is packing for a trip. She packs her suitcase with long skirts and pants despite the 90-degree weather that awaits her. While it is typical in the U.S. to see crop tops and shorts during the summer, where Kuntz is headed, dress has a bit more status.

In Haiti it is customary to see girls and boys wearing more modest clothing. This is one of the many cultural changes that Abby and her family experience when visiting Haiti as part of their regular mission trips.

Immediately adjacent to the Dominican Republic lies Haiti. A 27,750 square mile tropical paradise with beautiful beaches, terrain, and lively culture. It is also known as the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. The past few years have plunged the country into political turmoil, rising

prices, growing crime, and devastating natural disasters (two major hurricanes in three years). This has left the country with more than 70% of its citizens in poverty. Knowing this need for relief, the Kuntz family has participated in many missionary trips over the past eight years. The family of eight brings water, food, and supplies to poverty-stricken areas in the capital city of Port-au-Prince.

Abby remembers a time when she had to pack for a much more extended stay, a more permanent one that lasted eight months but was intended to be forever. The family of five then, had sold most of their belongings ready to begin a new life in a country so different from their own. Living out of a hotel called Servotel, inside the city, everything was 10 times harder, including the traffic. Abby's mother, Erin Kuntz, was shocked the first time she saw it.

"[There are] no rules, no lights, and no stop signs. No [thought about taking turns] it's insane. They just do whatever to get themselves wherever they need to go. It's not safe."

Adjusting to the lack of supplies and conveniences was a struggle. Going to a store and not being able to find anything you need. Being sick and not having any access to Tylenol. Not being able to purchase baby supplies because there's a shortage.

"So you do a lot of praying and it sounds silly but like from anything for an emotional need to a physical...it makes me rely on God," says Erin, "Because a Haitian has to work incredibly hard at everything." When it comes to cooking, it takes the entire day according to Erin Kuntz. You have to think ahead because they don't have refrigerators. "If you're going to buy something for a meal and it's perishable like a lump of meat or something, you have to go that day to catch the fish."

"Definitely Haiti has been a big part of who I am. As a person, I think it's given me a lot more empathy towards people." -Abby Kuntz

Connecting to the community, however, was easy. Speaking through only a translator, the Kuntz's were able to make lifelong friendships.

"Something I'll never forget is this orphanage that we always went to, the Lighthouse," says Abby. Playing soccer on a dirt field. Hiding behind dressers and stifling giggles during a game of hide and seek. Eating spaghetti with laughter and chatter filling the air at dinner. "Those were my best friends growing up. We didn't speak the same language. But somehow we understood each other. Every time one of them had a birthday, they cooked [a meal at our house], we'd have pizza and popcorn [while watching a movie]."

When Erin needed help taking care of her newly born infant, Emma, and toddler, Caleb, she hired a nanny, Renese. However, Renese became much more than that.

"I translate, so we did ministry together. We did life together. She was the first one there, you know, walking with me to get my kids from school [and then heading] to the market. [We always went to each other's houses for dinner," said Erin. She expresses how through these experiences you can see people's hearts even without knowing the language.

However, when the family had finally fallen into a routine, sickness struck. Caleb Kuntz, their son, started having asthma problems. The doctors thought it might even be cancer, so the Kuntz packed up and came back to the United States. This was in order to receive the healthcare Caleb needed that wouldn't have been available in Haiti. Caleb was able to receive the care he needed, although the Kuntz's struggled to restart their lives.

However, they continued to go back to Haiti, raising money for mission trips and communicating with friends about when it would be safe to come—and eventually finding a balance between living in Haiti and America. Josh Kuntz, Erin's husband, became a Regional manager at Visual Inspections System and Erin became a homeschool teacher for her younger children, Caleb, Emma, Aubrey, and Olivia. Her older children, Hannah, Abby, and Machaela, went to public schools.

Finding balance between traveling back and forth to Haiti was a struggle. Not knowing when they might leave, the Kuntz's were always ready to go back to Haiti, as they said, "to follow God's lead." They notified work



Abby Kuntz (fifth from left) stands with her Haitian friends and family.

and school, packed their bags, and made arrangements to go back when the civil unrest in Haiti eased. Typically, they would stay for a week with extended time in the summer. "It's different for sure and it's hard to get used to sometimes. But [with shorter trips, it's easier coming back]," Abby said.

Through Cling, a nonprofit built in honor of Erin's mother, the Kuntz's continued to connect with their Haitian community.

They helped carry out bulky bags of grain and would bring supplies every couple of weeks. Trucks were brought to the island to fill giant barrels, jars, and buckets with water from nearby wells for the women and children in the local villages outside of Port-au-Prince.

"The idea for [a school designed to support local villages] was hatched about three years ago and it took a village to make it happen," said Nick Schultz, a founding member of Cling.

Through fundraising and donations, Cling has been able to build a trade school to provide children, like those from the Lighthouse, skills that will help them make a life once they become adults. The Cling Polytechnic School of Haiti recently had its grand opening this past September.

Additionally, Cling wishes to build a medical center in the near future. The Kuntz's hope is that the nearby medical center will help the surrounding villages and community since medicine and medical supplies are difficult to obtain. The medical center also wants to provide graduates of Cling Polytechnic jobs as medical staff and nurse aides.

Her time in Haiti will always be precious to Abby, "Definitely Haiti has been a big part of who I am. As a person, I think it's given me a lot more empathy towards people." Abby is able to value what she has after visiting a place with very few resources.

"They still appreciate the little things that they have," said Abby. •

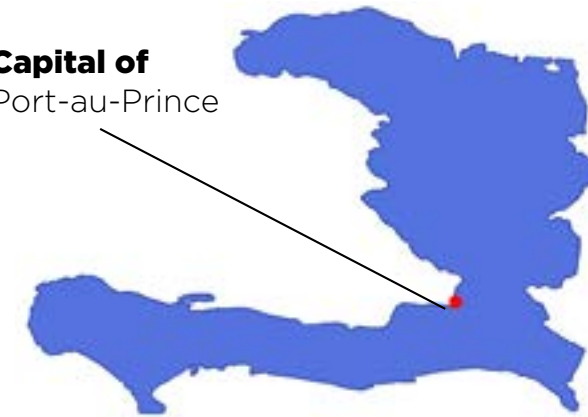
Government type: Semi-presidential republic
Capital of Port-au-Prince

Language: French (official)
Creole (official)

Population: 11,067,777

Climate: Range from 70°F to 90°F

Diet: Main diet is corn, cassava, millet,



Port-au-Prince: The largest city of Haiti and estimated to have nearly 1.2 million inhabitants. African descent constitute 95% of Port-au-Prince's community, and the other portion of the population is Hispanic, Asian, European, and Middle East Haitians.

source **countryreports.org, blackpast.**

A PIECE OF THE POLITICAL PUZZLE



Following recent political developments over the summer of 2022, an increasing number of young people are taking policy into their own hands and figuring out where they fit in democracy.

story **emily henderson** and **ava huening** | photography **ava huening** | art **emily henderson**

Chants echo throughout the city. Flags of green, red, white, and black wave through the air as the crowd fills the West End Historic District in Dallas, Texas. Posters are raised to convey their powerful messages, such as “My Great Grandmother was exiled from Palestine in 1967, she did not have a voice but worked hard so that I DO” and “Every Israeli city was once Sheikh Jarrah.” Everyone in the streets is united by one issue: the recent violence against the Palestinian people at the hands of the Israeli military.

Lakota East senior Joud Kiwan is among the crowd protesting as she wears a gold necklace in the shape of Palestine, her own personal form of activism. Being at the protest gives her a sense of solidarity with the others there and motivates her, Kiwan, who is also the vice president of the Lakota East chapter of Junior State of America (JSA), told Spark.

“I was kind of nervous because you never know what is going to happen at protests. Especially when you are not in the place of power; when you are the people who are protesting. You never know who is going to come your way, who’s going to be mad at you, who’s going to throw something at you, who is going to target you,” Kiwan says. “So, I was a little scared but because I went in a group, I was sort of excited and motivated at the same time.”

Protests, such as the one Kiwan attended, are one of many ways that young people are making their voices heard and getting involved in civics. For Kiwan, her passion for politics stemmed from her home life growing up and her cultural background.

“[My interest in politics] did not start with American politics. I grew up with politics all around me, politics in the Middle East. Being Palestinian in and of itself means my identity is a discussion,” Kiwan says. “My family is pretty politically involved. With my identity,

[being politically involved] is not something that I have to seek out necessarily, rather, it comes to me naturally, unfortunately. A very huge part of my identity, my parents’ identity, and where we are from, is a debate.”

Similar to Kiwan, research shows that many young people who grow up in households where their parents are vocal about politics tend to also be vocal about their political views in later years. In a 2016 study, Jeffrey Lyons, a political science professor at Boise State University, found that roughly 75% of children who grow up in households with two parents of the same political party will identify on the same side of the political spectrum as their parents in their adult life.

Another example of how an environment can shape a young person’s political identity can be seen through Butler County Democratic Party chair Kathy Wyenandt. Wyenandt told Spark that growing up, her family had a significant influence on her political views.

“My earliest political memory is when I was six and President Jimmy Carter did not win reelection -- I cried. I didn’t know anything about it, but I just knew that my dad enjoyed keeping up with political news, and so from then on I heard things and I paid attention,” Wyenandt says. “We went on a nerdy family vacation when I was seven or eight to Mount Vernon and of course, I just completely loved every minute of it -- historical and political elements combined.”

Other factors also impact the way in which young people shape their worldviews and ideas about politics. One of the biggest contributors

“Being Palestinian in and of itself means my identity is a discussion. With my identity, [being politically involved] is not something that I have to seek out necessarily, rather, it comes to me naturally, unfortunately. A very huge part of my identity, my parents’ identity, and where we’re from, is a debate.”

- Joud Kiwan

to shaping these views, outside of a person’s home life, is their education in civics and government.

THE STARTING POINT

According to the Ohio Department of Education’s model curriculum, social studies classes from kindergarten through second-grade focus on teaching the core principles of civic participation and skills, rules and laws, and human systems. In these years, the content focuses on helping children to develop social skills and learn about society as it relates to the individual.

Once students reach the third grade, social studies content expands and the principle of roles and systems of government is added to the curriculum. At this point, students will start to learn more about society as a whole and how individuals fit together to run a community. Third-grade VanGorden Elementary School teacher Amy Roth told Spark that it is important to start expanding upon civic education at this age for several reasons.

“Social studies instruction begins in kindergarten, but it is all about learning social skills,” Roth told Spark. “[Starting in third grade] students need to learn citizenship; getting along with others, understanding why we have rules and consequences.”

In a 2019 ACT Research and Policy study, principal research scientist Chrys Dougherty and senior research scientist Rael Moore recorded the answers of multiple K-3 teachers and district leaders across Arkansas and Kentucky on questions regarding social studies and science classes at the elementary level. The findings found a majority in agreement that teaching science and social studies K-3 often helps students have “a better understanding of concepts in the same subject area, improved reading comprehension, increased student interest in the subject, and increased motivation to read about the subject.”

The research also found that relatively few teachers or district leaders believed that it was acceptable for schools to postpone teaching social studies to grade 4 or later. Educators were also more likely to agree that social studies should be taught to students daily rather than teaching the subject sparsely.

Lakota East junior Ayesha Firdous told Spark that her elementary social studies classes gave her a “pretty good amount of knowledge as to how the government works and how it’s made up.”

“In elementary school, I feel like there was not a broad range of topics covered involving government and civics,” Firdous says. “I learned the basics such as the different branches of government, but past that I do not feel like I was prepared for high school government/civics.”

Researchers Bridget B. Kelly and LaRue Allen of the National Library of Medicine conducted a study in 2015 that explored cognitive development in young elementary students, and how educators can tailor their teaching styles to provide the greatest possible outcome for students. The research shows that children learn in developmental sequences, and therefore curriculum should be designed in developmentally sequenced activities. The study also found that elementary school educators can rely on their students’ growing cognitive abilities by using methods that depend more on children’s own discoveries and problem solving.

After elementary school, most students will not take another government course until their junior year of high school. The education that students receive during these years is critical for establishing a rudimentary understanding of how government functions. Knowing the basics better equips students for the social studies classes they will take in the years between, such as World History and American History. VanGordon elementary school social studies teacher Laura Kunkel told Spark that

elementary social studies classes are “broader in scope” because they cover geography, history, and economics, as well as government.

“I view social studies not only as a set of standards to learn but also as a way of thinking about the social fabric of society that has changed and continues to change over time,” says Kunkel. “I encourage my students to think, investigate, and ask why as they study and learn about the standards taught in 6th grade.”

A DEEPER LOOK INTO EDUCATION

The Ohio Department of Education requires that all high school students must complete one semester of American government in order to graduate. Lakota offers students two options when it comes to which government class they would like to take, regular Government which lasts a single semester, or Advanced Placement (AP) Government and Politics which lasts two semesters. Many students at East opt for the single-semester course. Lakota East government teacher Tisha Grote, also known more informally as “Mench” by her students, believes that government is a critical class for students.

“I will ask [students], do you remember in third grade, fifth grade, or any grade, learning about the Bill of Rights, or the three branches of government? Typically I see head shakes, the answer is always no. I think that civics needs to be laced through every single year,” Mench told Spark. “I think a government course is the most important class that you are going to take K through 12. Obviously, you need to be in English, and you definitely need math, but I feel like when it comes to democracy, [Government] is the most important class that you will take- and it is only a dang semester.”

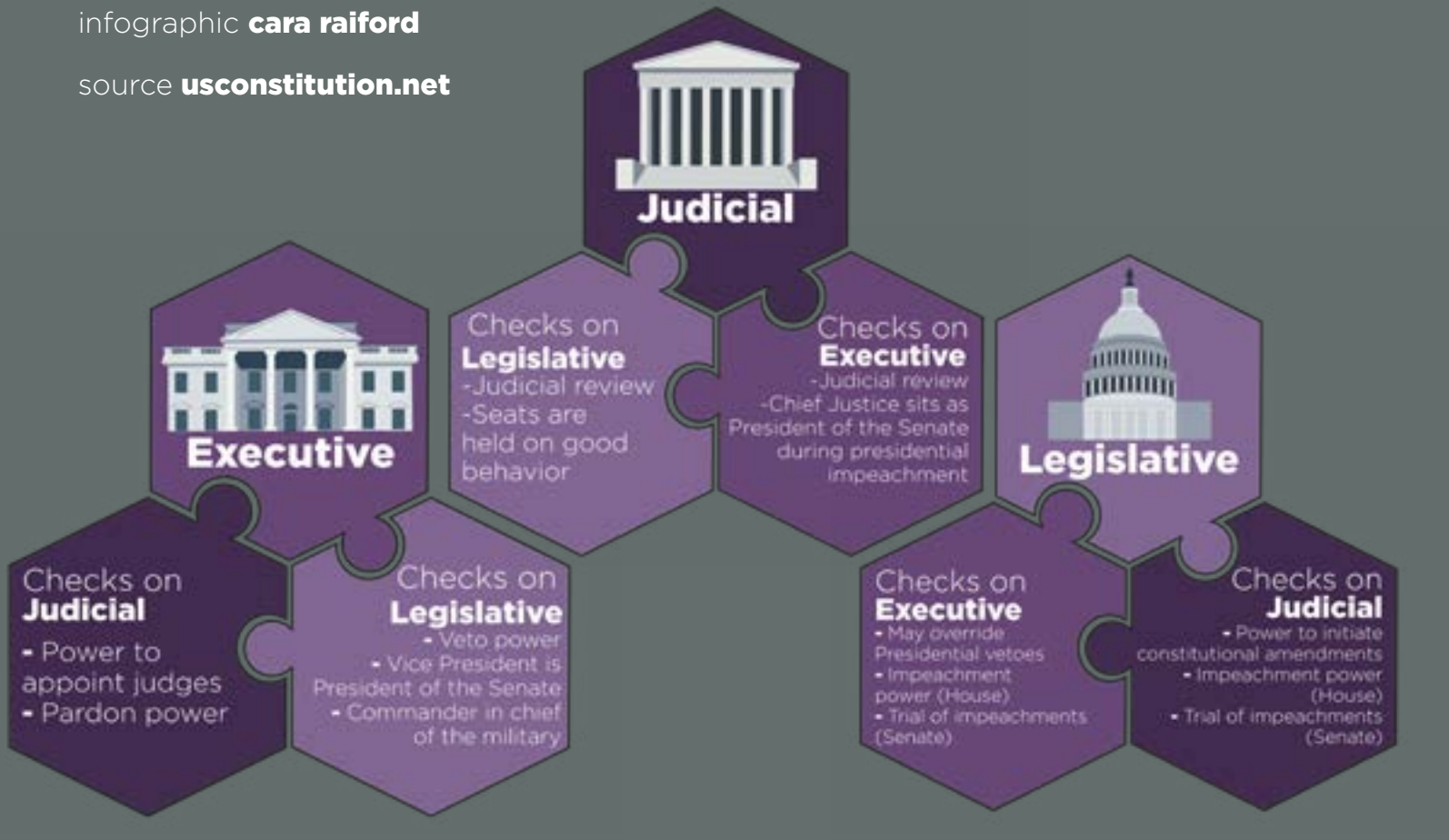
Many factors can impact a student’s ability to participate in politics. Community-Based Rehabilitation is a program that promotes the rehabilitation, equalization of opportunities, poverty reduction, and social inclusion of all people. It lists a series of barriers that prevent many from participating in politics. Some of these barriers include poverty, stigma, social isolation, and a lack of education. Mench believes that a way that Lakota could help to reduce the lack of education when it comes



Breaking Down the Branches

infographic **cara raiford**

source **usconstitution.net**



to politics and government would be to make all government class options a full-year (two semester) course, not just the AP Government and Politics class.

“Since I’ve been [at Lakota], government class has only been a semester. I constantly say it should be a year to everybody, but nobody listens to me,” Mench says. Lakota East American History teacher Samantha Miller agrees with this perspective.

“I wish that the government class that students take was a full-year class. I feel like I am speedrunning my class to get through everything I have to cover. I have never taught government, but I can imagine how much they are struggling to get through their content in just a semester,” Miller told Spark. “Government teachers technically have even less than a semester to get through [their curriculum] because students have to take the AIR test a few weeks before the semester ends.”

Because the Ohio Department of Education only specifies that students must complete a single semester of government class to graduate, some schools, like Lakota, choose to make the regular government class a single semester. Mason City Schools and

Princeton City Schools are two other districts in the southwest Ohio region that also only require a single semester of government class like Lakota. In contrast, Sycamore Community Schools is another school district in the region that has chosen to make its regular government class a full year.

A student’s knowledge about government and civics is not completely reliant on government class alone either. Other courses, such as history, can also impact a person’s understanding of how modern government functions.

“[Government class and history class] tie together really well. American history gives students that background of why we as a country are doing a lot of the stuff we do, and then in government class, students would get more into how things are done,” Miller says. “[For example], my students are learning about the history behind why women were pushing for the right to vote. Then in government, students learn about the ins and outs of how the 19th Amendment was passed.”

The act that modern-day American government and politics are constantly changing

can also impact the education students receive. Teachers are constantly presented with the question of how to teach new policies and laws in their already dense curriculum. An example of a recent policy change that is impacting high schools across America is the overturning of the Supreme Court case “Roe v. Wade” during the summer of 2022.

“I had been asking myself all summer, how do I present [“Roe v. Wade”] to my students, because normally that is something I talk about in my class. But if that no longer exists, do I just not mention it? Do I talk about it and point out that it has been overturned?” Miller told Spark. “It’s not a standard in the content that I need to teach that has to change, it is a change in the way that I approach it.”

When new policy changes arise, Mench discusses with other government teachers how to talk about and present those changes to her class.

“There are teachers all over [America] in different time zones, and we always chat on Facebook and message each other about how we are going to teach these changes going forward,” Mench says. “It is all about precedent. Precedent is when you take Supreme Court decisions, and then apply them to what is going on in current

events today. Whether they were overturned or not, it does not matter- they are still taught as precedent.”

Young people are not just learning about politics through school either. In recent years, the rise of social media has allowed young people to witness and learn about the world around them at a much higher and faster rate. Platforms such as Instagram and TikTok are able to spread information to the masses at a rate that is quicker than even most televised news stations.

ONLINE POLITICS AND MEDIA LITERACY

Social media is accountable for the majority of information that young people receive. According to a recent Spark survey of 93 students, 45% of students get the majority of their news from social media, 25% get their news from various news sites, and the rest of the respondents said that they receive their news from other sources.

Researchers from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Sloan School of Management, or MIT Sloan, have explored the spread of false information to understand how it develops and escalates through social media. A 2018 study from MIT Sloan professors Sinan Aral, Deb Roy, and Soroush Vosoughi found that false information is 70% more likely to be retweeted on Twitter than its truthful counterpart, an effect that is more noticeable with political news. The research team found a potential reason for this phenomenon: the novelty hypothesis. The novelty hypothesis is the idea that people are drawn to information that is “novel”, or unusual.

To combat the spread of misinformation on social media, many sites have implemented a “potential false news” warning on posts deemed untrue by fact-checkers. One of these sites is Twitter, which added this feature in May 2020 and updated it in May 2022. According to Yoel Roth, Twitter’s former Head

of Safety and Integrity, Twitter defines their “crisis misinformation policy” as situations in which the misinformation is a threat to life, physical safety, health, or basic subsistence. The social media site now requires verification of potentially misinformed posts from multiple credible sources, including humanitarian organizations, open-source investigators, journalists, and more.

Lakota is also making an effort to reduce the spread of misinformation by informing students about media literacy. Independence and Endeavor Elementary School Technology teacher Erica Dunn educates students on how to navigate the online world.

“Students struggle to understand the consequences of creating an online presence. Rather than saying a ‘digital footprint’ I started calling it another term I have heard -- a digital tattoo. Like tattoos, their online identity will be around forever, so every post should be intentional and planned out,” Dunn told Spark. “Online identities should help a person get to be where they want to go in life, rather than hold them back. We make a plan of posts to create over the next ten years that will open doors for them, rather than shut them out.”

Lakota’s technology classes are implemented at the elementary level as a “special” class required for all students, but the material of the class changes as the grade level moves up. Dunn says her third-grade class spends time learning how to identify and deal with spam messages, while her fifth-grade class devotes more time to learning how to evaluate the credibility of certain websites. In sixth grade, students will begin the “digital footprint” unit, as most students below the sixth-grade level “do not have much experience with social media or posting things online,” according to Dunn.

“I think the biggest part of their learning is just the discussions that come out of these lessons. Students have seen celebrities get ‘canceled’ for posting things online,” Dunn says. “Online life is a very big part of growing up in today’s age, and students are surprised by the consequences, good or bad, that can result.”



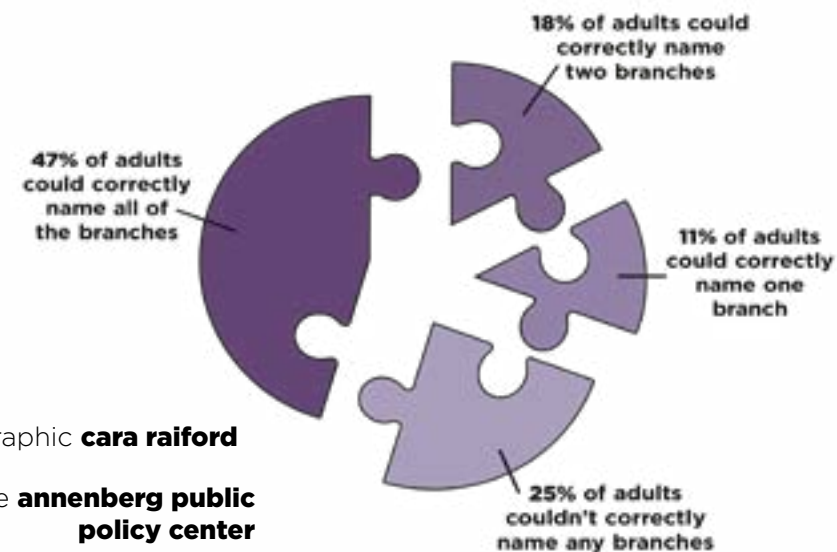
student survey of **93** infographic **cara raiford**

Teaching students about media literacy early on can help them later in life to identify misinformation and disinformation when they come across it. According to the American Psychological Association, the more people are taught to identify false information on the internet, the easier it becomes for them to recognize it on their own. Having this skill can be especially helpful when it comes to forming opinions about current political events. Professor and Department Chair of Political Science at Miami University, Bryan Marshall, believes that social media can be both beneficial and detrimental when it comes to informing people about politics.

“[Social media] is a double-edged sword. On one hand, it is a great way for young people to get more information and communicate their preferences,” Marshall told Spark. “At the same time, you have this negative aspect of social media and that is disinformation and misinformation.”

A 2018 study on misinformation by Harvard University defined fake news as fabricated information that has the format of news content but not the editorial standards and practices of legitimate journalism. In the study, researchers found that exposure to fake news was associated with an overall decreased trust in mainstream media and an overall increased trust in government, specifically within Congress and the judicial system. Miller believes that being able to correctly identify fake news is vital for a functioning democracy.

“[Being media literate] is really significant, especially when it comes to who you’re voting for or forming your opinions on topics. You have got to be able to look up all the different sides and perspectives in order to really find out how you feel,” Miller says. “News is a really big part of informing people. Being media literate and able to tell the difference between what’s a good source or a bad source is really important [for our democracy].”



infographic **cara raiford**

source **annenberg public policy center**

POLITICAL APATHY

Political apathy is defined as the indifference of an individual and their lack of interest in participating in political activities. Mench says that she sees political apathy in her students often, and actively tries to fight against it.

"You have to understand what is going on and form your own opinion in order to feel a sense of political efficacy. If you lack political efficacy, you do not know what is going on and therefore you really do not care, and then voting is nowhere on your radar," Mench says. "So I try to reverse that mentality by suggesting [my students] download news apps. I really force them to know what is going on nationally and internationally so that they start thinking, judging, and informing themselves."

Students, and young people in general, can feel a sense of political apathy for a variety of reasons, such as feeling underrepresented by policymakers, or thinking that their voice is not being heard even when they do vote. East teacher and JSA advisor Matt Newell believes that the main reason students are politically apathetic is that politics simply falls far down on their priority list.

"When you are younger, you understand the world in terms of what is immediately around you, that's just how most teenagers are. They are worried about getting through their day. They are worried about going to work, or maybe they are worried about whatever extracurricular activity they are doing," Newell told Spark. "But then they are being asked the second they turn 18 to start thinking and voting on decisions that have really broad, really big consequences that they might not even understand the effects of."

Similar to Newell, Executive Director of the Butler County Republican Party Joseph Stutzer believes that a big reason it can be difficult to get youth interested in politics is that many teenagers already have full schedules.

"It does seem to be a little harder than it used to be to get young people [involved], but

I do not think it is because of the politics. I think it is because we are up against so much competition. Sports, other activities, video games, there's a lot of competition for attention." Stutzer told Spark. Miller offers a historical perspective as to why young people tend to be politically apathetic.

"Ever since [the Vietnam War and Watergate], young people have been questioning the government a lot more," Miller says. "People do not want to participate [in voting] because they question how much it really affects things."

While for some students being politically apathetic is a subconscious trait, others are aware of the fact that they do not participate in civics to the extent that they probably should. East senior Marcus Hall recognizes the fact that he is not as involved in politics as he once was.

"I would consider myself slightly politically active. I keep up with current events but not as much as I have in the past," Hall told Spark. "I also do not do as much research into political events as I should."

One of the most obvious examples of political apathy amongst young people can be seen in elections. Voter turnout is the political science term that refers to the participation rate of a given election. The 2020 presidential election saw the highest percentage of voter turnout in any presidential election so far in the 21st century. Still, according to the United States Census Bureau, only 51.4% of voters aged 18-29 cast a vote. Mench believes that low turnout among the younger population can be related to their lack of representation within political campaigning. "When young kids and teens feel like they are not represented in policymaking, they're not going to turn out to vote," Mench says. "When [young people] see their problems represented in policy, and candidates reach out to them and have empathy, they are gonna vote -- it is very strategic."

While voter turnout rates in federal elections are often seen as less than desirable, local and

"People need to be aware that there are elections every single year, and that the people we elect at the local level impact our daily lives, more than anyone that we can ever elect in Washington, D.C."
- Kathy Wyenandt

state elections see even lower percentages of voters at the polls. Take for example the Butler County Primary Election in August of 2022. During this election, only 8.4% of all registered voters in Butler County cast a ballot. Wyenandt emphasizes the importance of voting in local elections.

"People need to be aware that there are elections every single year, and that the people we elect at the local level impact our daily lives, more than anyone that we can ever elect in Washington, D.C.," Wyenandt says. "I ran for state senate in 2020. I was the Democratic nominee for the statehouse in 2018. I would always hear from folks that they did not understand much about the state legislature. All they wanted to talk about was Nancy Pelosi, Mitch McConnell, Donald Trump, Joe Biden, anything on the national level because that is what they see; that is what social media focuses on."

Mench stresses the importance of participating not only in federal elections but local ones as well.

"I think there is a misconception that federal policy matters most, and that is not true. The policy that trickles down from the federal government takes months or years, but those policymakers who are township trustees, school board members, city council members, and mayors, create the policy that directly affects you, but that is what we are not taking the time to teach," Mench says. "If we had a whole year

[to teach government], or if civics was laced throughout K-12 a little bit more intensely, then I feel like students would understand that it's local grassroots policies that affect you the most."

FINDING A VOICE

Many people wonder how society can fight political apathy in the younger generation. Marshall says that one way to get more young people involved in politics and particularly in elections is for political leaders to pay attention to what issues are closest to young people.

"If the issues that are being talked about the most [in campaigning] are issues that young people generally respond to, such as environmental issues or privacy rights, it is more likely to see young people turn out to the polls," Marshall says. "Focusing on issues that are going to energize and motivate young people, for all [political] parties, is what is going to make a real change."

Kiwan says that in her own experience, forming her own opinion on issues was the catalyst for becoming politically active.

"The first step to being involved is really to have an opinion. If you do not have an opinion, then you cannot really [be an activist]," Kiwan says. "[After you form an opinion] you can start talking to others and advancing your knowledge of the topic."

Being politically involved does not require a person to be an expert on every issue. Many people first become involved in politics by finding one or two issues that they are deeply passionate about and doing deeper research on those topics. In modern-day politics, many issues are intertwined, so becoming educated about one issue can lead to gaining knowledge on a plethora of issues later on.

Miami University's Political Science Assistant Professor Kevin Reuning says that while interacting with his students, he has noticed several patterns in the issues that young people tend to be most passionate about.

"Over the summer, [with the overturning of the Supreme Court Case "Roe v. Wade"], students have become much more interested in abortion and reproductive rights. Students also tend to be generally concerned about issues of diversity and equity [within politics]," Reuning told Spark.

For young people under the voting age, becoming politically involved can be especially difficult. The most obvious way for many people to make their voices heard is by voting in elections. However, for people who are unable to vote, Marshall says there are still ways to voice their opinion.

"Students [who are unable to vote] can still be advocates of a message. They can inform their friends who may be of voting age; they can also certainly seek out decision-makers or

RESPECT FOR EQUALITY

The Respect for Marriage Act, designed to repeal the Defense for Marriage Act, was passed in the House, another step on the road to full marriage equality for all members of the LGBTQ+ community.

sidebar zachary shultz | infographic william huelskamp

With the recent overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, the future of same-sex marriage and other matters were discussed when U.S. Supreme Court Associate Justice Clarence Thomas's concurring opinion was released. Justice Thomas wrote that the justices should reconsider all of the Court's substantive due process precedents, including the case decisions for *Griswold*, *Lawrence*, and *Obergefell*.

Those three cases deal with Americans' fundamental privacy, the use of contraceptives, consensual sexual activity between members of the same sex, and the right to same-sex marriage, respectively. While all three are concerning, the comment about *Obergefell v. Hodges* was particularly called to attention, as members of the LGBTQ+ community and allies of the community were distressed by the implications of Thomas's comment.

"I think [Justice Thomas's comment] is horrible, awful, and bigoted and I cannot say enough terrible things about it. It's like comparing apples to oranges, regardless of how you feel about *Roe v. Wade*, it's a different situation than having the right to marry," East English teacher Kate Foldy told Spark. "I think it's absolutely absurd hearing from a black man who's married to a white woman, considering interracial marriage had to become law [just like gay marriage]. It doesn't make any sense to me. It's frightening for folks I know who are married, it just makes me sick to my stomach."

Besides being an English teacher, Foldy is the faculty advisor for the Gender Sexuality Alliance (GSA) at East, a club built on being a safe space for LGBTQ+ students to come together and support each other. The club's meetings can range from fun activities for students to spend time with each other to more serious meetings where the group discusses topics such as suicide prevention resources. East junior Riley Mills is one of the leaders of GSA and shares Foldy's opinion that Justice Thomas is in the wrong here.

"I think that it isn't [Thomas's] place to decide whether LGBTQ+ people should be married or not, considering he's not [a member of the community] himself, he really shouldn't be saying anything about whether

we are allowed to be married or not," Mills, who is a member of the LGBTQ+ community herself, told Spark.

On the other hand, East student Sean Castillo is intrigued by Thomas's proposition and is not opposed to the overturning of *Obergefell v. Hodges*. However, he does not think the Supreme Court will reconsider the case anytime soon.

"I think the only way the Court would be able to readdress that case is if a similar case manages to make its way all the way up to the Court," Castillo told Spark. "Other than that, the Court would lose a lot of validity in the eyes of some Americans if it seemingly randomly chose to reconsider that case."

Several other Supreme Court justices in the majority of the *Roe v. Wade* decision assured that Thomas's comment amounts to nothing and that the overturning poses no threat to the aforementioned precedents. Despite this, the Court's liberal wing argued that the assurance was unsatisfactory, stating that Thomas's concurrence is a problem in and of itself. Foldy is still concerned about the undertones of the comment, saying that she cannot trust anything the Supreme Court does.

Some could say that Thomas's comment caused a push for the Respect for Marriage Act (RFMA) to be reintroduced in Congress. The RFMA repeals the 1996 Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), which prevented same-sex couples from receiving benefits available to married couples, such as reduced taxes and Social Security benefits. The Supreme Court decisions of *United States v. Windsor* (2013) and *Obergefell v. Hodges* (2015) struck down the federal recognition portion of DOMA, and the RFMA would permanently repeal and replace the portion with a requirement of respect for gay marriage by the federal government.

In case Thomas's decision amounts to anything and *Obergefell* is overturned, RFMA is designed to have the same effect in a more secure place of legislation. The RFMA, first introduced in Congress in 2009, has been reintroduced and turned down four times. In July 2022, the RFMA was reintroduced a fifth time and finally pass the House of Representatives. It now awaits a decision in the Senate.

Percentage of Voters Ages 18-26 that Voted in Presidential Elections



"I think that every marriage is equal in its essence, and I think that LGBTQ+ relationships should be given the same marriage validity and rights as heterosexual couples," Mills says about the RFMA. "There's still a lot left [for RFMA to pass] but the world is constantly changing."

This being the fifth time RFMA has been reintroduced into Congress, America is a much different place than when the act was first introduced in 2009. GLSEN (formerly the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network) Greater Cincinnati Chair Renee Hevia believes that America is more accepting of the LGBTQ+ community than it was 13 years ago.

"I think a lot more people are [open to LGBTQ+ citizens] joining the rest of the world that get married and get divorced," Hevia, a member of the LGBTQ+ community, told Spark. "Just like the majority of the people in the U.S. think that Roe v. Wade should never have been overturned, it's the same thing with gay marriage."

GLSEN is an American education organization working to end discrimination and harassment based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression and strides to promote LGBTQ+ cultural inclusion and awareness in K-12 schools across the country. The Greater Cincinnati chapter does this by providing professional development for teachers and organizations to improve how they approach students with different gender identities, as well as holding events and programs for LGBTQ+ teenagers. Hevia, who has been the Greater Cincinnati Chapter Chair since 2019, believes that regardless of if RFMA is passed, it wouldn't make a huge difference in social equality.

"There are still laws in places that say [LGBTQ+ people] can't rent or can be fired [just because of their identity]. Being able to freely rent [like the rest of society] is just as important as the right to marriage," says Hevia.

Foldy shares Hevia's sentiment that America is becoming more open and accepting of gay marriage, saying that she hopes people are seeing that it hasn't made any kind of difference to the country. However, she disagrees with Hevia about RFMA not making a difference in social equality.

"People will feel more secure. People will feel that [the RFMA] is the government and society's way of saying we approve of your relationship. Having a relationship validated by your government is huge," Foldy says. "It also allows folks all kinds of rights within marriage such as healthcare and financial protection. It's a way to make queer relationships normal. What do straight

couples do? They date, get married, have babies, and die together. So why can't gay couples do that?"

Castillo disagrees. Being a Catholic, he firmly believes marriage is a privilege and sacred act reserved for a man and a woman. He does not believe the RFMA is necessary.

"I am taken aback by the name of the act since from my perspective the act seems to ensure that people can defile the act of marriage instead of respect it," says Castillo. "I view that act as an 'attack' on those who do not support same-sex marriage, especially for religious reasons, like myself, forcing them to accept a certain way of thinking regarding the act of marriage."

Mills does not think the potential passing of RFMA to be representative of a true change in America's attitude towards same-sex marriage.

"I think there's a lot of growth that can still be done within the people [of America], and this act won't change their minds," says Mills. "But it might be that one step closer to getting them to accept and acknowledge [the LGBTQ+ community]."

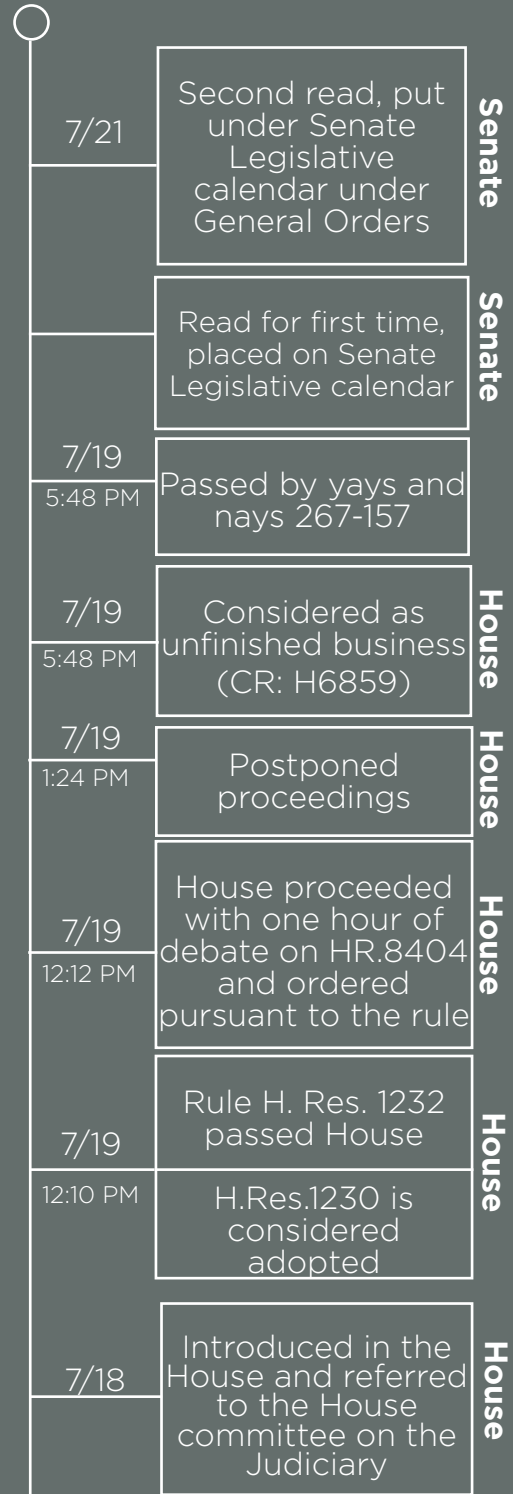
The RFMA would not stop any state from refusing to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples if the Supreme Court overturns Obergefell v. Hodges, as proposed in Thomas's comment. The federal government would still be required to respect already existing same-sex marriages, but new couples might be rejected licenses if the overturning were to happen.

The act still needs to pass the Senate to be put into effect. When it was recently passed in the House, it was a 267-157 vote, meaning that 47 House Republicans voted in support, making this the most pro-LGBTQ vote in Congressional history. But in order to pass in the Senate, at least 10 Republican senators would need to join all 50 Democratic senators in order to let the bill get to a vote, and then a majority vote of yes would be needed to pass.

Hevia knows that progress like that in the Senate can be very challenging, especially given the sheer amount of anti-LGBTQ and specifically anti-transgender bills being pushed recently. While the freedom to marry is without a doubt important, many including her think that a lot of work still needs to be done to protect the LGBTQ+ community. She is worried about the future of same-sex marriage legislation but holds true to her beliefs.

"People in schools [treat equality for LGBTQ+ students] as change that they don't want to deal with. But guess what? They have to deal with it," says Hevia. "I don't know what [anti-LGBTQ+ people] are so afraid of. What are they so afraid of?"

Respect for Marriage: The Process



The timeline above shows the events of the Respect for Marriage Act (RFMA), including what the bill has gone through to stand where it is today: read for a second time and placed within Senate Legislative Calendar Under

source [congress.gov](https://www.congress.gov)



The United States is divided into ten JSA regions: Arizona, Mid-Atlantic, Midwest, Northeast, Northern California, Ohio River Valley, Pacific Northwest, Southeast, Southern California, and Texas.



Ohio is part of the Ohio River Valley Region, which consist of chapters in Ohio, Kentucky, Tennessee, West Virginia, and parts of southeastern Indiana.



The Lakota East chapter of JSA is advised by teacher Matt Newell. It is lead by a board of student officers with Lauren Polyak serving as the president and Joud Kiwan as the vice president for the 2022-2023 school year.

source [lauren polyak, joud kiwan, jsa.org](https://www.jsa.org)

infographic [ava huening](https://www.jsa.org)

elected officials," Marshall says. "For young people who are not of voting age, especially if they are in the district that a legislator represents, contacting [those representatives] is a way to get your foot into the door."

For East Senior Lauren Polyak, being politically involved comes through her role as President of JSA. JSA is a debate-style club that provides a space for students to discuss different perspectives relating to issues relevant to the current political climate. Polyak says that being active in JSA has led to her being more informed on political topics and encouraged her to participate further in politics.

"I think I actively participate in small global activism educating those around me and sharing my thoughts on things with those around me on a bigger scale," Polyak told Spark. "I say that just being involved in JSA is a form of activism because we officers are actively encouraging education among the people that attend and bring different issues to light when we decide on our meetings for the week."

Kiwan agrees with Polyak. She too believes that being involved in JSA has made her a more informed citizen and helped to increase her knowledge regarding certain topics.

"I remember when I was a sophomore, most of my life was online because of COVID. I got a lot of my opinions from online sources. For a lot of [those opinions], I did not really have good reasoning or good support. Then I came to JSA and witnessed all these members that knew what they were

talking about and they all had solid opinions and very good reasoning for what they believe in, and I was like 'Oh, this is what I need,'" Kiwan says. "You need real evidence and real supporting facts to really solidify the base of your argument. That is what JSA is for a lot of us students who do not know a lot about politics or only know a little."

JSA facilitates reasoning and reflection among its members by beginning each meeting with a "thought talk" about whatever topic is being debated that day. Members have a chance to go around the room and voice their opinions and offer different perspectives on the issue being debated at that meeting. After a lengthy discussion in which all members are able to share their thoughts, two participants volunteer to debate in front of the group, one person for each opposing side. After the debate, the group, as a whole votes, on a resolution: whether they are for or against the topic.

Both Polyak and Kiwan agree that structuring the meetings in this way is the best for allowing everyone to voice their own thoughts while also exposing people to new perspectives they might not have ever thought of before.

Weekly debates are not the only way that JSA encourages students to become politically aware and involved. JSA also attends a number of conventions each year that exposes students to an even wider range of opinions. According to Polyak, East JSA plans to attend three different conventions this year: Fall State, Winter Congress, and Spring State. Each convention is structured in a way to allow participants to get the most realistic world experience and hear as many differentiating opinions as possible.

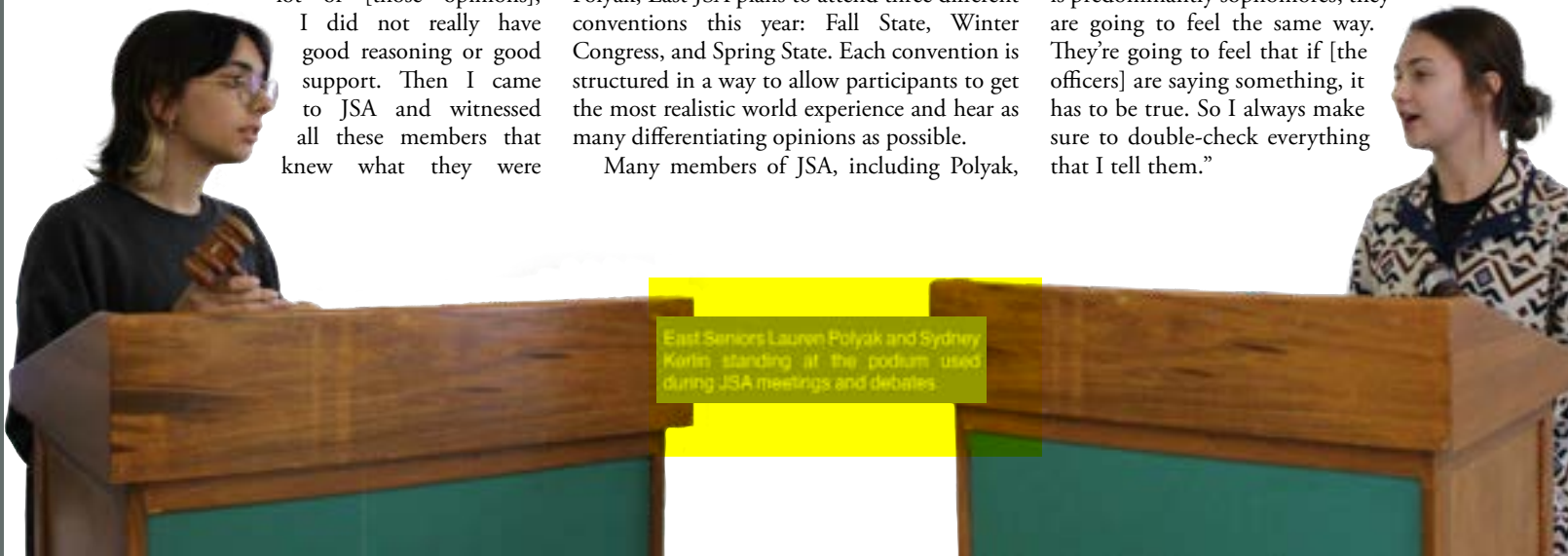
Many members of JSA, including Polyak,

acknowledge that there is an issue amongst young people when it comes to political apathy. Polyak says that JSA actively tries to fight political apathy via a variety of activities, such as discussing topics that young people are interested in and participating in campaigns fighting apathy.

"A couple of years ago, JSA did this campaign called "fight apathy", where each chapter was given a poster board and some stickers and they had to get people to put a sticker on the board about something they care about," Polyak says. "We tried to recreate that. We have a board put up by our advisor in room 206, and you can put whatever you want on it, as long as it is something you believe in."

The plan is supposed to encourage people to fight for what they believe in and realize that they actually do have a voice, she says. Polyak says that as President of JSA, she feels a responsibility not only to inform others but also to keep herself informed.

"I do feel that responsibility [to be informed on current issues] and I feel like anybody who has any leadership role in JSA, including our advisor, should feel that responsibility," Polyak says. "I know that when I was in my first two years of JSA, I felt like anything that one of the advisors or officers said was true. So considering the fact that our club right now is predominantly sophomores, they are going to feel the same way. They're going to feel that if [the officers] are saying something, it has to be true. So I always make sure to double-check everything that I tell them."



East Seniors Lauren Polyak and Sydney Kerlin standing at the podium used during JSA meetings and debates

Besides JSA, many other organizations in the community are working to get young people involved in politics and policymaking as soon as possible. Wyenandt says that the Butler County Democratic Party encourages young people to get involved in politics in many ways. For example, the party has started to use social media platforms, such as TikTok, to get in touch with a young audience.

"The key [for social media] really is to echo the content that we are putting out on other channels and formats and really get the message out about what we are trying to do," Wyenandt says. "We have a core strategic message and we are really pushing that out in different ways, whether it is by posting a little video or showing up at different events and getting some footage of the things that we are doing there, or even just posting easy links for people to jump on and follow."

Statzer says that the Butler County Republican Party also tries to actively encourage political participation in young people through a multitude of activities.

"I think you can still be heard no matter what age you are. Getting involved in your school, running for elections, creating your own political club, those are all ways young people can get involved," Statzer says. "When my kids were young, all of them at some point or another went door-to-door with me. [They] were in parades, they helped me do mailings, they worked polls, they handed out flyers at polling places on election day. I think that [being involved] at that age really helped them to just get used to it and understand the process better."

The earlier that people are exposed to politics, the better chances they have of staying involved later in life. According to Reuning, when young people start the habit of voting

early in life, it is more likely that as the years pass they will continue to vote and make their voices heard within policymaking.

"Political engagement is like a muscle. Once you start voting, it becomes easier to go in the future. It is something you build on and over time it becomes easier the more you do it," Reuning says. "The fact that younger people are voting now means that as that group gets older, they are more likely to continue voting at higher rates."

Political activism does not necessarily have to be huge actions either. While attending a protest or organizing a rally is certainly a good way to get out into the world, young people can also make their voices heard by participating in smaller gestures.

"To me, activism is when you go out and actively encourage something you believe in and talk about what you believe in," Polyak says. "It does not matter if you are [acting] just on a small level or a large level, just actively talking about what you believe in [counts as being politically active]."

Kiwan gives an example of a time she participated in political activism by posting on her Instagram story regarding concerns surrounding the Marvel character "Sabra." The word Sabra is a word that means a person born in Israel, as well as the name of a refugee camp in Lebanon that was home to a massacre of mainly Palestinian refugees in 1982.

"Recently, I posted on my Instagram about Marvel introducing their new Israeli superhero and how they named her after a literal massacre of a refugee camp," Kiwan says. "Pretty much her entire existence as a character is super problematic."

Kiwan says that being able to spread information over social media has allowed her to feel like she is able to reach a wider

"Political engagement is like a muscle. Once you start voting, it becomes easier to go in the future. It is something you build on and over time it becomes easier the more you do it."

- Kevin Reuning

audience and share her opinion and current events with people who otherwise might not know for themselves.

According to Mench, getting young people involved in politics is vital for the future of democracy. If young people do not learn how to make informed decisions early in life, then when they are adults, they will not know how to vote on issues and policies that are impacting them.

"[Teenagers] have this ability to understand what is important to them, and then go and research it, and perhaps understand more about it than the adults in their life," Mench says. "That leads to their feeling of 'I have a strong voice and I am going to use it, it is not to be squashed'. They do not want to see the status quo."

Wyenandt stresses that if young people want to see a change in the world, they have to participate and actively be that change.

"I would suggest for young folks: if you want to see change, you have got to get involved and make that change, and that means joining the party that is the most closely aligned with your values and trying to change things from within," Wyenandt says.

The role of young people in a democracy can be confusing at times. Teenagers have issues that they are passionate about, yet in the current political climate, it can be difficult to voice their opinions. Political leaders often do not prioritize the preferences of young voters or teenagers who cannot vote. A person's education can impact the knowledge they have on government and how they can get involved. Many teenagers are already balancing stressful, packed schedules, making it hard to find time to do in-depth research on topics or attend political events.

Despite all this, teens and young people are a critical piece of the puzzle that is American politics. Newell stresses the importance of making young people aware of their role and bridging the gap from being politically apathetic to being aware and active.

"The reality is, it is a big jump from being 16, 17, and 18 years old, to understanding the power of being in a democracy and understanding the power of voting," Newell says. "But I think that's what we have to do. We are the bridge to that [understanding] for young people." •

PLANTING A SEED OF HOPE

East students work to keep the environment clean and healthy, similar to some actions President Biden has modeled.

sidebar **audrey allen**

East junior Madison Price believes everything can be taken for granted, especially the land we walk on.

She always has her reusable shopping bag on hand when she is at any store, abstains from fast fashion by shopping from thrift stores, and leads as Co-President of the Lakota East Environmental Advocates Forum (LEAF) club where she and her peers do many things to protect the environment. Price radiates positivity and contagious passion while sharing ideas of how to protect the environment as citizens and students. While climate change can be a dreadful topic, she presents it in a hopeful and optimistic light of what people can do to combat it right now.

Price recognizes that the world we live in is a privilege and any privilege can be taken away if taken for granted.

"I am passionate about the environment because we must be if we want it to stay healthy. The environment doesn't belong to humans. The trees in our backyards, the coral in the sea, the birds in the sky, and the air we breathe. It's all a privilege," Price told Spark. "We share it with hundreds of thousands of living organisms that depend on it for survival. For their sake. Ultimately, I recognize that humans aren't the only living things here, and I want to see all plants and animals thriving."

Price, many other students, and schools in the community are actively doing things to preserve and protect the Earth like East junior Ann Kim.

Kim is the Co-President of the LEAF club. She participates in trash pick-ups and plants flowers that pollinators like, such as coneflowers, and tries to limit her waste by recycling and reusing.

Kim loves spending time in nature and wants to go into environmental education as a career. She believes ignoring environmental care will leave future generations in peril.

"If nobody cares about the environment we could end up losing valuable resources and sources of enjoyment," Kim told Spark. "Some things students can do to help the environment is limit their use of single-use plastic goods by using reusable water bottles or lunch containers. You can also donate old school supplies or clothes so you aren't wasting items. I would like to see stricter regulations on corporate pollution and protection of natural resources."

One organization in our community committed to reducing operations' environmental impacts and limiting natural

resource consumption is the Environmental Protection Agency Cincinnati (EPA Cincinnati). It is a core value of EPA Cincinnati to serve as a model in providing a safe and healthy, working environment. The Environmental Management System (EMS) is a tool to achieve these principles for all EPA Cincinnati facilities, personnel, and resources.

East CP Environmental, AP Environmental Science teacher, and LEAF Club advisor Mark Folta cares about the environment because future generations depend on it. He doesn't believe the EPA is doing everything it can to protect humans and animals.

"[The EPA] has limited funding, but it has been effective at enforcing some environmental policies, however," Folta told Spark. "This area alone has had five superfund sites that the EPA cleaned up."

Each year federal agencies, including the EPA, receive funding from Congress, known as budgetary resources. In 2022, EPA had \$35.54 billion distributed from President Biden, much greater than last year (\$17.25 billion) and in 2022 (\$16.95 billion).

President Biden promised to reinvigorate the EPA as part of his push to tackle climate change and ease the pollution burden placed on poor and minority communities. Folta believes the current president truly cares about the environment.

"[The president] promoted the Inflation Reduction Act which includes many aspects of improving infrastructure for [a] more energy efficient, lower polluting future," says Folta. "While he didn't obtain his initial goals, it was a start to making improvements. He also required that all cars by 2026 get 40 miles per gallon or better."

President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) allocates more than \$50 billion to the EPA for repairing the nation's essential water infrastructure, which helps communities access clean, safe, and reliable drinking water, increase resilience, collect and treat wastewater to protect public health, clean up pollution, and safeguard vital waterways. More than \$1.1 billion in capitalization grants from the BIL have been issued to 18 states through the State Revolving Funds (SRFs), with additional capitalization grants forthcoming. The grants mark the first significant distribution of water infrastructure funds.

"I am passionate about the environment because we must be if we want it to stay healthy. The environment doesn't belong to humans. The trees in our backyards, the coral in the sea, the birds in the sky, and the air we breathe. It's all a privilege."

- Madison Price

EPA's SRFs are part of President Biden's Justice40 Initiative, which aims to deliver at least 40% of the benefits from specific federal programs to underserved communities. Furthermore, nearly half the funding available through the SRFs, thanks to the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, must be grants or principal forgiveness loans that remove barriers for investing in essential water infrastructure in underserved communities across rural America and in urban centers.

Although Biden is trying to help the environment as President, Folta believes everyone has a part in caring for the environment.

"Refuse water bottles, instead fill up your own reusable bottles. Make plans to buy electric cars or hybrids in the future. Recycle whenever possible," Folta says. "Everyone has a part in caring for the environment. Don't just put it on the politicians. Vote if you want policy change for a better environment."

If Price were President she would want to see laws implemented for the environment.

"I surely don't know everything it takes to make the decisions for a country, but I would want to push laws that would help clean up all bodies of water including lakes, rivers, and beaches," Price says. "I would want to push laws that focus on eliminating fossil fuels and turning towards renewable energy. It's an ambitious goal, but fossil fuels are in the past." •



THE OVERTURNING

In 1973, the United States Supreme Court ruled in favor at the federal level of protecting abortion. But after being reconsidered in the Supreme Court, Roe v. Wade was overturned, leading to distress across the United States.

story and infographic **abbey bahan**

On what seemed to be another regular June day, people across the country were shocked to hear the news. Theresa Endsley started out her day continuing her work at a pro-life women's conference and burst into laughter and tears of joy after hearing the news. Meanwhile, Maggie Scotece was preparing tables with her board president and communication staff representing the Abortion Fund of Ohio (AFO) at a community festival. She received outrage from people who felt their choices were being called into question.

The reactions were a result of the Supreme Court's decision to overturn the 1973 court case, Roe v. Wade.

Despite being leaders on opposing sides of the topic of abortion, both Endsley and Scotece receive the common question: What does this mean and what happens next? According to the Center for Reproductive Rights (CRR), about 50 years ago when Roe v. Wade was initially ruled in 1973, Roe communicated that the decision to have an abortion is an individual's right under the Fourteenth Amendment's guarantee of liberty. At the time the Supreme Court ruling, with a 7 to 2 vote, determined that any excessively restrictive state regulation of abortion is unconstitutional.

A new court case, Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization (Dobbs v. Jackson), sparked further questioning regarding the ruling of Roe v. Wade in March 2018. At that time, abortion was banned after 15 weeks of pregnancy in Mississippi, and Jackson Women's Health Organization (JWHO), the last standing abortion clinic in Mississippi, wanted to challenge that law, claiming that it was unconstitutional under Roe v. Wade. Thomas Dobbs, a state health officer of the Mississippi State Department of Health, defended Mississippi's state ban in court, but the lower courts agreed with JWHO and blocked the ban from taking effect.

Mississippi sought to appeal the ruling and took the case up to the Supreme Court, claiming that the ban was compliant with Roe v. Wade. However, their motive changed after Justice Amy Coney Barrett was admitted to the Supreme Court in October 2020. The state then sought

to overrule Roe v. Wade outright. On June 24, 2022, Roe v. Wade was overturned, putting the future of abortion into the state legislators' hands.

40 Days for Life is a 40-day campaign to end abortion through fasting and praying primarily stationed in Bryan, Texas. 40 Days for Life Campaign Strategist Theresa Endsley disagrees with the court's original determination in 1973 and supports the new precedent set by the overturning.

"There was a point in time when there was legalized slavery, there was a point in time when there were human beings counted as less than a full person to allow for voting and redistricting. At this point, we're at a time where the preborn child who has their own DNA, has their own life, who is growing inside of their mother's womb, is being denied their humanity," Endsley told Spark. "It's our job as pro-lifers to stand up for that humanity."

But the Interim Executive Director of AFO, an organization that provides funding for Ohioans needing access to abortions, Maggie Scotece with a background in law confirms that under the Constitution of the United States, a person does not have constitutional rights until they are born and functionally split.

A recent Spark survey of 92 East students shows that 75.3% identify as pro-choice, 19.4% are neutral, and 5.4% identify as pro-life.

OVERALL IMPACT

CRR says that there are now 13 states that have outlawed abortion since the overturning of Roe v. Wade. Ohio has a ban on abortion after 20 weeks of fertilization, which is typically 22 weeks after the first day of the woman's last normal menstrual period. Endsley strongly supports the ban since it is possible for the fetus to survive outside of the womb by that point.

"A child that is inside the womb at 22 weeks can be aborted. But if another child was just born at 22 weeks they will have medical intervention and survive," Endsley says. "What is so special about the second one, except that they have the medical intervention?"

Before the 20-week ban, Ohio established an abortion ban as early as six weeks into the pregnancy when the fetal heartbeat can be detected. Scotece claims that the detectable heartbeat at the six-week mark of pregnancy is not actually a heartbeat. According to Scotece and Live Science, a science news website, by six weeks, the fetal heartbeat is actually the electromagnetic pulse in the area that will eventually become the heart. The Doppler ultrasound picks up and emanates this pulse, which sounds like a heartbeat, but is not.

Cincinnati Children's Pediatric and Gynecology Fellow Lauryn Roth sees how the 22-week ban and Roe v. Wade affect her patients. She is noticing that it takes months for patients to be able to see the gynecology team due to wait times and that an increasing amount of her patients are asking her questions about Roe v. Wade and how it affects them.

"The situation is changing rapidly and it's changing depending on what your zip code is," Roth told Spark. "So I think that this rapidly changing environment creates fear, creates chaos, and it is really frustrating for my patients."

IMPACTS ON THE HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

In a comment after the decision to overturn Roe v. Wade, Supreme Court Associate Justice Clarence Thomas said that the Supreme Court should reconsider the protection of the rights to contraception access that are under the court case Griswold v. Connecticut. Roth states that a common misconception people have is that any form of birth control or emergency contraception is an abortifacient: medications that will abort a pregnancy if it is present. She clarifies that birth control and emergency contraception only prevent pregnancy from happening, they cannot stop an already present pregnancy.

"The way that [emergency contraceptions and some forms of birth control] work is that they actually delay ovulation, so the opportunity for the sperm and the egg to meet doesn't happen," Roth says. "Similarly, a lot of people think that IUDs [a small, plastic form of birth control inserted in a uterus] are going to cause

an abortion. Incorrect. They actually work by cutting the cervical mucus and acting like a brick wall, again, preventing the egg and the sperm from ever meeting."

Roth is frustrated that her patients are making decisions about contraception out of fear of losing access to it. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that in the years 2015-2017, 64.9% of women aged 15-49 in the United States used birth control.

"I'm getting patients [that are] coming in seeking contraception, not because they're sexually active and not because they plan to be sexually active in the near future, but because they're scared that they won't be able to access birth control in the future," Roth says. "They're coming to me now, requesting options preemptively."

Although she is frustrated with this, she also worries that it will become harder for her patients to receive the care that they need. Roth says her patients are also scared that they will lose their health care overall and go to jail for taking birth control.

"I know that some people might find this silly, but I've had patients come to me crying, telling me that they need their IUD removed," Roth says. "Even if it's for management of their heavy periods, not even for birth control, they think they're going to end up in jail because they have an IUD. It's happened multiple times. It's not just a one-off."

Despite Roth's patients' fear and Thomas's declaration about contraception, Endsley claims that no pro-lifer wants to punish women or

put them in jail. The goal of 40 Days for Life members and other pro-lifers is to remind the mother that she deserves to be helped and offer a hand of forgiveness.

"No pro-lifer and no pro-life legislation that I'm aware of that is being enforced at this time has anything to do with charging the mother with any sort of criminal activity," Endsley told Spark. "It's always about protecting both the woman and the child because we know over 60% of women claim that they feel coerced. They feel like they have no way out. They feel like someone else is pressuring them to [have an abortion]."

Shareholder and attorney of Ennis Britton Co., LPA, an Ohio law firm that provides legal services to school districts, Pam Leist clarifies that a woman who receives an unlawful abortion is not criminally liable; however, the physician would be. Beyond the law, Scotece recounts a time when a pro-lifer attempted to punish a woman getting an abortion through assault at an abortion clinic.

"I have a very dear friend who needed an abortion and was able to get it thankfully, but it involved a lot of trauma for her. We were young, we were both in college. She did not know how I felt about it and did not tell me because she was afraid I would judge her or not be supportive of her," Scotece says. "What broke my heart was not that she had an abortion, or that she'd made that choice. What broke my heart was she went through it and was actually assaulted at the clinic, not by the clinic but by a protester walking in, and she didn't have anybody to talk to about it because she didn't know how her best friend would feel about it."

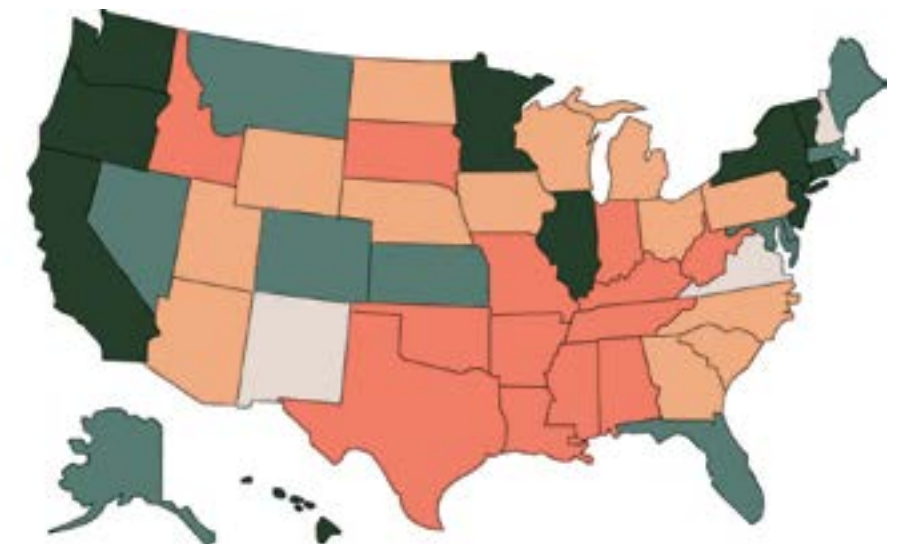
The overturning is also impacting healthcare workers. Roth says that the overturning is causing an ongoing decrease in obstetrics and gynecology (OBGYN) workers in the United States while there is already a shortage. The shortage of these workers in Ohio is a result of worry that they will be penalized for providing safe abortion care, so they continue their job in a more abortion-accepting state than Ohio.

Leist says that unlawful distribution of abortion-inducing drugs is a felony of the fourth degree, and if previously convicted it is a felony of the third degree. Similarly, whoever assists in an unlawful abortion faces a fifth-degree felony. Potential penalties include 6-12 months of jail time per offense, losing a medical license, and fines that reach up to \$20,000. Beyond that, doctors could potentially lose their eligibility to work in a school district, even as non-teaching staff, or lose their house. While physicians typically have professional liability coverage, Leist says that the coverage may not apply if the physician is engaged in an illegal act.

The future will also face a drastic decrease in OBGYN workers because of the changing education for them. Roth says that residency training - the training that doctors complete after medical school for all OBGYN residents - is required to teach future OBGYNs about medical and surgical abortions in order to maintain their credentialing. Future workers can opt-out of participating in that care, but Roth says it is crucial to learn how to perform abortion procedures to have that type of training present.

Abortion's Status in State Law in the United States

- Abortion is protected by state laws and other laws create additional access to abortion care
- Abortion is protected by state laws with limitations on access to care with limitations on access to are
- Abortion can be accessible but is unprotected by state law
- Abortion is banned completely and categorized as "illegal"
- No legal protections for abortion and has expressed a desire to ban abortion entirely



source **center for reproductive rights**

“[These bans] will exacerbate disparities that already exist in healthcare. Women who are of lower socioeconomic status and women who are black and Latino are going to be affected disproportionately by this change.” - Lauryn Roth

“About 50% of the states are not going to be able to provide [abortion] training for their residents and medical students,” Roth says. “These residents and these trainees are going to have to travel to other states to get the training that they need. I’ll be honest, many of these residents will not get that training. That is a terrifying thought because these are skills that an OBGYN worker needs in order to keep their patients safe.”

HOW IT IMPACTS PREGNANT PEOPLE AND CHILDREN

Endsley points out that a lot of people do not understand what the abortion procedure entails and how harmful it is for not only the baby but also the woman. She says that a common misconception about pro-lifers is that their motive is to control women, but instead, it is about protecting both the mother and the child.

“We don’t want to see any more women get hurt. It’s sad because a lot of people think they won’t be the one that gets hurt. They’ll think, ‘Well, that won’t happen to me,’ or, ‘I deserve what’s coming to me,’” Endsley says. “The reality is, God has a special plan for that mother and that child and there’s no way that child could be here if it weren’t for his plan.”

Endsley adds that even if someone was not Christian, it does not erase the fact that every human life deserves a chance and it is not the baby’s fault that they were created. Although Scotece recognizes that there is room for discussion about religion, she believes it doesn’t change the scientific fact that a fetus is dependent on the person who is pregnant up until childbirth. She says that the person who is pregnant is ultimately the only one that should make choices about what they want to do with their body.

Scotece adds that even though scientifically, new DNA is created and a new life starts at conception, it does not mean that a person exists yet. Roth additionally points out that abortion is incredibly safe and where harm is potentially done is during pregnancy and/or childbirth.

“[Pregnancy and childbirth] are the riskiest times for a woman. A woman is much more likely to die in that circumstance than they are getting an abortion,” Roth says. “Many of the patients I care for have other chronic medical conditions that elevate their risks of a pregnancy complication. But we have a lot of evidence to suggest that abortion is safe.”

Not only can medical conditions spark a complication with a pregnancy, but pregnancy can also worsen terminal medical conditions. Scotece mentions that the bans on abortion are putting people’s lives at risk because they are preventing people from getting the proper treatment that they need to survive.

“I cannot imagine that people who do what I do, who talk to patients every day, who talk to clinic workers every day, would ever think that these bans are okay. The impact of them is so inhumane,” Scotece says. “There are people in Ohio who have not been able to get cancer treatment because of the bans that are in place because they can’t obtain an abortion. They have to have the abortion before they can receive their cancer treatment.”

Additionally, Roth says that abortion bans do not decrease the rate of abortion, but it increases the number of unsafe abortions.

“[These bans] will exacerbate disparities that already exist in healthcare,” Roth says. “Women who are of lower socioeconomic status and women who are Black and Latino are going to be affected disproportionately by this change. I just can’t say it enough, it does not eliminate abortion; it just eliminates safe abortions.”

Scotece points out that not all illegal abortions are unsafe. In the 1970s, before Roe v. Wade was initially ruled, the vast majority of illegal abortions were unsafe because people did not have access to the same medications as they do today. Now there is wide access to abortion pills that can be self-managed safely.

“People have been managing their own reproductive health choices for millennia and they will continue to do that regardless of what the law says,” Scotece says. “The reality is that if people do not want to be pregnant, they will do anything they can to not be pregnant. [The AFO team] has even had clients tell us that if they cannot obtain an abortion, they will kill themselves because remaining pregnant is not an option for them.”

Opposingly, Endsley believes that abortion bans do result in fewer abortions.

“Many people think if something is legal then it’s moral and it must be okay,” Endsley says. “When people see it’s not legal, they begin to question it, and they begin to really think about it. That is what generally changes women’s minds; they see their baby on the ultrasound and they see that there’s hope. They think, ‘Oh my gosh,

this is a real child.’ So when they connect that ultrasound with their baby, then they change their mind.”

However, Scotece says that the issue goes far beyond seeing a fetus as a sign of hope. She points out that 60% of people who seek abortions are already parents and get abortions because they need to focus on the children that they already have at home.

“You’re putting that theoretical life over the life of the person who is actually carrying the fetus and over the life of any children they already have at home,” Scotece says. “Many people seek abortions because they cannot afford to have another child or their body physically will not survive having another child.”

Still, Endsley says that it is the woman’s responsibility to have the baby. She recognizes that it is not easy, but regardless, she reiterates that it is time for the woman to mature, even if it means placing her child in a closed or open adoption. However, Endsley says that adoption should not be considered the first and only solution if a woman does not believe she can be a parent right away.

“I know [someone who had an open adoption] and had the little girl walk down the aisle with her at her wedding,” Endsley says. “She still has a relationship with her and that little girl now has kids of her own. So, that child’s legacy does not just start with her, it continues.”

Yet, Endsley says that adoption should not be considered the first and only solution if a woman does not believe she can be a parent right away.

“[The mother] needs to sit down with someone, look through the cost, and look into how she can stabilize her situation,” Endsley says. “Then, if she’s saying, ‘I really think that adoption is a better decision for me,’ then she needs to move forward with making an adoption plan.”

Scotece says that adoption is not an alternative to pregnancy; it is an alternative to parenting. It can also be highly traumatic for both the child and the biological parent. Even if a woman decides to put her child up for adoption, the pregnancy requires costly prenatal care, which disproportionately affects women who cannot afford it. Pregnancy also impacts the physical health of a woman such as the way the teeth and internal organs function for the rest of the woman’s life. Beyond the woman’s physical health, the mental load of being pregnant, giving birth, and going through the adoption process is huge.

“Not to mention the impact it has on the child who was adopted out. Many of the people who are proponents of adoption as an alternative to abortion have not listened to the stories of adoptees,” Scotece says. “Specifically, transracial adoptees talk about the harm caused in their adoption process.”

MISCONCEPTIONS SURROUNDING ABORTION

Scotece says that the person who knows what is best for their own health, parenting, and pregnancy choices is that individual. Scotece has experienced a time in her life when she did not have that freedom of choice and it created a big risk in her life.

“There have been times in my life when I was not able to control my own contraceptives because I was in an abusive relationship. If I were to have gotten pregnant at that time, the abuse would have gotten worse,” Scotece says. “When women get pregnant in abusive relationships, it drastically increases the likelihood that they’re going to be murdered by their partner.”

Additionally, Scotece says that not all abortion procedures result from unwanted pregnancies.

“A friend who has been trying to conceive for many years now has had to have multiple abortions because of her miscarriages that don’t fully pass,” Scotece says. “She has had to travel out of state to get medical care for her miscarriages because they are technically abortion procedures. Watching somebody I love go through that and go through all of the emotions is painful.”

Scotece adds that a common misconception some people have is that men should not be included in the conversation about abortion

continued from page 22

“Every year we get three or four [new] kids,” Kreider said. “It’s rare that we get someone who has never played before, but I always welcome anybody at any level.”

Warren discovered that as much as he enjoys playing some of the best players, he also loves playing against newer participants. It’s the “horsing around” and “talking trash” that he enjoys because chess “[doesn’t] always have to be serious.” He compares chess culture to the same way the varsity football team interacts. There’s a varsity group in

since they can not get pregnant. But Scotece says that is false because transgender men and nonbinary folk also need abortions and oftentimes face higher barriers and higher stigma. It is harder for them to find healthcare providers who are able to provide the care they need.

“Abortion impacts everybody’s lives. It is not just a topic that impacts women. Every single person has a story about how they are related to abortion. About one in four women seek an abortion during their lifetime,” Scotece says. “I think people who have the potential to be pregnant, and the people who have had abortions are the people who should be leading the conversation, but this impacts all of us, and [the issue is] not going to go away if only half the population talks about it.”

Despite their differences in opinion, Endsley agrees with Scotece that men should be included in the conversation of abortion but nonetheless has different reasoning. She says that it is hypocritical for people who support the verdict of Roe v. Wade to say men should not have a voice since it was nine male justices that originally voted on the case, and, it was a female justice, Amy Coney Barret, who was on the opinion of overturning Roe v. Wade. She also points out that it takes two to make a baby.

“As far as the male words and the male opinion, they have a powerful influence on a woman’s opinion,” Endsley says. “I worked

at a crisis pregnancy center for two years and I would see women change their mind really quickly whenever the father wanted them to have a baby.”

Many factors play into the argument over whether abortion should be regulated in the law. There are moral and scientific arguments for both sides, however, no matter the debate, Roth believes that the issue at hand is that many state legislators do not realize that the abortion laws that are being established create more complex issues. Such issues include a rise in morbidity and mortality in pregnant women, the ability to access additional aspects of health care, and people not being able necessary contraception or other medications. However, Leist adds that the conflict in opinions of these state legislators creates a lot of gray areas in the law.

“I’m a registered lobbyist and I help legislators draft state laws. I think it’s always interesting how those [abortion] laws are drafted and the fact that there are such strong opinions on either side of this [issue],” Leist told Spark. “I think people are always going to be trying to find ways to challenge [those laws], so it’s probably going to be an unsettled area for a little while before we really have a sense of what the long-term and short-term implications are.” •

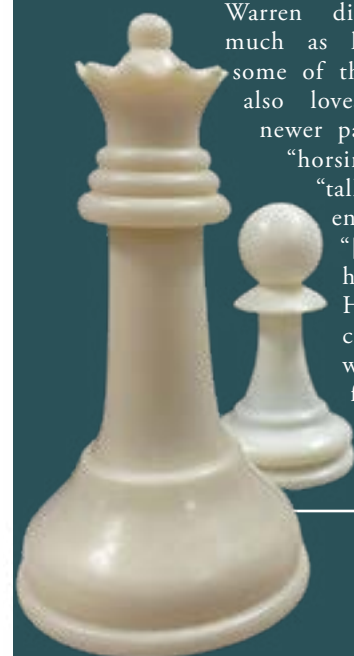
chess that has its own “competition” and “jokes” that makes this comparison true.

Both Kreider and Warren told Spark that they welcome anybody interested in chess, no matter their ability level. They hope to find kids that enjoy the game and enjoy the social aspects of the sport.

“The game chess has its own ‘culture and identity,’” said Warren. He wants to be able to show and bring more voices to that understanding.

“We are always looking for people who just enjoy the game. You don’t have to be a great player, we all have different ability levels,” said Kreider. He compares the process of learning chess to the same as “building rockets.”

The Lakota East chess club consists of around 25 members that meet every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. Their goal is to further prepare for the current GMC (Greater Miami Conference) matches with other schools in the Ohio area, already claiming victory against Mason, Lakota West, and Sycamore. In 2021, the team finished fourth, and their best year yet was in 2018 when they placed third. •



East sophomore Ryan Everding and senior Sean Huggins shake hands after a match.





ONLY CAROLINA KNOWS

Delia Owens's debut novel has now become a captivating mystery film starring Daisy Edgar-Jones, Taylor John Smith and David Strathairn.

review **ezri colpi** | art **ava huening**



Director: Olivia Newman
Budget and Profit: \$136 million worldwide on a \$24 million budget
Running time: 2h 5m

The cicadas buzz as a long stretch of green moss and tall trees run along a secluded marsh, overlooking a golden sunset and casting a shimmer on the water. While the setting of the film adaptation of "Where the Crawdads Sing" is beautifully aligned with the imagery highlighted in the book, the movie can be lacking in substance and plot.

Perhaps it was a hard task to take a best-selling and widely loved story and transform it into a film perfectly corresponding to every detail; however, the creators had set high hopes for the viewers. Not only was award-winning actress Reese Witherspoon a producer of the film, but the widely adored Taylor Swift wrote and performed the theme song, adding to the expectations surrounding the film's arrival.

The result of its anticipated release is a movie that's surprisingly hard to follow. Director Olivia Newman, working from a script by Lucy Alibar, jumps back and forth without much momentum between a young woman's murder trial and the recollections of her rough-and-tumble childhood in 1950s and '60s North Carolina.

This becomes especially obvious in the film's courtroom scenes, which offer the predictable amount of dramatic beats and cliché suspense. Every time the film cuts back to protagonist Kya Clark's murder trial, which happens seemingly out of

nowhere with no discernible rhyme or reason, the story's timeline starts to become more and more confusing.

For a film depicting the rigorous misfortunes and wild upbringing of a girl living by her own rules, the overall mood was surprisingly tame and restrained. Other than the underrated actress Daisy Edgar Jones' portrayal of Kya, most characters in the movie seemed underdeveloped in comparison to her, and it would have been interesting to see them evolve alongside the leading role.

The main issue that viewers often criticize the movie for is its portrayal of Kya. The adventurous and independent main character is described as nearly illiterate and borderline unkempt and dirty, a result of living in a marsh for her entire childhood. Understandably, the producers altered Kya's speech to help the audience understand the plot and keep a steady pace, however it seemed unrealistic for the character to not struggle with her words. Kya also never seemed to appear as though she lived in swamp water and mud. She always has untangled hair, a clean face, and a big enough wardrobe to show her in new clothes in almost every scene. The girl from the novel, covered in dirt and consumed by gnawing loneliness, is sanded down and smoothed out to become more aesthetically pleasing.

With this being said, there were things the movie did objectively well. It does a great job exploring the book's sensitive topics of abuse, neglect, abandonment, and assault in an extremely realistic way. You truly feel every emotion throughout this movie, whether you want to or not.

The slower pace was necessary in order for the audience to truly understand Kya's upbringing and to become invested in her character. Without it, it would not have been as heartbreaking or personal when she went through multiple traumatic circumstances. It also matched the vibe of the slow, Southern town the story took place in.

It is a complicated and tangled tale to recreate, but with this being said, it was beautifully filmed, the bright colors driving away the gothic shadows when despair seems set to overwhelm the narrative. The audience sees her development, progress, and independence from her father and others. This film has its ups and downs, but it is both aesthetically pleasing and captivating, perfect for an audience who enjoys visual cinematography. However, for those who have read the novel, the controversy that exists around the film could taint your view of this widely-adored book. •

STRUMMING A CHORD

Seven-time Grammy award winner Billie Eilish released two new surprise songs to excite fans for her upcoming junior album.

of streams: 151,386,762
Listening time: 8:17
Record label: Interscope Records
Producer: Finneas O'Connell



review **jaedyn armbruster**
art **riley grosnickle** | infographic **alex schwind**

"Maybe I'm the problem," the crowd sings back to Billie Eilish as she sings her newly released song "TV" for the first time in Manchester, England, on June 7, while on her "Happier Than Ever" tour. To the crowd's shock, the song was unreleased at the time.

A little over a month later, Eilish dropped two new songs on July 21 without any warning. Eilish posted on her website and said, "SURPRISE! "Guitar Songs" !! featuring "TV" and "The 30th" is out now! finneas and i really wanted these to be yours as soon as possible. So here they are!"

Jumping into the first track on the single, there's "TV". This song opens with a soft guitar melody before Eilish's gentle voice floods into your ears. In this song, Eilish creates a heartfelt tune with captivating lyrics that highlights her vocals and cuts back on the production.

Although Eilish is known for being honest and real in her music, most of her songs stay on the surface of what is really happening. This song, contrary to her other music, is personal and it demonstrates a vulnerability.

Eilish opens up about her desire to escape her feelings and heartache over a recently ended relationship. Willingly admitting her struggles is an admirably humble attitude and shows her maturity as an artist.

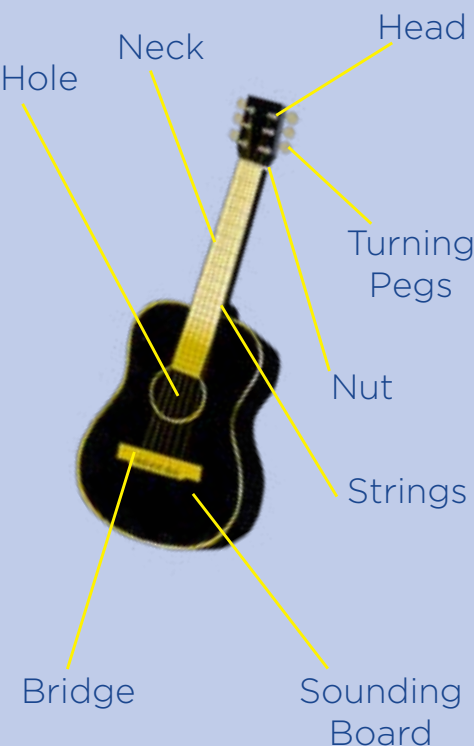
The song then takes a drastic turn as the next lyric is, "The internet's gone wild watching movie stars on trial, while they're overturning Roe V. Wade." At the time it was written, Roe v. Wade was not yet overturned, but the world was caught up in the Johnny Depp v. Amber Heard trial; Eilish's awareness and voice on these serious topics are admirable, especially considering the platform she has.

When Eilish first played this song in Manchester, she recorded the crowd singing the lyrics back to her and inserted it towards the end of the song. This addition allows for fans to feel included in the song and closer to Eilish.

Completely shifting gears, we have "The 30th". This song is about a car accident that happened on November 30, 2021 to someone close to her. Eilish said it was "the most indescribable thing to have to witness and experience."

The only word to describe this song is raw. It feels like you're reading straight out of a diary. The lyrics themselves are understandable, but without context it could end up being a little confusing to connect the dots.

The highlight of this song, hands down, is the bridge. For the most part, this song has a light melody with only an acoustic



source **sixstringacoustic.com**

guitar in the background, extenuating Eilish's vocals. Unlike any other part of the song, the bridge builds up a crescendo with the instrumental and vocals getting louder, until the end when the instrumental is dropped.

During this, Eilish talks about scenarios that could have ended up worse for the person in the accident. Like, "What if it happened to you on a different day," or "On a bridge, where there wasn't a rail in the way." This draws attention to the seriousness of the topic and how personal it is to her.

These two tear-jerking songs are the ideal acoustic melody with beautifully written lyrics and vocals to tie it all together. Fans are awaiting the release of Eilish's junior album, which she stated she has been working on. While these songs will not be included on the track list, they will still be played just as much. •



MILWAUKEE MONSTER

This salacious and unnerving limited series takes over Netflix streaming records.

review **max anagnostou**
art **andie madding**



Written by- Ryan Murphy
and Ian Brennan
Release date- Sep 2, 2022
Running time- 8 hours 54
minutes

DAHMER: Monster The Jeffery Dahmer Story is tough to watch with all of the gruesome violence, but the tastefully-chosen music and ominous ambiance keeps the viewer hooked and makes it an almost addictive watch.

Even amidst controversial content, the show continues to soar. Debuting and staying at #1 for the fourth week in a row, Dahmer's over 700 million hours of watchtime cements it as the fourth most-watched title on Netflix. Ever.

Despite the series' popularity, critics argue that though the limited series is unnervingly accurate and precise in the telling of his life, the story of Dahmer has been told in many mediums over and over since 1992, and this series empathizes with Jeffrey's struggles.

One of the most shocking parts of the show was its delve into Dahmer's mother's substance addiction, though this does not in any way justify the fetishization of Jeffrey himself. The writers introduce in the first episode, that he might have "brain damage" resulting from a hernia operation, in an attempt to excuse his psychotic tendencies. Ryan Murphy's biggest restriction when making Dahmer was that the show would not be from the perspective of Jeffrey Dahmer himself, but an objective view. The plan was put in place despite the aforementioned conflicts that humanize him. With six movies and three other shows dedicated to Dahmer, this series can't help but fall into the trap of fetishizing a monster, while trying to make a fleshed-out character – no pun intended.

Aside from the many issues this show introduces, its saving grace was Emmy-award winning actress Niecy Nash's performance as Dahmer's neighbor Glenda Cleveland. However, according to an article by The Independent, Glenda's role in the show was a dramatization. Crime reporter Anne E. Schwartz for the Milwaukee Journal stated that the cinematographers took "artistic license" and that "Ms. Cleveland...lived in a separate building." Cleveland is one of – if not the most impactful supporting roles, and

to think that the creators would completely fabricate the story, just for entertainmen, is sickening.

Regardless of the series' performances, wasted potential arose in the promotion for the show. The poster Netflix released for the show exuded an unnerving ambience that sucked the viewer in. The yellow gleam of his irises emits curiosity and practically begs the viewer to watch the show. Nevertheless, the alluring elements in the promotion fell flat when watching the limited series.

Murphy and Brennan continue to violate the name of entertainment through the lack of consent from the victims' families. Because the court proceedings are in the public domain, not one penny is required to go to those afflicted. To quote Eric Perry, the cousin of victim Errol Lindsey, "My cousins wake up every few months at this point with a bunch of calls and messages and they know there's another Dahmer show. It's cruel...My family found out when everyone else did." The continual iconization of Jeffrey Dahmer only leads to pain for the families and more money in the pockets of those who want to "give respect to the victims."

Though Evan Peters is widely adored as an actor, It's hard to think of him as this version of Jeffrey.

For someone who has a filmography full of critically and commercially acclaimed roles, Jeffrey Dahmer will not be another Tate Langdon or Peter Maximoff. Not to say Dahmer doesn't have good actin; it's perfect for a fan of true crime, violence, gore, and unsettling themes, but the writing is lacking. The convoluted plot structure leaves the audience watching for six episodes just to get back to where the show started – and I couldn't help but be left unfulfilled. •



THE KING

Director- Baz Luhrmann
Budget- \$85 million
Release Date- June 24,
2022

The King of Rock and Roll is commemorated through 2022's "Elvis" hitting the theaters with its flashy and maximalist cinematography.



review and art **andie madding**

As one of the most anticipated movies of the season, "Elvis," directed by Baz Luhrmann, who also directed "Romeo and Juliet" and "The Great Gatsby," proved to be a hit among audiences and reviewers alike. The sheer scale of the film, as it was in the works for nearly 14 years and had an 85 million dollar budget, was jaw-dropping and led to a lot of buzz within Elvis fans around the world. Austin Butler, who portrayed The King himself, had major shoes to fill and was able to pull it off

flawlessly. This film raked in 276.7 million dollars worldwide and blew audiences right out of the water.

Baz Luhrmann is typically a hit or miss with his directing choices, however this maximalist style of cinematography combined with the whirlwind of Elvis' career creates the perfect atmosphere for the drama to unfold. Each shot is full of vivacious color and energy that lights up every scene. This brightness is juxtaposed by a more neutral color palette when heavier emotions are involved, providing the perfect amount of solemnity for the audience.

Going in with the expectation of a three hour movie deterred a fair amount of viewers from this film. As always there were a few critics whose main qualm was the length of the film, however the duration did not disengage the audience and, in fact, was an adequate length for the plot to unfold. Because Luhrmann's style is so over the top, every second was filled to the brim with music, colors, and captivating visuals. There was never a moment in the theater where the movie droned on or created disinterest among viewers.

Austin Butler's performance

was perfect. After years of research and preparation, Butler's mannerisms and voice matched The King to the very word. Many of Elvis' famous performances were recreated in the film, which allowed fans to reminisce about his legendary

shows. There were times, especially during the final scene of the movie, where it was even difficult to tell the difference between Butler and Presley. Butler, who was not previously a singer, trained in order to perform every song with his own voice. Many of the early Elvis fans were able to appreciate these recreations. They never came off as cheesy or cheap grabs and created a sense of nostalgia within the audience.

That being said, the costuming, hair, and makeup team did an outstanding job for the duration of the movie. Typically when a biopic or period piece is released, the public is quick to judge on both the accuracy and quality. "Elvis," however, did not fail to replicate the aesthetic of every character exceptionally well. One of the most overlooked characters of this category was Priscilla Presley. Mrs. Presley's hair and costumes were spot on and transported the audience back to the '60s and '70s. The quality of the looks helped the viewer feel connected to the time period and transformed the viewing experience.

The only hiccup with this movie is Colonel Parker. The movie is set through his perspective and there seems to be a lot of focus on his career and involvement within the Elvis franchise. Though Parker was an integral part of Elvis' life and should be included in the film, I found that his perspective often added to the more dull sections of the movie. This was not one of the better Tom Hanks performances. His Southern accent was lacking and his characterization fell flat inside the lively world that Luhrmann created. Perhaps showing Elvis' story through Priscilla's eyes, expertly portrayed by Olivia DeJonge with her understated, yet capturing, performance.

Though Hanks' performance and plotline fell short, the rest of the cast (in particular Austin Butler) pulled off this ambitious cinema style. Luhrmann was incredibly brave to take on such an iconic story and one of the biggest pop culture legends in recent history, and it was impressive that he was able to accomplish his goal. This movie earned a top spot in my biopic hall of fame and I can't wait to see what the stars of this film will do next. •



The Master of Puppets

Netflix's hit television series, "Stranger Things," returns with its longest and darkest installment yet in an entertaining penultimate season.



review **zach shultz** | art **riley grosnickle**

After a long three years, "Stranger Things", Netflix's hit science fiction horror drama series, finally released its long-awaited fourth season over the past summer. Nine lengthy episodes averaging about an hour each released across two volumes on May 27 and July 1 respectively. The star-studded ensemble cast returns, along with a couple of new characters joining the ranks, including flamboyant Eddie (Joseph Quinn) and cold and calculating One (Jamie Campbell Bower).

The season contains three interwoven plotlines that follow the cast divided into groups. The miniature ensembles are spread out across various locations located far away from each other, in comparison to recent seasons, where the entire story took place in the fictional suburban town of Hawkins, Indiana. Hawkins remains the centerpiece of the plot, as the two other storylines take place in California and a Soviet prison camp, both being drastic changes. The plotlines start out relatively self-contained but slowly connect as the season progresses. At times it can be challenging to follow, as all three are given important details in each episode, but as long as the viewer pays attention, everything falls into place.

The problem with an intense plot structure containing a cast of over 20 characters is that some are going to be pushed aside in favor of others. One of this season's weaknesses is that some characters, who used to be huge players in the story in past seasons, receive low screen time and serve less important roles, such as Mike (Finn Wolfhard) and Jonathan (Charlie Heaton). The upside of this is that the characters who do have more screen time get a lot of moments to shine, especially the characters of Eleven (Millie Bobby Brown) and Max (Sadie Sink). Their acting performances are nothing short of phenomenal and stand out against the rest of the cast, which is still full of great performances.

One thing unique about this season is the darker and more mature tone. While horror was an element of past seasons, it comes to the forefront this time around, with more gruesome deaths that produce ghastly themes and messages. Because the child actors from the cast have grown up

now, their characters have to grow up too, and the Duffer Brothers described this as a chance to delve deeper into the horror territory, which really benefits the show. The more mature tone is very much needed to tell the story it wants to tell, and it does an amazing job of it this season. At this point, the audience has spent multiple hours from previous seasons learning to love these characters, and now that the stakes are higher and the characters are in danger, it becomes unclear who will survive and who won't. This increases the suspense and adds fearful emotion to the show and the viewer.

One unfortunate aspect is several plot fake-outs in the season finale. While the 2.5-hour-long episode is nothing short of epic, there are several instances where something seems very likely to happen, but doesn't, and it almost comes off as cheap and rushed to the viewer.

Nevertheless, the season excels in lots of other aspects, such as amazing visuals and action, including an enticing one-take action scene in episode four that really blew me away. The soundtrack continues the previous seasons' trend of incorporating old 80s hits, but this season arguably does it best, with songs like "Running Up That Hill (A Deal with God)" by Kate Bush and "Master of Puppets" by Metallica significantly elevating the scenes they occupy, which would not be the same without these tracks. These songs also fit with the themes of the season, showcasing their ability to stay relevant.

Aside from the sometimes overstuffed plot, the direction by the Duffer Brothers is amazing. This season really does a lot of things right, and it perfectly sets up the stage for the final season releasing in the upcoming years. •

Creator: Duffer Brothers
Budget: \$30 million per episode
Viewership: 1.4 billion hours viewed
Run time: Episodes average at 1hr



CELEBRITIES RESPOND TO ROE V. WADE

story **zach shultz**
art **emily henderson**

Michelle Obama
Former First Lady

"I am heartbroken - for the teenage girl, full of zest and promise, who won't be able to finish school or live the life she wants because her state controls her reproductive decisions; for the mother of a nonviable pregnancy who is now forced to bring that pregnancy to term; for the parents watching their child's future evaporate before their very eyes; for the health care workers who can no longer help them without risking jail time."



Megan Fox
Actress, model

"[The Supreme Court] would rather focus on restricting women and LGBTQIA's than focus on getting weapons out of the hands of dangerous, violent, and mentally unstable individuals."



Selena Gomez
Singer, songwriter, actress

"It's about voting. Men need to stand up and also speak against this issue. It's also the amount of women that are hurting. I'm just not happy and I hope that we can do everything in our power to do something to change that."

Variety interview at LA premiere of "Only Murders in the Building" Season 2, June 27th



John Oliver
Television host, comedian, actor

"[This] is pretty tough to take given that for some, especially disabled people and other vulnerable groups, forced pregnancy could be a death sentence," Oliver said in response to "Today, Life Won," a tweet from former Vice President Mike Pence. "The message that the Supreme Court sends is pretty clear: We don't care if pregnancy kills you, we don't care if you don't want to be pregnant, we don't care about you at all."

Excerpts from "Last Week Tonight with John Oliver", June 26th



PIC SIX: FRENCH FRIES

Spark staffer Maggie Huss ranks her favorite fast food french fries.



#1 WENDY'S \$1.49

7436 Tylersville Rd, West Chester, OH 45069

Going through the drive-thru was not the best experience. They were not overly happy to be serving me, but they still had good manners and I was in and out within ten minutes. It was extremely quick. I was worried that I would be late to work but they were fast and efficient.

These fries were possibly the best fries I have ever tasted. They were salted perfectly and tasted like

they were freshly made. They were extremely hot at first, but were the perfect temperature by the time I got to work, which I appreciate. They were crispy and none of them were soggy. They were a little greasy but nothing I couldn't handle. When I finished the fries, I was ready for more. I didn't need any sauce to dip them in because they were so delicious. These were definitely the superior of all the fries I tried.



#2 RAISING CANES \$1.69

7721 Tylersville Rd, West Chester, OH 45069

When I first pulled into the drive-thru, I was expecting it to be long, because usually the line is wrapped around the building where it takes 12 o'clock. I have been before where it takes 20-30 minutes just to get through the line. In spite of that, I waited around ten minutes. I was really grateful that it was not a long waiting experience. The Canes workers were all very friendly and overly kind which made my day go by much smoother. The fries were acceptable overall. They had a crispy outside and soft middle that

made it enjoyable to eat. A few fries were soggy towards the bottom of the box. The texture was perfect. They were still warm when I took them home to eat which was also a big surprise. They come in a closed container so the fries stay hot longer. They were very delicious, especially paired with their signature Canes fry sauce. My only complaint would be that they were overly salty, which is not my favorite quality. The medium size had a large number of fries, which was admirable for such a small price.



#3 MCDONALD'S \$1.79

7679 Doc Dr, West Chester, OH 45069

I went through the drive-thru to get these fries and waited a total of ten minutes until I was given my food at the window. For McDonald's, this is not a long time considering the noon rush. Although, when asked for my order, they did not seem very joyful. Now, I would not expect the kindest person, however, being polite is something that makes me want to go back. When first looking at the presentation, I was not impressed. They could have put more in the container and the fries were not freshly made. They were, however, salted perfectly

which surprised me, because it is truly hard to get that perfect salted taste. They were kept warm so they were an excellent temperature for eating. Most of them were crispy fries which I enjoy but the occasional few were soggy. It is always hit or miss when getting fries from here. They are either very good or just alright. For being so cheap and the container looking small, I still feel like there was a greater amount of fries in there than it seems from the human eye. I would choose this place as having some of the best fast food french fries so I would come back for more!

PIC SIX: FRENCH FRIES

reviews and photography **maggie huss**



#4 BURGER KING \$2.79

7782 Dudley Dr, West Chester, OH 45069

The drive-thru was the fastest line I have ever been through. It took less than three minutes to order, pay, and receive the fries. The worker at the window was polite and the service was impeccable. The fries tasted very flavorful. They were salty, warm, and crispy. They did get cold relatively quickly and I prefer my fries thinner. Plus, their fries were

thicker than usual but they would be good for dipping in ice cream. I have never been to Burger King so I was surprised that they were decently good and freshly made. The price seems excessive, especially since the medium looks small. I was not impressed with the amount of fries that were in the container, but overall, they were still quality fries.



#5 CHICK-FIL-A \$2.29

7733 Voice of America Centre Dr, West Chester, OH 45069

The experience of getting these fries was amazing. The employees there are so kind and polite. The service was efficient and the line was moving quickly. I was in the parking lot for less than ten minutes. This is always a good place to go when I need to eat but I'm in a rush. The presentation of the fries was acceptable but it was underfilled. They could have easily added more fries into the container. The temperature for eating was ideal, they were not too hot and they were also not too cold. They seemed to be freshly made but they did

have the soggy fry texture which is not my favorite. The top of the fries were perfectly crispy but they were soggy once you got to the bottom. Also, they were unfortunately not salty. It almost seemed like they forgot to put salt on the fries. For only getting so many fries, the price seemed a bit exaggerated, and I feel I was not getting the amount I was paying for. If I were to choose a side to pair with my chicken nuggets, I would choose the soup over the waffle fries. In other words, Chick-Fil-A needs to step up their game with their fries.



#6 DAIRY QUEEN \$2.89

7485 Wyandot Ln, Liberty Township, OH 45044

When getting these fries, the service was fast and I was in the drive-thru for less than five minutes. They were very nice and polite. There was not a huge line so I was in and out. The fries were long and crispy, which is the best type of fry. They tasted okay, but had a weird aftertaste, similar to chemicals. I tried to dip my fries into my

blizzard to see if they would taste better but it did not help. They were only lightly salted and not super hot. These definitely were not my favorite fries especially since they seem costly for the amount in the container that they came in. I was almost getting a small fry for the price of a large. I would definitely look for cheese curds or pretzels sticks when going here as a side for my meal.

SEAMLESS WORK

story **jaclynn mosley** | photography **audrey allen** | art **ezri colpi** | model **corinne hayes**

Spark editor Jaclynn Mosley sheds light on what it's like to be a seamstress and what to expect in terms of fashion in the near future.

One of the many benefits of learning to sew is being able to create a piece of clothing that is one of a kind and well fitting. Shopping at JoAnn Fabrics can be overwhelming with the many aisles of fabric bolts. It is sectioned by cotton, apparel fabric, flannel, fleece, knit, cosplay, and specialty fabric. Since I've gotten my drivers license, I go almost every week to purchase fabric.

It used to be that sewing was a good way to save money but that's not accurate, not because of inflation, but a yard of fabric can be expensive. Typically I spend \$6 to \$21 per yard. Depending on the width of the fabric, a yard can create a short sleeve top, a mini skirt, or shorts. For a dress,

I usually need at least two yards. However, if you use thrifted bed sheets or curtains that could be less expensive.

In outfit two, I bought a half of a yard of fabric for \$6 to create the tank top. The tiered maxi skirt was \$28 and took about two and a half yards. In outfit four, the long sleeve top took 1 and a half yards of fabric being \$20. The skirt fabric was \$8 for 1 yard.

The most crucial part of the sewing process is cutting the fabric. The majority of people use sewing patterns. I tend to draft my own patterns based on YouTube videos and if I do use a premade pattern, I will often adjust it.

Once you learn the basics of the machine, sewing isn't that difficult.

Knits can be difficult to work with as they can be slippery; however, it is probably the fabric I purchase most often. Knits give more flexibility – how the garment fits because of the elasticity.

In outfit two, the tank top took the shortest amount of time, adding up to about an hour. The skirt took a few days since I didn't own a serger. All of the rectangle's sides had to be hemmed. In outfit four, the top took about two hours. The mini skirt only took an hour as it was fairly simple with the half circle skirt and waistband.



Outfit 1

A classic white tank top, never goes out of style. The one pictured is from Target, and showing to be popular. It is a neutral piece so it goes with almost everything and so I'm here for the trend. As for jackets, the bomber jacket could be a popular trend in the upcoming months. The bomber jacket could be paired with the head-to-toe leather look as well. The jeans aren't necessarily a trend however they are timeless and never go out of style.

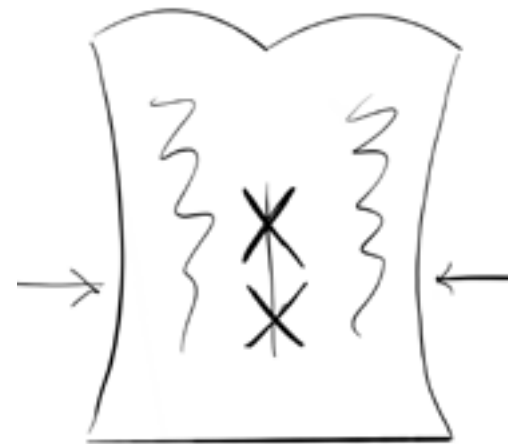


Maxi skirts are great for the colder weather. I was drawn to the fabric because it varied from what I've defined as my style in the past and it reminded me of fall colors and patterns. According to Popsugar, Salted Caramel is going to be the 2022 neutral. The top I created isn't the exact color but it has a similar hue.

Outfit 2



Outfit 3



One of the trends that surprised me was the "head-to-toe leather" I don't know how wearable this trend is however I think this outfit came out much better than expected. The top was sewn by East senior Noor Hamidullah while the skirt is from Hollister. According to Seventeen, the corset look will be popular as they were the hottest trend at the Met Gala.



Outfit 4

My style has always been unique, consisting of both bold colors and patterns. So, by personal preference this outfit has to be one of my favorites. One of the trends is bold, non-fall colors. According to Marie Claire, popular colors are pops of purple, marigold-round, barbiecore pink, and wild blue yonder. The fabric is vibrant and the top is incredibly soft, similar to loungewear. Another trend is metallic, shiny, and sequin-oriented clothes. This trend may not work for everyone but I loved the idea of it. In contrast to the maxi skirt, the other trend is the mini skirt.

Glossary:

- Fabric Bolt:** unit of fabric used to measure cloth.
- Hem:** edges of fabric folded and sewn to avoid fraying
- Knits:** elastic, breathable fabric created by yarn with needles
- Mini skirt:** length well above the knee
- Maxi skirt:** length reaching to the ankle
- Serger:** a device that finishes seams to avoid fraying

ADMEIRING UP CLOSE

Lakota East Athletic Director (AD) Jill Meiring explains her new position and the differences between the Head AD and Assistant AD.

story and photography **colin kunz**

Twenty-seven sports. Three different seasons. Managing student-athletes, their parents, and coaches. Academic eligibility. All just the tip of the iceberg for a high school athletic director. So when your athletic director of 12 years leaves, how do you fill that spot? The clear choice is assistant Jill Meiring.

Taking over as Athletic Director is a welcome step up for Meiring. Being in athletics was something she was always interested in.

“My passion was coaching, coming out of college. I coached a lot, and that’s how I got into the athletic realm,” Meiring told Spark.

She started her career as a physical education teacher and women’s basketball coach at Hamilton and then moved to Saint Ursula to coach women’s basketball.

After some time, though, she wanted to move out of coaching but still stay in athletics, which led her to apply for the Assistant Athletic Director position at Saint Ursula. She got the position and held it there for three years until she met East Athletic Director Richard Bryant, who gave her the opportunity to come to East, where she was the assistant for five years.

Meiring comes from a small town called Fort Recovery, located on the eastern side of Ohio. It had “one stoplight” and “more cows than people,” Meiring jokes. She added that only about 1,100 people were in the town, and everyone did everything. Meiring says that she was in two sports, band, choir, her mom was a

teacher, and her dad had a business downtown. She said it was a great situation, though, because everyone rallied behind the athletic teams and had a fun atmosphere and great support. For schooling, she went to Denison University, located northeast of Columbus, in Granville, where she played both basketball and softball.

Moving up into the position of Head Athletic Director comes with its changes, but already having extensive experience makes the move easier for everyone involved. Head basketball coach Clinton Adkins was supportive of the move.

“I’m just glad that Mrs. Meiring is the one that was hired,” Adkins told Spark. “Obviously, she’s going to put her own twists and spins on things, but we’re gonna have some continuity in the athletic program.”

This continuity was something that Meiring emphasized herself, saying that the role was very similar but just focused on some different responsibilities.

Despite the roles being similar, there are some things that Meiring wants to focus on. One new addition that people may notice is the interactive video board which was added on main street. It allows anyone to come up to it and see various things, including team schedules, team information, and the various records that athletes hold at Lakota East. Meiring says that she saw the idea while visiting another school and liked it so much that she wanted to have it implemented at East.

“It really connects alumni to our current students, and vice versa,” Meiring says.

The video board was completely funded by the boosters, who were immediately sold on the idea and getting it implemented. Getting the board set up was the “summer project” for the athletic department. In addition to getting the boosters sold, they also had to go back and look through archives and find the records and information that can be seen on the board.

Meiring adds that it will be an “awesome bridge between the community and what’s going on at East.” In the future, Meiring also added that she would like to put focus on more alumni-focused events. On top of that, she would like to re-implement one of her past ideas, which was a women in sport leadership conference, which allowed women from the conference and the city to meet at East.

Taking over the position happened rather quickly for Meiring, with everything happening within a few days. When former Athletic Director Richard Bryant told Meiring he was leaving, he offered her the position to take over. She was understandably excited and told him she would like to accept the position. From there, she got a call from the Human Resources Director and talked to Lakota East Principal Rob Burnside, whom Meiring says was a “huge advocate for her taking over.” Meiring added that she got offered the position because of the work she did as assistant Athletic Director. Meiring was super grateful to be offered the position. She also added that there are not many female Athletic Directors in the city and that she is “happy she can be that role model.”

As the Athletic Director, an important area for Meiring is seeing the student-athletes play. She makes it a point to get out and attend various sports games during the week. Meiring says that she wants the athletes to know that she “supports them and everything that they do.” She added that she wants athletes to “see that we believe in them, and they have our support.” We love to “watch them grow as people and players.” She explains that it is really “rewarding for an Athletic Director.”

In addition to having that relationship with the players, she talked about having a close relationship with the coaches at East. Meiring says, “They can come in and talk to me about any issue they have, and I think they know that I have their back.”

Assistant Football Coach Carl Longworth was also excited about the hire. Something that stood out to him was Meiring’s enthusiasm and passion.

“She has been very approachable for any needs the football program has had, and she made sure to expedite things that the football team needed during the season,” Longworth told Spark. •

PAYING THE PRICE

After a tough injury East junior Abigail Price has been working through physical struggles, and facing mental challenges on the court.

story and photography **jaedyn armbruster**

As East junior Abigail Price was getting ready for her first tennis lesson at age 11, she explained her concerns that tennis was not at the top of her list. She told her mom that she did not want to take tennis but her mom, Alaina Price, forced her to take three tennis lessons before she could decide if she hated it or not. To both of their surprise, Abigail fell in love with the sport and has been playing ever since.

“I thought it was a good sport for her, and I really wanted her to do it,” Alaina told Spark. “I could see her excelling in tennis.”

While Price enjoyed tennis, she did not get serious about the sport until one match she played during her freshman year. At the time, she had full intentions of continuing to swim and play basketball, but after winning the match, she knew what she wanted to do.

“If I wanted to be good at tennis, I was going to need to put my full attention and effort into it,” Abigail told Spark. “Tennis is a 12-month, everyday sport, so there is no off-season.”

She did just that by competing in tournaments during the summer and for East ever since that match during her freshman year. Price’s end goal is to compete at the collegiate level, but she knows it will not be easy. Especially right now, she has a significant injury affecting her ability to play.

Dating back to late February and up until June this summer, Price has been doing physical therapy for her trap muscles, located on her right arm from her shoulder all the way down to her fingertips.

“My trap muscles don’t have enough room, so they are excessively tight in the process of pinching the nerves in my hand and making my hand go numb,” Abigail says.

Only for a couple of weeks, Price was relieved from the constant pain, but everything returned worse in July. Although the injury is getting



East junior Abigail Price playing first doubles in a 5-0 East victory against the Colerain Cardinals.

better, Price expressed how frustrating it is not to be able to compete at the advanced level that she is familiar with.

“I have worked really hard in tennis, and I can’t play to the extent that I want to,” Abigail says.

Abigail has tried many methods to try and tame the injury, but they have helped her very little. Things like cupping, dry needling, physical therapy, and so much more have not been able to help her with this roadblock.

With that, Abigail has some restrictions. Usually, she would play third singles, but she is still making the most of her junior season on varsity playing first doubles.

Kirsten Kusel, Abigail’s doubles partner, is an East senior and has been playing on the varsity tennis team for three years. This duo is 8-1 overall but 5-0 in the Greater Miami Conference (GMC), being the only court for East to defeat Mason High School during their matches.

“We have beat Mason and many more,” Abigail says. “I think we may even have a chance to go to state this year.”

Both girls keep each other in a positive mood while on the court and off of it. Even with the surprise of both being thrown into doubles matches, both players have shown excellent adaptability.

“We both have a good sense of the court, and when both of our games are on, we are a very strong doubles team,” Kusel told Spark. “We both know that we make mistakes, but [we] keep moving forward and focus on the next point.”

Abigail has expressed how much she loves playing for East, and her varsity coach, Cindy Strahan, is one of her biggest motivators. Even with Abigail’s injury, Strahan remained confident in her and allowed her to play doubles at the highest level.

“She made the move to doubles flawlessly and has been a great partner no matter whom she is paired with,” Strahan, who has been coaching at East for ten years, told Spark. “Her superpower is her positive attitude on the court, which is essential for playing doubles.”

Abigail has said how she has not only been struggling physically on the court but also mentally at times. She has learned to control her emotions more efficiently, so she can continue to perform, even if she makes an error.

“I try to only focus on the ball in front of me, and what shot I’m about to hit,” Abigail says. “I don’t let myself think about anything else, or sometimes I think about random things to get my mind off of bad shots.”

Abigail is not only learning to control her emotions with bad shots on the court but also learning to be proud of herself when she does something good. She realizes it is just as important to reward yourself for doing something positive as it is to discipline yourself when you do something negative.

“[Abigail is] learning to get excited over a good shot, which is hard for her because she never says anything on the tennis court,” Alaina says. “She’s learning not to get upset but to get excited.”

Abigail is a hard worker and is always looking to improve her game. Even while injured, she is practicing every day to improve and learn new skills. With all the different things asked about Abigail, that was one of the major themes that remained constant in the answers. Players on the team all say she is a positive, outgoing, and determined individual.

“One word to describe [Abigail] is confident, but I’m going to add one more, and that would be coachable,” Strahan says. “These two attributes, and many others, make her a blessing to have on our team.” •



East Athletic Director Jill Meiring stands next to East Principal Rob Burnside at the East Thunderhawks vs. Colerain Cardinals football game.



East senior Erica Cox scored one goal during a 6-0 East victory against Hamilton Big Blue.

STAYING ON HER FEET

East senior Erica Cox finishes her high school soccer career with a second GMC title and prepares to continue her soccer career at Eastern Kentucky.

story and infographic **blake furnish** | photography **audrey allen**

The crisp night breeze blows in the early autumn night. As the lights beam onto the field, onlookers can see a sense of pride in Lakota East Girls Soccer Head Coach Tom McEwan as he looks out at his team.

"I always brag about this group because they had such a high GPA last year. Our cumulative team GPA was 4.2, which is incredible. I don't think it's changed that much this year either," McEwan told Spark. "So with that, the reflection on the season is just a great group to coach. They're very coachable. They listen. They absorb, and then they execute. So far, this season has been fun. It's been very enjoyable."

McEwan, the 2021 Greater Miami Conference (GMC) Coach of the year for women's soccer, says that despite their overall record of 10-6-1, the team was playing extremely well.

"I don't worry as much about the regular season results as I do about getting ready for the tournament," McEwan says. "If you look at our schedule, hands down, we play one of the hardest schedules in the state of Ohio. Our out-of-conference non-league games included the top-ranked team in Kentucky, the top-ranked team in Indiana, one of the

state ranked teams in Ohio, and in total, five of our losses have come to teams that are state-ranked. So there's no shame in that, and they've been very close matches."

In these close matches, many bright spots come to the surface. East's defense, paired with their goalkeeping, has allowed for two shutouts in GMC play. East's roster consists of several skilled junior players, including team captain Sidney Zawillia. That being said, arguably the brightest spot on the team this season has been East senior and varsity forward Erica Cox.

Cox, a part of the 2021 GMC all-conference first team and 2021 all-Ohio second team, was off to a strong start, scoring seven goals in the first six conference games. In the GMC, Cox is ranked sixth for offensive stat leaders while only playing six GMC games. For context, excluding Cox, the top 20 offensive stat leaders played an average of 10.9 games.

"It's difficult to describe Erica's style of play," McEwan says. "If I had to pick one word, I would say sneaky. She is a relentless worker. She

has a high work rate and tries to put herself in the best position to get the goal, but if I had to pick one word, I would say she's very sneaky." After East defeated Lakota West in a nail-biting 2-1 finish, in which Cox scored both goals, West's Girls' soccer Head Coach Brigit Reder described Cox as a unique threat.

"Her physicality, her pace, and her ability to strike the ball from distance are obviously all strengths of hers, but ultimately, her game continues to elevate," Reder told Spark. "I've known her since she was in grade school, so it's been fun to see her evolve even from just freshman year to now. It's fun to see local kids, especially that you've known for a while, continue to develop and ultimately become a threat that you have to coach against."

Cox finds herself comparing herself to others. As a competitive person, she is constantly working to be the best she can be.

"I challenge myself to always be the hardest working player on the field," Cox told Spark. "My competitive nature drives me. I approach every game trying to be as creative and relentless as I can be."

Cox's skill set of elite ball handling, striking from distance, and doing the nitty-gritty work defines her play, much like her two soccer idols.

"My sports idols are [Lionel] Messi and Neymar," Cox says. "I love Messi's grit, touches, and ridiculous determination. I love Neymar's personality on the field, his confidence, craftiness, and his mastery of foot skill." McEwan agrees with Cox and describes her playstyle in a unique way.

"If you ever watch Erica play, it's kind of like watching Gumby. She's always sending down low, trying to get underneath someone or

get around somebody. Because of that, she spends a lot of time on the ground. So we're always talking about staying on her feet," McEwan says. "It's more of a compliment than anything about her style of play. She's on the ground a lot because she gets bumped and knocked around."

Cox laughs off the comparison since that is how she enjoys playing. "It's the performer in me," Cox says. "Sometimes you have to sell the foul to get the call. My coach at Eastern Kentucky University has already mentioned it. He says he loves it, that it creates great scoring opportunities, and to never change it."

Cox is committed to play soccer for Eastern Kentucky University (EKU) after she graduates. EKU is a part of the ASUN conference for Division One (D1) women's soccer.

"I really liked the coach, one of the best coaches I've met," Cox says. "The campus and the team environment felt very inclusive."

Cox attributed their regular season success to how well the team gels with each other.

"I feel like our chemistry and toughness really came together as the season progressed," says Cox. "Our ability to trust each other helped us pull out some tight games."

East went on to defeat West in the first round of the playoffs with a 2-0 shutout. The two goals came from Annabelle Hyden and Cox. After their first round victory, East went on to lose 0-1 a close game to Mount Notre Dame.

"[Winning the GMC] is very cool." Says Cox. "Being that it's the school's first back-to-back girls' soccer GMC makes it even more special. I'm not sure it's fully hit me yet. I know this is a very special group of girls, and getting to share this with them is such an honor." •

ERICA COX CAREER STATS

25
Games
Played

22
Goals
Scored

2
All GMC
First Teams

9
Assists

5'6
Height

53
Total
Points



source **greater miami conference**

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MOVING UP

The Ohio High School Athletic Association announced their new division breakdowns for many sports and explained what competitive balance is.

story and photography **audrey allen** | infographic **colin kunz**

The Ohio High School Athletic Association (OHSAA) announced the new divisional breakdown using enrollment data provided by the Ohio Department of Education to determine each school's base enrollment numbers for girls' and boys' sports, which will be used for the 2022-23 and 2023-24 school years.

The fate of all Ohio school sports teams relies on the 11 people who comprise the OHSAA Board of Directors. These important people, who are elected by the membership, annually approve sports regulations. They create regulations for all sports every year including which sports get sanctioned by the OHSAA.

For the first time, the OHSAA's spring sports will include boys' volleyball. There will be two divisions of boys' volleyball due to the spike in the number of schools now having a team, which went from 85 to almost 160 schools since the OHSAA announced earlier this year that it will sanction the sport.

East junior Carson Hill plays boys' volleyball for the school and loves that the OHSAA is including boys' volleyball.

"Boys' volleyball is a very rapidly growing sport and it has been around for a long time," Hill told Spark. "The more recognition it gets by the state, the more popular it will become."

Hill also agrees with the OHSAA putting two divisions for boys' volleyball.

"I totally agree with there being two divisions. I believe they are placed in a division based on how big their school is and I totally agree," Hill says. "Moeller is a powerhouse and they should not be in the same division as a smaller school like Chaminade Julianne."

Among the OHSAA's sports, baseball, softball, basketball, soccer, volleyball, and football use competitive balance data and are reconfigured every season. Sports that do not utilize competitive balance data including golf, girls' tennis, field hockey, and cross country are reconfigured every two years using only base enrollment numbers.

East Athletic Director Jill Meiring believes the way divisions are divided is fair for some schools.

"I think divisions are equal and fair, for the most part. I think competitive balance does less to affect larger schools but is more of an issue for smaller, non-public schools. Often times, with competitive balance, the size of the school doesn't matter," Meiring told Spark. "It's the number of athletes that play for the school team, or the amount that come into the school from outside the district. As Lakota East is a big school, I do not foresee the new divisional alignments affecting us at all. We always have and always will be a Division I (D1) school."

Competitive balance takes into account residency, systems of education, feeder schools, transfers, and several factors determining enrollment. Voted in place by the OHSAA member schools in May 2014, Competitive Balance is a process that makes modifications to how schools are placed into tournament divisions in the team sports of baseball, softball, basketball, soccer, volleyball, and football. The modifications are based on which students are actually on each respective roster.

The roster data collection takes place in ArbiterGame within the 'Students' tab, and the data is entered by each respective athletic administrator or his/her designee. There is a window either near or after the conclusion of each season when roster data is required to be entered and a deadline date when all roster data must be received. Failure to submit roster data may result in penalties as determined by the OHSAA. Refusal to submit roster data or falsification of roster data may result in removal from the OHSAA tournament.

East boys' lacrosse Head Coach, Steve Burkhardt, believes lacrosse should have competitive balance in place.

"Just because the school has a large number of males/females enrolled does not mean they have large numbers of players for the teams," Burkhardt told Spark. "There are some schools who can barely field a varsity team yet get put in D1. They cannot compete with the schools who have 60-90 players trying out for lacrosse. Player numbers and team sizes should be taken into account when deciding divisions. Since the

divisions are based on male/female enrollment numbers, I think having a cut off number is fair, however, that number needs to be reevaluated at the times the divisions are reevaluated."

Anderson High School is one of the many schools that changed divisions for boys' lacrosse moving from Division II (D2) to D1. Ross High School is another school with many sports moving up from D2 to D1 in boys' soccer, girls' volleyball, and baseball. Monroe moved from D2 to D1 in boys' soccer and baseball.

Ross Athletic Director, Justin Beck does not believe the OHSAA divisions are even/fair for all schools.

"Specifically, the difference in enrollment D1 puts many schools at a distinct disadvantage when it comes time for the tournament. For example, this year we have been moved up to D1 in every sport except for football where we are now D2. When looking at some of the enrollment figures, it is clear we are at a disadvantage," Beck told Spark. "Our enrollment for boys is 387 and girls is 363. Mason has enrollments of 1300 boys and 1251 girls. The difference between the largest and smallest school in the other divisions is nowhere near that large."

East boys' soccer played Ross' boys' soccer for the first time since Ross moved to D1 in the

opening round match of the tournament and won 3-1 with East seniors Jad Qaqish, Khaled Eid, and Jacob Nguyen scoring goals. East senior Gavin Hook is one of the captains on the team and enjoyed his time playing against Ross.

"It was a very fun and thrilling experience playing against Ross, it's always a fun time to start a new chapter of the season with the first game of the tournament and it's always something to look forward to," Hook told Spark. "Ross was a very good team and a good challenge for us to go up against. They were a tall, athletic team although they were very impatient with their passes. I was feeling very calm and collected playing against Ross, they seem to always aim for there striker #7, so if we watched him and took him out of the game it would be very light and relax full game which it was."

Even though Ross moved up, Hook believes they will eventually go back to being a D2 team.

"I think it was clear that Ross should have moved up from D2 because they could compete with us D1 schools, however I think in the long run they will slowly fall back too D2 just from the seniors they lose and their style of play being more aggressive and less patient and precise," Hook says.

Hook also believes it was fair to move Ross up to D1.

"I think if a team had a year like Ross with their record winning nine games and absolutely owning their league; Yeah I think it was fair to put them in a game against a higher talent team to see what they are made of and to see how far a small school like them could have gone," Hook says.

Beck says that even after moving up a division the student-athletes are not deterred.

"Our teams understand moving up a division in tournaments certainly makes our postseason path more difficult. However, that does not deter our student-athletes from working as hard as they can," Beck says. "One of my favorite sports quotes is 'Surrender the outcome.' That expression does not mean that we are apathetic toward the score of the game or our performance in the tournament. Instead, it just means that we cannot directly control the outcome- we can only control the factors by which the outcome is determined ie. our conditioning, our preparation, our practice habits, our discipline, and our execution."

Burkhardt suggested that the OHSAA "should explore separating public and private schools into two separate tournaments similar to other states."

Georgia, Louisiana, New Jersey, and Texas are some states that separate public and private school teams.

In Georgia, beginning in 2012, private

schools in the state's smallest classification 1A, or schools with 520 or fewer students, compete in their own playoffs. Before that, Georgia used a 1.5 enrollment multiplier formula for private schools from 2000 to 2008. Other qualifiers for Georgia private schools include: Single-sex schools have their enrollment doubled for classification purposes. Schools whose enrollment is more than 3 percent out-of-county students are moved up a class. Schools also can request to move up in class.

In Louisiana, public and private schools were divided into different classifications in 2013. Several votes to reunite the two sides have all failed, including the most recent one in late January. As it stands, the more than 400 state schools are divided into nine classes and divisions based on each school's student enrollment. Classes are for the public schools while divisions are made up of private schools. Schools with single-gender enrollments have their enrollment numbers doubled for classification purposes.

New Jersey's non-public schools play football in their own conference. Non-public and public schools can still play each other during the regular season, but only if both teams agree to the matchup.

In Texas, there are separate associations for public and private schools, though two all-boys schools (Dallas Jesuit and Houston Strake Jesuit) were granted into the public University Interscholastic League (UIL) after extensive court battles. In 2011, the Texas Senate voted to allow private schools to join the UIL except in football and basketball.

Beck suggests that the OHSAA should consider making another division.

"I understand that there is likely not a perfect solution to the issue in D1 (for three and four division sports) would be to make another division that includes all schools with enrollments between 300-600," Beck says. "This would create legitimate postseason opportunities for schools that just barely fall into the D1 category under the current model. Currently, schools in that 300-600 enrollment window have a very difficult time winning a single tournament game, let alone make a deep postseason run."

Although Ross student-athletes have a disadvantage, they are controlling what they can control.

"It is hard to say what direct impact the athletic division has on our school. Regardless of what division we are in, I know our student-athletes and coaches are doing everything they can to get better and have the best season possible," Beck says. "We talk about it all the time- control what you can control. We understand that the current division model is not to our advantage but we cannot control that. Instead, our focus remains on getting better each day." •

Equal But Unbalanced



lakota west enrollment	2,564 students
lakota east enrollment	2,426 students
mason enrollment	3,492 students
ross enrollment	911 students
anderson enrollment	1,215 students
	source usnews.com



East senior Abrar Siddiqui (11) attempting a head pass during senior night of a 2-1 East victory against the Fairfield Indians.

FIRST TIME KICKIN IT

East junior Justin Stidham faces challenges of playing on two high-demanding sport teams during the same fall season.

story **kalla saineghi** | photography **cara raiford**

The Lakota East football team runs out with intimidation displayed on their shoulders. East junior, Justin Stidham, looks around at the field he spends his Tuesday and Thursday nights playing soccer. Tonight is different. Different day. New team. New sport. He turns around to see the gray bleachers, now filled with fans wearing all black. He hears the crowd cheer, and a sudden nervousness rushes through his body. The clock counts down, and he steps onto the field, ready for his first football game ever.

Stidham has played soccer for the Lakota East soccer team for three years. He has been playing goalkeeper, but there were some bumps in the road this year. "I played goalkeeper up until this year [when] I broke my pinky pre-season, and so now I am playing striker," Stidham told Spark. Striker is an offensive position designed to score goals.

East Varsity Soccer Coach Jeremy Hilen sees Stidham as an asset player and an all-around go-to player.

"Justin is a high competitor that brings a lot of energy on the field," Hilen told Spark. "He's a versatile player who can play on the field and as a goalkeeper."

With a smaller roster than usual, the varsity football team lacked a proven kicker. So Stidham was offered to play kicker on the Lakota East football team. The idea of being a football player never came to Stidham's mind, but for some reason, the offer was intriguing.

"I believe [Varsity Football] Coach [Rick] Haynes had talked to Coach Hilen about any soccer players that might be interested in kicking for the football team. Justin was suggested as a potential player," East

Running Back Coach Carl Longworth told Spark. "That all transpired about the third week of the season."

On Aug. 27, Stidham took the field for the first time for a field goal during the Lakota East vs. Lakota West game. Stidham felt overwhelmed, but as he looked around, he saw his teammates, coaches, and fans cheering him on, he became ready.

"I was extremely nervous for my first kick," Stidham says. "The first game (against rival West) I kicked was one of the most attended games in Cincinnati."

Stidham was worried he was not prepared because the time he had to practice was minimal. The relief kicked in as the football flew through the sky. The crowd cheered, and he ran off the field with confidence displayed on his shoulders.

"I had only been practicing for a week, but I did the job, and it felt amazing after," Stidham says.

Coach Longworth has spent time working with Stidham. He has seen him improve and develop as a football player and soccer player.

"[Stidham] was doing very well in practice. Before his [ankle] injury, he was improving every time he kicked. He was working hard and becoming excited about kicking footballs," Longworth says. "I think the excitement was coming from the fact that he was doing really well and that if he got even better, there was a potential for college scholarships more so than in soccer."

Stidham had to learn how to balance two highly demanding sports teams. Soccer practices four days a week and has about two games a week. Football practices every day and also has a game every Friday.

"It's tough to balance it all because I have to go to football for 30 minutes and then go to soccer for an hour," Stidham says.

Although balancing two sports was challenging, Coach Longworth has found ways to have him constantly improve and keep him ahead of the game.

"I put him in contact with a former kicker I had coached that played for OSU [Ohio State University] and was the state record holder for the longest field goal to get some additional and probably better instruction."

Unfortunately, Stidham had setbacks that have made it hard to progress in football.

"Before he could take advantage of [OSU Athlete], he rolled his ankle on his plant foot which is a big deal," Longworth says.

Stidham is extremely grateful for the opportunities he has been given from both sports. He has gained friends to last him a lifetime and adult figures who truly care about helping him develop into the best athlete he can be.

"[East football team] gave me lots of respect, and that makes me want to do my best for them," Stidham says. Both teams have given me opportunities that I will forever be grateful for."

Longworth has enjoyed watching the football team take Stidham in as their own. He is proud of everything the team has accomplished and the pride the school has that brought soccer and football together.

"I think that Justin was accepted very quickly by the football team. I also credit it to the fact that we are East and the pride that athletes have for that," Longworth says. "It's my opinion that we are not soccer players or football players but rather Thunderhawks, and we are very supportive of each other." •



"It's tough to balance it all because I have to go to football for thirty minutes and then go to soccer for an hour. Plus, the three games a week are pretty draining." -East junior and varsity soccer and football player Justin Stidham

STRONG STEVEN

Lakota East senior Steven Embry discusses the hardships of his past injuries and how the student athletic trainers have helped in his recovery process.

story **olivia wilson** | photography **used with permission**

As he walked onto the field, East senior Steven Embry was flooded with emotions as he remembered his injury from last year. He was engulfed with fear and nervousness, but with his friends by his side, his confidence peaked. He walked to his starting position and heard his name being chanted throughout the stands. He looked up and saw the student section filled with the colors red, white, and blue. He glanced at his coach, who displayed encouragement and grabbed a drink of water from the student trainers. Then, he stepped up to the line of scrimmage, in his place as strong safety, stood eye to eye with his Centerville opponent, and waited for the play to begin. Embry was ready for the “comeback season” of his dreams.

During a punt return Embry tore his ACL in his left knee last season at the East vs. West game. He had a six-month recovery, meaning playing basketball was out of the picture.

“I didn’t miss [playing in] the football season, but I missed out on the basketball season because I used to play basketball,” Embry told Spark. “I stopped because I didn’t get to play sophomore year.”

He heard his quarterback’s queue and approached his opponent from the other team. As he started to block him, he switched legs to open up and planted his leg. When the opposing player pushed onto Embry’s shoulder, his shoulder went back, and his foot stayed grounded. His knee rotated, and he fell to the ground in pain. Embry felt the feeling in his leg slowly slip away.

“You know your leg is there, but you can’t put any weight on it. It’s just not supporting you anymore.” Embry says.

Silence surrounded the stadium, and the trainers rushed to Embry to investigate the injury. Everyone watched as the trainers had to put his knee back into place after dislocation six separate times. Embry’s hope for his comeback quickly plummeted.

“I knew immediately that this [injury] was worse than the last one,” Embry says. “I knew I was never going to play football again.”

Embry had a long road of recovery ahead of him. East’s school athletic trainer, Kevin Stokes, was there along the way to help. For the privacy of the Embry family, it is against HIPAA policy for Stokes to disclose any information about Embry’s injury.

“I had a complete tear of my ACL, MCL, MPFL, LCL, and I tore a little bit of my meniscus,” Embry says. “as well as a dislocated kneecap and fractured part of my femur.”

Stokes earned a bachelor’s degree in Physical Education with a concentration in Exercise Physiology. He also earned his master’s degree in Kinesiology at the University of Arkansas.

Stokes has worked at several places as a trainer, like the University of Cincinnati, the University of Mississippi, a high school in South Haven, Mississippi, and Atrium Medical Center at Middletown High School, before coming to East for the past eight years. Stokes works in partnership with three student athletic trainers, who assist him on the field and court.

“They’re a huge help. Just the little things that when you go through college, you don’t always realize you have to do. All those extra things like getting coolers ready, icing kids down, and walking kids through rehab,” Stokes told Spark. “There’s some things that they’re able to do now that just make my life easier. That’s huge.”

At the time of Embry’s injury, the student athletic trainer and East junior, Cassidy Swan, watched on the sideline.

“I could hear Steven yelling, saying that his knee was out of place. It was a little bit hard to hear,” Swan told Spark. “He just kept repeating that [his knee] was out. That’s all he would say.”

The other two student athletic trainers, East juniors, Emma Laughlin and Ashley Young, were in the locker room when his injury occurred.

“We walked out of the locker room, and he was just in the training room, and we knew something was bad,” Laughlin told Spark. “We stopped in our tracks.”

The crowd’s energy shifted as everyone realized how bad the injury was. Embry had been down and being assisted for about five or six minutes, with everyone watching him hunched over in pain.

“Well, I didn’t really see it happen. We saw him in the brace, and then we saw people crying and his whole family in [the training room]. I was kind of just like, what happened? Because I didn’t see it.” Young told Spark. “Just the change of emotions at halftime was so real.

We could hear it from the locker room. [The team] were all chanting, ‘Let’s finish this for Steven,’ which was obviously really sad.”

The brotherhood created on this team of boys is what made all of them fall in love with the sport in the first place.

“You can hit people as hard as you want in football. It lets out some anger.” Embry says. “It’s a distraction, mentally, to just get your head off things and also, the brotherhood that it makes with all my teammates and everything. It’s just a good thing to be out there with all my friends. They’re like my family.”

The student athletic trainers described his teammates were crying on the sidelines at the game. They reported that seeing the athletes upset about their teammates’ injuries is the hardest part of this job. Embry has continued to go to every practice since his major injury. He sits alongside his coaches, teammates, and best friends on the sidelines.

“That’s the worst part, going into practice and just sitting there and watching instead of being out there, especially seeing the team. Yes, it’s difficult,” Embry says. “I feel helpless sitting there on the sidelines just watching.”

Embry approximates that he will continue to be in his brace with little to no movement for the next couple of months. He says he will most likely not be cleared for a year. Embry’s past injuries have helped him to gauge the severity of this one.

“I knew I was out for six months with this [past injury] leg. I was honestly thinking it might have been like a year or something with this [current] one. Especially with the rehab and everything, it’s a lot easier because I know what to expect.”

The student athletic trainers assist athletes in exercises, help tape, get ice, set up machines, and observe Kevin in the recovery process.

“I’m a very independent person. So I don’t like anybody helping me, but if they see that I’m struggling with something, they come and help me alongside Kevin. They know what to do to help me. They’ll set up the stem machine,” Embry says. “They do more of the little things, not as serious because Kevin obviously comes in and checks it out and everything.”



East senior Steven Embry still showing support and smiling after his injury during East against ___ and give score.

“I had a complete tear of my ACL, MCL, MPFL, LCL, and I tore a little bit of my meniscus. As well as a dislocated kneecap and fractured part of my femur.” -East senior and varsity outside linebacker Steven Embry

Many of Embry’s friends, trainers, coaches, and teachers explained that he is a very independent kid. For the first couple of months after the injury, Embry had a wheelchair when he could not bend his leg at all. Embry became frustrated with all the things he now needed assistance completing.

“I tried to go up the stairs. It was hard at first, but I’ve found ways to be able to do it by myself. Getting in and out of bed took me a while to do by myself. It was frustrating having to have my dad there to lift up my leg to put it on the bed. It’s just little things like that. Like I just want to do it by myself.” Embry says. “I would prefer not to get help from my parents. It just bothers me sometimes.”

Embry’s “comeback season” came to a crashing halt after this injury,

bringing his dreams of playing football again down with it. However with his team, trainers, and family by his side, he will continue working hard to recover and persevere through another hardship.

“I haven’t seen many people go through the type of adversity he has had to go through already as a senior with two significant injuries,” East athletic teacher, Coach Drew, told Spark. “He handles it like a champ. There’s a calm presence about him.”

“Once we found out how severe it was everybody felt bad for him because he had been injured before and had worked really hard to get that point and be a starter,” East head football coach, Coach Haynes, told Spark.

Haynes did not want this injury to hurt the momentum of the team. •



Second grader at Wyandot Elementary learning new cheers at the Tomahawk Clinic.

VOICE OF VICTORIA

East cheerleaders teach Tomahawk cheerleaders like Victoria Laub, new cheers to perform in front of the crowd during the East Thunderhawks vs. Princeton Vikings football game.

story and phtography
maggie huss

As Victoria Laub, a second grader at Wyandot Elementary school and a Tomahawk cheerleader on the secondgrade black team, walks onto the Thunderhawk football field, all she can do is smile thinking about performing in front of the enormous crowd to fulfill her dream of becoming a high school cheerleader herself.

“I get so excited [cheering in front of people]! I never get nervous cheering in front of a big crowd,” Laub told Spark. “My favorite cheerleading memory is going to be cheering on the big field in front of a lot of people.”

Laub learned new cheers to perform on Tomahawk night during the Tomahawk clinic. Which is when each of the East cheerleaders demonstrates and teaches new cheers to the Tomahawk cheerleaders from each grade and team so they can perform the cheers during the first quarter of a specific football game during the East season, known as Tomahawk night.

“My favorite part of practice is learning new cheers from my coach,” Laub says. “My favorite cheer that I learned is the ‘Let’s go black, let’s go white’ cheer.”

East senior and varsity cheerleader Lainey Hill, who also taught Laub her new cheers, described her Tomahawk teaching experience as “overwhelming” since there are 245 cheerleaders, and their ages range from kindergarten to sixth grade. However, she enjoyed her experience and was surprised at what they could do.

“With kids, it gets a little crazy. Sometimes it is really hard to keep their attention when they need water breaks. But sometimes I am worried that some cheers are too hard, but they do it. I am like, ‘Oh my gosh,’ so that is good to see as well,” Hill told Spark. “They catch on super well for second graders, so I think that when they have someone in front guiding them, it will be really fun.”

Hill loved how “fun and energetic” the Tomahawk cheerleaders were when cheering, also growing a relationship with them as they showed that they were “really interested in getting to know” her.

East senior and varsity cheerleader Sienna Combs also explained that coaching was “very stressful to work with [the cheerleaders], but it is so worth it because they are so cute.” She enjoyed being involved with the Tomahawk cheerleaders despite the craziness of getting all the girls to pay attention at one time to learn the cheers in a limited amount of time.

“They looked up to me, and I took pride in that,” Combs told Spark.

She taught second graders right by her teammate, Megan Haitisch, during the Tomahawk Clinic on Aug. 25. Haitisch is an East senior and varsity cheerleader who coached third-grade Tomahawk cheerleaders and loved going to watch

the Tomahawk cheerleaders at their games.

“They are good listeners and know all the cheers,” Haitisch told Spark.

This was also Haitisch’s first year teaching the Tomahawk cheerleaders, and she explained that it was “worth it” and that she “would do it again.” Although, she had many different emotions while coaching.

“It was an exciting, happy, and overwhelming experience,” Haitisch says. “They have their moments, but that is when they want to have fun.”

Haitisch saw how excited they were for Tomahawk night. They were all thinking about their new cheers, how to show spirit, and do their jumps.

“My favorite jump is a pencil jump,” Laub says.

Victoria Laub got to show the crowd, Hill, and Ashlee Laub, her Tomahawk coach and mom, her skills during the first quarter of the football game.

“Teaching the girls to love cheerleading and learning the skills myself,” Ashlee told Spark. “It is the best attribute of coaching cheerleading since it is very rewarding.”

**“I look up to my mom as a cheerleader.”
-Tomahawk cheerleader Victoria Laub**

Ashlee has been coaching Tomahawk cheerleading for two years and believes the best way to teach is “to be positive and give positive reinforcement.” An example would be receiving awards such as the spirit stick.

“I look up to my mom as a cheerleader,” Victoria says.

Ashlee is a huge role model for her daughter, especially with all her experience in cheerleading. She was a cheerleader for the Tomahawks in kindergarten through sixth grade and an East cheerleader for a few years during her high school career.

Her favorite cheer was the Hello cheer.

“[The Hello cheer] is complicated, but the [Tomahawks] can do it. They say their names, so it gives them a chance to introduce themselves,” Ashlee says.

Each cheer has different moves that can make it difficult for the Tomahawk girls to remember.

“I think they have been working hard and are happy and will have fun,” Combs says. “They were not in sync, but they did great [during Tomahawk night].”

The Tomahawk cheerleaders from kindergarten to sixth grade all participated in cheering for their team and the East Thunderhawks during the first quarter of the game. Each East cheerleader had a wonderful time coaching them, even when it was stressful at times. They created memories with them that they will never forget.

“When it’s hot and sunny, they all wear huge sunglasses [is a favorite memory of mine],” Combs says. •

VOLLEYBALL

photocaption **gwen gilbert**
photogrphay **cara raiford**



Volley for the Cure is an awareness event for women with breast cancer to educate high school girls, specifically the volleyball team, and surrounding communities.

“[Volley for the Cure] is a way to spread awareness and show support for people that are dealing with cancer,” East sophomore and junior varsity defensive specialist Annabelle Orlando says. “Also, volleyball is fun [and the event is] a fun way to spread awareness.”

East junior and varsity middle Breanna Sayles believes the event gave the players the ability to “play for” people who are currently or have had cancer. Sayles plays for her mom, who has Metastatic Breast Cancer.

During the Volley for the Cure game, a 3-1 victory over Colerain, Sayles had a total of 11 kills and three blocks against the Cardinals. After the game, the Hawks held a celebratory huddle to support some players who hit a milestone in their game careers.

“[It is a] great way to honor and remember them,” freshman libero Shayla Mckay says. Many of the girls on the team knew somebody who had a connection to a victim of cancer. Before each game began, the Hawks held a rose ceremony to show their individual support for cancer victims. The players lined up on the court, each holding a rose, while an announcer read their name, number, and the person they were playing for. Then the players handed off the rose to their family and resumed their spot on the court.

The Hawks had a 6-3 record in the Greater Miami Conference and finished 12-11 overall, with a roster that has brought in new records for the team. The fall 2021-22 season kill percentage sat at 28.9%, and the girls have raised it up to a 33.3% this season. The Lakota East girls volleyball team ended their season by making it through the first round in sectionals. •

CROSS COUNTRY

photocaption **brendan wright** | photography **audrey allen**

The stage was set, and East freshmen Reilly Meyer's heart was racing waiting for the starting pistol to start the season's biggest race for both the boys and girls of the East Cross Country team. The green field was in front of him and he was ready to attack the challenge.

All ten Greater Miami Conference schools came to Voice of America Park for one final league race, GMCs. The East varsity boys cross country team ended up placing second overall behind the Mason Comets. One person, in particular, Meyer, was competing in his first GMCs by racing in the varsity 5k, where he placed ninth. East varsity girls cross country team placed fourth with the Mason Comets placing first, the Lakota West Firebirds placing second, and the Oak Hills Highlanders placing third.

"Everyone seemed well prepared, and we were able to get the job done as a team," Meyer told Spark. "which I'm proud of."

During the race, Meyer ended up beating his personal record (PR) for his 5k by 34 seconds, recording a 16:22.30. His goals include beating "4:30 in the mile at minimum" and getting "sub 16 [minutes]" for his 5k time. Meyer finished 14th at regionals with a time of 16:28.70.

East Senior Jocelyn Willis got her personal record at GMC (at VOA) being the 4th fastest 5k with the time of 18:17.60 in Lakota East Girls Distance program. She has now made it to state all four years in high school.

"I am blessed to have made it all four years. It's not as easy as it sounds. There's a lot of mental and physical preparation that goes behind it," Willis told Spark. "I felt pressure during my regionals race this year since I knew I had made state the last three years and wanted to be 4 for 4. It was at Troy and you had to finish top 20 individually to qualify for the state meet and I got 9th."

Willis is grateful for her experiences in East cross country and is planning to do cross country in college, while Meyer is excited to watch as the team grows, as he waits patiently for the next season to begin. •



GIRLS GOLF

photocaption **gabby weber**
photography **maggie huss**

Lakota East Girls Golf enjoyed their senior night on Sep. 27 – its first since 2019. The girls golf senior nights are created by the parents of the athletes.

The team has done well this season and they are ranked in the Greater Miami Conference, including sending East junior Clare Yeazell to state, shooting a 78 on her first day.

On the chilly night, the three seniors, Andie Madding, Skylar McKay, pictured teeing off against Lakota West, and Abby Theobald,

were all dressed in pink. While the team lost with a score of 186 to West's 173, McKay values other things in her golf career.

Although she will not be playing in college, that night, she had time to reflect on the memories she made throughout her four-year high school career. She enjoys the "chill atmosphere" of the team and loves her teammates.

"We're super competitive, but at the end of the day, we just like to be with each other," McKay told Spark. •



BOYS GOLF

photocaption and photography **colin kunz**

The boys golf team finished their season recently, coming up just short of making the OHSAA state tournament finishing third at the Regional Tournament.

The team was headed by juniors Bobby Horseman and Nick Collins, who finished sixth and tenth respectively in the GMC. Three other golfers finished outside of the top ten, but finished inside the top 25 making five in the top 25 in the GMC.

East junior Walker Wood, pictured teeing off at The Heritage Club was the top performer at districts, scoring a 76, and finishing tenth out of 95.

"We weren't expected to even make it out of sectionals because we lost some of our big seniors and we got uninvited from lots of tournaments, but the team showed up in the big moments this year and it's unfortunate that we couldn't

make it to state," Wood told Spark.

The team looks to continue success and improve next year, where they plan to bring at least five seniors to the team.

One of the struggles this year was the lack of seniors on the team. East had only one senior for the season.

"Our top four players, all of us really stepped up and led the team. It was hard having only one senior, but I feel like we were still able to show a great amount of leadership, and it will really prepare us for next year," Woods says.

"With Mason out of the way next year and all of the team improving in the off season, Lakota East is going to be the team to beat next year."

Mason was one of the teams who East struggled with this year. The Comets accounted for all five spots in the top five in the GMC. •



BRAIN-DEAD PROTOCOL

column by **cara raiford**
photography by **audrey allen**



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Five out of ten concussions in sports go undetected. Football is still leading the pack with the highest rates of concussions. Considering the National Football League (NFL) has already had issues with covering up how dangerous concussions are, it is not surprising that football has the lead in this category. With around \$70 million in profit, one would think the NFL would take better care of their players and their safety. With the updated concussion protocol in place, since 2011 there has yet to be any reduction in concussions. Not even with rule changes or improved equipment. That is because many concussions show no symptoms at first. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), it can take hours or days for symptoms of a concussion to show up.

Tua Tagovailoa, quarterback for the Miami Dolphins, is a perfect example of the NFL's priorities. He showed symptoms of a concussion during a game against the Buffalo Bills and was sent back out after he was cleared by an unaffiliated neurotrauma consultant, even though he showed signs of ataxia. Ataxia is a degenerative disease that causes impaired balance and coordination due to a brain injury. It is a very well-known sign of a concussion, but was not previously a part of the NFL's concussion symptom list until now. Four days after the injury, he went on to play against the Cincinnati Bengals. After taking another blow to the head by Bengals' defensive lineman Josh Tupou, Tagovailoa's arms became rigid and his fingers curled into a fencing response, another sign of a traumatic brain injury. A fencing response is where the arms flex in an unnatural position following contact with the head.

In the protocol, the players may only be removed for a concussion check if they show signs or symptoms of one, or if a concern is raised by an official, coach, teammate, or medical personnel. If not, they are sent back out into the game, only to potentially worsen the concussion they do not know exists yet. If a player does show signs but passes the sideline survey and locker exam, they are cleared to go back to the game. A proper medical protocol needs to be put in place, not just for the players who show symptoms or have concerns, but for everyone who makes head-to-head contact on the field. The protocol focuses on those who display issues or concerns, but not the ones who show no symptoms at all. With the amount of head-to-head contact in a single football game, it is extremely easy to worsen a less serious concussion to a severe concussion. The American Association of

With a concussion protocol in place, NFL athletes must meet minimal criteria to play, but is the NFL doing enough?

Neurological Surgeons (AANS) explains that a second concussion not long after the first one does not have to be very strong for its end result to be permanently disabling. The AANS also states that there is no such thing as a minor concussion, just concussions that are less serious than others.

For those who do show symptoms of a concussion and fail the survey and exam, there is a five-step return process they must undergo, all of which are under staff supervision. The first step is symptom-limited activity. Simply put, do not do anything that would worsen the symptoms.

Anyone, especially football players, can easily worsen a concussion without having the symptoms worsen, making this step obscure. There should be a simple routine of constant rest and limited light exposure no matter how much "better" the player feels. The next step is aerobic exercise. Just because some concussed people can tolerate some aerobic exercise does not mean their brain is healed enough to be handling aerobics. The third step is football-

specific exercises, preparing the injured athlete for the fourth step of club-based non-contact training drills. Consulting someone higher than the team's medical staff to make sure the player's brain can handle the impacts and exercise might be a good idea. The final step is full football activity, where an Independent Neurological Consultant (INC) assigned to the player's club and a club physician must clear that the player's concussion has concluded in order to participate in the next game. This second opinion in this step makes a lot of sense, but an INC should be consulted for every step, not just one of them. Instead of having the top people work with athletes at the end of the road, have them work with the athletes throughout the entire process.

There should also be a plan for those who do not have symptoms or post-concussion symptoms to ensure that they did not create another concussion during a game since those players are at an even higher risk of another concussion. A study conducted by the Injury Prevention Research Center showed that football players with a history of at least three previous concussions were three times more probable to have a concussion within one football season compared to those without a history of a concussion. The player's well-being and health are not the NFL's priority, instead, the NFL focuses on what the public may be able to see out of the player during the game. The NFL has made it crystal clear after spending years of hiding concussion information from its players and their audience. •



HIGH-VALUE TRADE TARGET

column by **blake furnish**
photography by **audrey allen**

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The hustle and bustle of Sheremetyevo International Airport is one that cannot be easily described. The second busiest airport in all of Europe hosts a variety of travelers as it provides 108 different direct flights. The noise, chaos, and overall visible confusion are second to none. Now imagine if all of that stopped as a tourist stepped through security. Immediately security rushes in, the tourist looking beyond confused, being bombarded with questions and papers as what looks to be a translator tries to explain everything. That is exactly what happened to Brittney Griner as she was arrested and detained in Moscow, Russia earlier this year.

Questions immediately came to mind – the main one being why Griner was in Russia in the first place. Griner, an 8-time Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA) all-star, was also a part of the UMMC Ekaterinburg (UMMC), a team who competed in FIBA Europe's Euroleague Women at the time. As a part of UMMC, Griner was receiving a significantly better salary in Russia. Griner received over \$1 million a season while playing for UMMC. For the Phoenix Mercury in the WNBA, Griner received \$221,450 in the 2021-2022 season, less than a fourth of the amount of money received for playing for UMMC. For the amount of money Griner was receiving for playing in Russia, it's a no-brainer, but as an American athlete, competing in a country that has extremely high tensions with the United States should be done with extreme caution.

Caution was tossed aside as Griner was caught in possession of hash vape cartridges in her luggage at the Moscow airport. Griner was detained and kept in Russia for five months, where her trial date was extended three separate times. Unfortunately, Griner was not as dominant in the courtroom as she is on the court, where she pleaded guilty to possessing illegal drugs, claiming she packed in haste and did not mean to pack the vape cartridges. Now, this is where the trial would normally end in the United States, however in Russia, this is not the case. Although Griner's lawyers presented a doctor's letter for medical cannabis to treat chronic pain and presented two character witnesses, the court ruled Griner guilty of drug possession and smuggling, ruling that she brought the drugs into Russia deliberately.

On Aug 4, 2022, Griner received a near-maximum prison sentence of nine years. Nine years in prison would effectively end Griner's playing career, making her 40 years old on her scheduled release from prison. Russia has said they are open to a prisoner swap. The swap that seems to have the most traction is trading Griner and Paul Whelan, an ex-marine and police officer who

Face of the WNBA Brittney Griner has been detained in Russia. Is a trade for a war criminal worth bringing her home?

was detained in 2018 for alleged espionage, for a Russian arms dealer named Viktor Bout. Bout, known as "the Merchant of Death" or "Sanctions Buster" is a former Soviet military translator and notorious arms dealer of the 1990s and early 2000s. Bout was arrested on March 6, 2008, in Thailand on terrorism charges and is facing 25 years in prison in the United States for conspiracy to kill Americans and provide terrorist aid. Now did Griner receive a fair trial? Probably not, but with how little information is available, it is essentially a "he said, she said" argument. Griner claims she was not read her rights and was forced to sign documents she could not read. Russia claims the interpreters explained everything as accurate as possible. If Griner was not a face of the WNBA, would she have even received a fair trial in the U.S.? So many questions and statements have sprouted from this event, but the one point that sticks out like a sore thumb has yet to be addressed.

The United States are seriously thinking about trading an alleged war criminal for a WNBA star and an ex-marine. Bout was one of the most dangerous men in the world in the late 1990s and early 2000s constantly moving for about 10 years avoiding capture. The popular 2005 film, *The Lord of War*, starring Nicholas Cage, was based off of Bout. Bout is a deadly man, there is no light way to put it. The fact that Griner and Whelan for Bout was proposed is not only unacceptable from a global safety standpoint, but it endangers athletes and celebrities around the world. What is stopping other countries or organizations from capturing athletes or celebrities and holding them for ransom? This is essentially giving massive trade value to professional athletes, celebrities, and influencers. Considering there are many countries that have strong terrorists, or criminals in places of power, this could spiral into a serious issue.

So while yes, Griner should be home, by no means is it worth the target being put on all athletes' heads. The best thing onlookers can do at the moment is to support the WNBA. Watch WNBA games and be involved. The WNBA community is still grieving because of the absence of one of the biggest faces in the league. It truly is heartbreaking to see a professional athlete's career ruined over political tension and it is even more heartbreaking knowing there is nothing more anyone can do without making this a norm in the profession. •

NAME IMAGE AND DOLLAR SIGNS

column by **colin kunz**
photography by **audrey allen**



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For years athletes have been profited off of by their colleges, hoarding all of the rights to their name, image, and likeness. Athletes were left in the dust while their already rich institutions hold their brand rights hostage and pay their coaches millions.

This was the norm in collegiate athletics until things started to change. In July of 2021, states like Alabama, Florida, Georgia, and California became the first to pass laws allowing athletes to profit off of their Name, Image, and Likeness (NIL). From there, a majority of the country followed, starting a revolution across the United States finally allowing athletes to profit from their personal brand. All that was needed was an amendment to the National Collegiate Athletic Association's (NCAA) locked-down policy.

When the NCAA was founded in 1906 as the Intercollegiate Athletic Association, there were no such rules about paying players at all. It was actually commonplace for the athletes competing in football games to be paid. Some of the football players were not even college athletes. After some time, though, the NCAA realized this is not something that can go on. In 1948, the NCAA adopted a "Sanity code", a policy that essentially only allowed players to be paid in necessary aid; things like tuition, fees, and food. This policy, however, was barely enforced and was repealed. It was then replaced in 1956, when it was further enforced, and teams followed it. Since then, the NCAA has frowned upon any attempts to give their athletes a much-deserved payday unless it is a scholarship or a snack at the university cafeteria.

Finally, a breakthrough came, in the form of some law changes. Many states had passed their own laws allowing athletes to be paid, but these laws meant nothing until the NCAA repealed their policy. The outcry came for years about these "heinous" laws, making athletes sacrifice their bodies for a comparatively low amount compared to professional leagues. But there were also those in favor of the NCAA, stating that it could cause "monopolies" allowing the most profitable colleges with the biggest boosters to take over and get all of the highest-rated recruits and most skilled players. Despite this, the majority was in favor of allowing athletes to be paid, so the NCAA finally folded. On Sept. 15, 2021, they changed their guidelines, allowing athletes to talk to sponsors and sign deals to get them paid.

Something like NIL has been missing in collegiate sports for decades. Name, image, and likeness are great for all athletes, and this money will do wonders for them. It allows them to live the lives that they deserve for sacrificing their time and well-

The NCAA has finally made changes to its policies allowing collegiate athletes to be paid, but is this new deal really all that?

being for their sports. This has been a long time coming, and it feels like there has been speculation about it for years. At just over a year in, there have been almost all positive outcomes. Funny and heartwarming stories have come from all over about the deals that these athletes are making. One example is Alabama Crimson Tide defensive back Ga'Quincy "Kool-Aid" McKinstry, who signed a deal with Kool-Aid, a perfect match. You could also look at Nebraska Cornhuskers wide receiver Decoldest Crawford who signed a deal with an Omaha-based heating and cooling company.

Besides the funny brand deals, there are also many athletes who are using their brand deals to reach out to the community. University of Kentucky football player Josh Paschal partnered with a local dentist to work with kids in the community.

However, some people do not think that this is all it is made out to be. The number one complaint is that teams at the highest level will hold a monopoly on these deals, and their players will be given the best. While this could be true, it is no reason to disallow this altogether. Although companies will look to the athletes at the top schools first, there are plenty of brand deals to go around. Local companies will look to target local athletes. There is no limit on how many deals can be done. One other issue, though, is the idea of a player taking the money and running. One example of this has actually already happened with former Louisiana State University quarterback Myles Brennan. Brennan had signed five NIL deals, including Raising Cane's Chicken Fingers and Smoothie King. After signing these deals, he then announced that he was retiring from football altogether. There are no rules disallowing this, so he was able to keep all of the money he was paid.

These instances, though, are just small gripes in something that is otherwise a very healthy change for collegiate athletes. NIL deals allow athletes to get paid for their hard work and effort in playing the sport they love. It is a good way to get athletes accustomed to their futures, as professionals who deal with brand deals all the time. On top of that, it allows them to live a much more enjoyable life and teaches athletes how to save for the future.

All of the benefits clearly outweigh the negatives, and the idea of name, image, and likeness will be a great change for years to come. •

THE ESCAPE ARTIST

column by **celina blount**
photography by **audrey allen**



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Twenty-four sexual assault allegations. Eleven game suspensions and a \$5 million dollar fine. Cleveland Browns quarterback Deshaun Watson has made a more prominent name for himself outside the football world.

On March 16, 2021, lawyer Tony Buzbee filed the first sexual assault civil suit against Watson on behalf of Ashley Solis. Watson, who was on the Houston Texans during this time, responded on Twitter saying he had become "aware" of the lawsuit and that he has only treated women with "anything other than the utmost respect."

Over the next two days, two more civil lawsuits were filed against Watson. The one filed on the 18th was much worse than the rest, however. The victim accused Watson of forcing her to perform a sexual act on him. Immediately after the third allegation, the NFL jumped into action. Nine more women came forward the next day, bringing the total number of lawsuits to 12. In total, 24 women came forward with sexual assault lawsuits.

In April 2021 the Houston Police Department released a criminal complaint that had been filed, beginning the criminal investigation. In addition to that, Watson's lawyer Rusty Hardin filed a response for his client in which he stated, "[T]he answer to the question of whether we are saying that all 22 plaintiffs are lying about the allegations of sexual misconduct by Mr. Watson is a resounding yes."

Watson stayed on the Texans for the 21-22 season but didn't play for non-injury/personal reasons.

On June 21, 2022, Deshaun Watson had settled 20 of the 24 allegations, just a week before his disciplinary action had started. He would've paid \$33-55 million to settle just the 20 of the masseuses.

After so much resounding evidence, it was presumed that the NFL would take more of a stand on this issue. But even after so many accusations, Watson received only a six-game suspension, which is outrageous. It was later changed to 11 games, but it still doesn't make any sense. Why does Watson only get suspended for 11 games after doing something that could put someone in jail for multiple years? While Atlanta Falcons wide receiver Calvin Ridley, bet on five games on his own team and was indefinitely suspended through at least the 2022 season. A couple of game suspensions and some fines aren't anything when you get a \$44.965 million signing bonus.

Quarterback Deshaun Watson settles with 24 sexual assault allegations, but is there more going on behind the scenes?

The NFL continues to shrug off sexual assault scandals and gives them little to no punishments and Watson happens to be an example of this. Ben Roethlisberger, the former Pittsburgh Steelers quarterback, had two sexual assault allegations. Along with Watson, he was not criminally charged for either, but he was suspended for six games, yet he appealed to make it only four. When breaking the personal conduct policy, the suspensions seem to be little if they are not charged with crimes.

Hopefully, the NFL will inflict a longer punishment for him. That being said, Watson's new contract makes him the fourth-highest-paid NFL player, possibly meaning that the NFL wanted to make his suspension quick so he could get back to playing after the anticipation surrounding him and his debut for the Browns. His first game back is against his old team, the Texans. It makes you wonder if the NFL could be using this for increasing sales and selling tickets, once again proving that the NFL could be

using him and his scandal for money. Sexual assault gets blown over by bigger players, especially in the NFL, which makes us wonder if there are more things going on behind the scenes.

While meeting with these masseuses, the Texans were helping him set these appointments up and making nondisclosure agreements. After coming out with a statement, it was surprising to hear that the Texans influenced his actions by providing venues and places for Watson to get these massages. There is so much corruption and cover-ups in the NFL, which proves that as viewers, we have a blind eye to many things that are happening in the league.

In the state of Ohio, a charge of sexual assault could give someone 5-15 years in jail depending on how serious the assault is. Watson wasn't charged with anything but settled 20 claims which give the outlook that he did assault the masseuses.

It is obvious the NFL picks and chooses who they suspend and how long they will suspension will last. Watson is getting away with way too much while players like Ridley are being unfairly targeted. The NFL just wanted Watson's suspension to end so he could get back to playing, and they could get back to making more money off of him. •

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A BRIGHTER FUTURE

The Biden Student Debt Relief Plan opens new doors for debt holders across the U.S. but still has holes in how the debt is being handled.

column **maddie behrmann** | photography **audrey allen**



Looking through a crystal ball to my future, I see myself eating ramen noodles three meals a day, living in my parent's basement, and being in debt for the rest of my life. I do not plan on being a low-life broke adult with no job; I plan on going to college of course! Not many people can afford a luxurious college life, let alone pay for tuition itself without a problem, resulting in student debt. But the cry for help from debt holders has been heard by the gods above and they have come to soothe our sorrows.

The Biden Administration's Student Debt Relief Plan was announced on Aug. 24, which extends the student loan repayment pause, and provides up to 20,000 debt relief for eligible students. It also proposes a future income-driven repayment plan that lessens monthly payments, raises income considered non-discretionary, forgives loan balances of \$12,000 after 10 years, and covers unpaid monthly interest.

An extended repayment pause allows a student living on their own to prepare themselves by working extra shifts and planning for when the repayment resumes. \$20,000 in debt relief empowers a family that makes \$75,000 a year to break away from surviving paycheck to paycheck. Preventing long-term payments also prevents a man from waiting to celebrate paying off his debt for years after graduating, and instead, he can move on to do better things such as buying his dream home. Lessening monthly payments permits a recent graduate working minimum wage more flexibility to find a better job and be able to pay for her basic needs.

Removing ginormous pressure like student debt can do wonders in allowing students to focus on their day-to-day lives and have more opportunities to thrive. This change especially helps low-income and Black students. It can even help narrow the racial wealth gap. Simply

put, Black students tend to have less wealth than white students which leads to them taking out more loans than white students. According to the White House Initiative on Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence, and Economic Opportunity for Black Americans (Initiative), Black graduates have nearly \$25,000 more student loan debt than white graduates. Black students also face more obstacles of racial disparities while trying to repay loans in employment and wage gaps. The Initiative also found that Black graduates owe 6% more than they have borrowed, while white graduates owe 10% less than they have borrowed. The income-based debt-relief plan allows Black students/graduates to receive more relief and narrow the racial wealth gap.

Many organizations, such as the Student Debt Crisis Center, the NAACP, and the Campaign for Free College Tuition, are pushing for more debt relief though, some even pushing to cancel student debt altogether and make college free. How realistic is this? The nation already has a \$2.8 trillion deficit from the 2022 fiscal year, adding to its seemingly eternally growing national debt.

The two obvious ways to cut back the deficit and be able to afford student debt would be to increase taxes or cut spending (or both). The Congressional Budget Office presents 121 options to decrease federal spending/increase federal revenue, but all of these solutions have

"Wealthier taxpayers should have a larger tax to decrease the tax on low-income taxpayers. They already have the extra money to use, rather than low-income taxpayers trying to make up for the extra expense."

their own setbacks.

A good portion of the options to increase federal revenue takes money from people who need it. According to CNBC, dispersing all student debt evenly could mean an average burden of \$2,503.22 per taxpayer. While this is obviously a lot smaller burden than individual loan pay-offs, it is still a big burden for taxpayers to pay for someone else's education. However, if the government were to go this route, it is not as simple as taxing the same amount of money per taxpayer.

If the debt relief plan is based on income then the plan to pay for the debt should be too. Wealthier taxpayers should have a larger tax to decrease the tax on low-income taxpayers. They already have the extra money to use, rather than low-income taxpayers trying to make up for the extra expense.

The other option to pay for student debt is to decrease federal spending. While this could happen in many different areas, there could be major budget cuts specifically in military expenditures. In the big picture, it's like budgeting on a larger scale.

There are always definite pros and cons to each budget cut, but which is the right choice? The cuts do not have to be all in one place; the best answer would be to do a little bit of both instead of dumping the debt all on one party. That wouldn't be a very fun party. Cut government funds from various programs, and the leftover debt can be divided income-based among taxpayers.

With Biden's Student Loan Forgiveness Plan, the various benefits of debt relief, and income-driven repayment plans will allow many people to be able to navigate life with a much lighter weight on their shoulders. This gives way to a new future with less suffering, empowering people to move out of their parent's basements and make the most of their lives.



INTO THE SHREDDER

Lakota East has been facing a decrease in paper and toner supply requiring students to complete their assignments and tests virtually.

column **aurora hutchings** | photography **audrey allen**

During the start of the third week of school I walked into my second period class. My classmates and I have gotten into the rhythm of grabbing our classwork for the day from the back table and sitting down to start our work. On this day however, the back table was empty and desks remained paperless. The bell rang to signify that class was starting while our teacher informed us that the district was experiencing a paper and toner shortage due to cost, and that we needed to continue our lesson online.

Disappointed groans and moans could be heard all throughout the classroom, as my peers pulled out their **chromebooks**. Some were charged at the ready, and some dead from being untouched. Many students assumed that the paper and toner shortage was a temporary thing that would soon be resolved, but school has reached the second quarter, and still we are using our chromebooks for every assignment.

“The world is constantly innovating, and it’s our job as people to keep up with those changes.”

The day that Lakota East runs completely out of paper and toner is worrisome. There are some classes that could get along just fine without paper, such as government, english, or metals; the classes which are almost completely based around paper are bound to struggle. Staff and students are concerned about the math classes that require a sheet of paper for each of the 160 kids taking the class per day, or the economics class that has a packet of homework for each chapter per week. Or even the spanish classes that have weekly vocabulary sheets, notes, and paper homework.

A Lakota East science teacher claimed that it would be beneficial to have the lesson materials on paper for class and that students

prefer to use paper and teachers want to be able to provide them with a hard copy. The teacher said that they have given students the choice of using the computer or an actual hard copy for several years and the students who choose hard copies seem to always perform better in the classroom.

On the flipside, many classes at Lakota East have gotten acquainted with doing important assignments and tests, for example standardized testing, online. According to Edutopia, in 2014, Ohio had 65% of schools offer state standardized tests online; and since that number has grown to 98% in 2017. If standardized tests have already been moved electronically and students prove to do well, then everyone could potentially get acquainted with taking regular tests and doing assignments online as well.

For most classes it could be more beneficial to have everything electronic. Class notes, homework, everything. **No more lost papers or forgetting about assignments, because it’s all a tap away and can be accessed with a click of a button. Especially since students’ Chromebooks have access to google drive and Kami, a tool that allows you to write on pdf.** Switching everything to paper could potentially solve many problems that a student faces in their day to day lives, and would only have to carry a chromebook. Minor inconveniences such as forgetting a pencil or leaving a folder at home would be a thing of the past. Many teachers also have chargers in their rooms, or there’s loaner computers in the innovation hub.

The world is constantly innovating, and it’s our job as people to keep up with those changes. One of those changes could be going paper free at East. It may be hard to adjust from using paper constantly to no paper at all, but

in the end it is beneficial in more ways than not. According to the Global Forest Resource Assessment, run by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, roughly 80,000 to 160,000 trees are cut down each day around the world with a significant percentage being used in the paper industry. If East and eventually other schools and businesses decided to go paper free; It would save hundreds of thousands of trees.

Reducing our use of paper would save a lot of money, which is the leading reason as to why Lakota would be eliminating paper and toner originally. In a recent email to Lakota teachers, Lakota East Principal Rob Burnside said that it would cost East around \$850,000 to purchase more paper and toner at this time. That money could be spent on other things such as bussing, new desks, or other items essential for teaching.

Lakota’s Chief Operations Officer Chris Passarge said that the price of paper has increased by nearly \$10 per case if we were to buy now versus last school year. Passarge stated that Lakota has seen the price steadily increase over the past couple of years. They were paying \$29.15 per case in March of this year, and that same amount increased to \$44.15 this past summer, although the price has slightly decreased and is currently at \$38.42 per case.

The paper and toner shortage East is currently experiencing doesn’t have all negative outcomes. It allows students to have a universal system for all classes, and the ability to access the material to every class with the touch of a button. No more “my dog ate my homework”, or “I left my homework at school”, it holds students more accountable and prepares us for the ever changing world we live in today. •

49 YEARS BACK IN TIME

The overturning of Roe v. Wade not only negatively impacts every woman in the United States but also creates extremely dangerous situations for them.

column **olli tomtishen** | photography **audrey allen**



As a 16-year-old girl walks into a Planned Parenthood building, a man outside holding a poster with the words “Protect Innocent Children!” painted in bright red, shouts harsh phrases at her. She cannot help but wonder why she is less important as a young adult compared to a child who isn’t even developed. “Protecting innocent children” tends to only apply in this society when the “child” is still in the womb of the carrier. The overturning of Roe v. Wade has violated the right to medical and personal privacy while endangering women, people of color (POC), and others in inhumane ways.

“Whether or not society agrees with the court decision, telling women that they should keep their legs closed unless they want the burden of a child for the rest of their lives is incredibly unrealistic and unconstitutional.”

The court ruling of Roe v. Wade was overturned last summer leaving more than half of the country feeling defeated and left with emotions of despair and grief. The law had been in effect for 49 years after the case was decided in 1973. Just a year before 1970 Jane Roe had rightfully filed a lawsuit against Henry Wade, who was then the District Attorney of Dallas County, Texas, where she began to fight against the unjust laws that made abortion illegal with the exception of if the woman’s life was at risk due to the pregnancy. According to Oyez’s report of the case, Roe claimed that the state laws were infringing on her right to privacy protected by the First, Fourth, Fifth, Ninth, and Fourteenth Amendments, which motivated her understanding that the laws were “unconstitutionally vague.”

Now in Ohio, a woman’s access to abortion is extremely limited as women have only six weeks to find out that they are pregnant, schedule and meet with a doctor, and fully go through with the procedure. National Health Service (NHS) states that most women do not even know they are pregnant until anywhere from two to six weeks after the pregnancy is conceived. The law does not give women a chance to make a decision about whether or not they want to continue their pregnancy. The **court’s** opinion means that from the very moment of fertilization, a woman has no rights to speak of. According to the National Public Radio (NPR) website, a state can force them to bring a pregnancy to term even if the personal and familial costs are unachievable.

In states that possess strict abortion laws, women are required to travel across state lines if they wish to terminate their pregnancy, but it is not as simple as a road trip. Many states have made traveling to get an abortion illegal. Anyone who aided in the transportation or termination of the pregnancy, including doctors, nurses, private citizens, others who aided in the transportation, and the person getting the abortion themselves can be arrested and punished for being involved. According to Politico, in Ohio a nurse, doctor, or citizen can be charged with a fifth-degree felony and punished for six to 12 months and fined up to \$2500.

What grabs my attention is that the “father” is not punished in this situation. Whether or not the conception of the pregnancy was consensual or a product of incest or neither, the father is not punished. Unfortunately, about three million women in the United States had unwanted pregnancies caused by rape, and it is completely understandable

as to why someone would not want to carry through with **either** of those pregnancies. What is even more unfortunate, is that a rapist is not punished for the action of raping a woman. Instead, according to Prism Reports, the rapist has the ability to sue the victim for custody. That can’t be constitutional. It is incredibly inappropriate, especially in today’s society. This raises so many issues, considering the fact that men who want children could see this as an opportunity, as disgusting as that is. This mindset and these laws are feeding into rape culture and I am terrified.

The overturning of Roe v. Wade not only affects abortion laws as most people automatically assume, it affects same-sex marriage and interracial marriage as well. Since the Supreme Court ruling, several states have outlawed abortion and 17 states had policies previous to the decision that would effectively outlaw abortions. According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, many of these states are in the South, which has large shares of Black and Hispanic women, the Plains, which has a large Indigenous population, and the Midwest. 82% of Black women and 63% of Hispanic women voted against Roe v. Wade’s overturning. The website also states that women of color between ages 18 and 49 face greater barriers to accessing healthcare in general.

The overturning of Roe v. Wade is a national shock and a historical setback. Whether or not society agrees with the court decision, telling women that they should keep their legs closed unless they want the burden of a child for the rest of their lives is incredibly unrealistic and unconstitutional. •

HEAD TO HEAD

ARE LAKOTA EAST'S NEW RULES EFFECTIVE?

Section Editors Blake Furnish and Ezri Colpi debate whether or not the new school rules are necessary changes.

photography **audrey allen**

On students' first day back to Lakota East High School, they were met with new rules and regulations on using the bathrooms. Immediately the changes were met with negative backlash. The rules in question mainly pertained to the bathroom policy, dress code, and cafeteria conduct, and were designed to address the increasing vape issue as well as eating outside the cafeteria.

The bathroom rules required anyone using the bathroom during the bell to scan a QR code,

BLAKE FURNISH: YES

leave their phone in the classroom, and then take a lettered lanyard to the corresponding locker bay bathroom. During the assembly, the dress code was slightly amended allowing hats and durags but banning hoods, spaghetti straps and tank tops. Lastly, for lunch, the school is requiring all students to report to the cafeteria unless they have a signed pass from a teacher. Overall, based on the free-for-all during lunch of previous years, it shows the school is open to change, and they're working to improve students' experience in the school without completely giving up the idea of professionalism.

Lakota East High School wants to be portrayed as a safe, inviting, and professional learning environment. On the official lakota online website it states, "Everything WE do is designed to provide a future-ready, student-centered learning experience for every single child." To do this, the administration is trying to provide a professional environment. In order for this to occur, the school has to crack down on the unsafe and unprofessional habits of the students. Eating lunch on a public bathroom floor is possibly the most unsanitary, unprofessional and for lack of a better word, disgusting, habit to fall into. East administrators don't want to be known for that, so they made positive changes.

Another aspect of a professional environment is appropriate clothing. A day in school is not the same as a day in the office. Everyone should have the right to be comfortable in the clothes that they are wearing at school; there's no question about that. However, school is not the place to be dressed in obscene clothing. To keep the level of professionalism that the district of Lakota is trying to convey, a policy needs to be set. Agree or disagree with the policy, nobody can deny that the district isn't working on revising the dress code. The fact that hats and durags are now allowed is a huge win in the eyes of progression and encouraging change. The

school is taking a step in the right direction to allow students to express themselves and be comfortable without taking away from what the students are there to do, learn.

One of the biggest distractions a student can possibly have is an addiction. An argument could be made about students' smartphones but fortunately the physical health side effects are minimal. The same cannot be said about vaping and nicotine. Unfortunately, teens around the United States have been falling into nicotine addictions, and southwestern Ohio is no exception. That being said, Lakota is doing everything it can to prevent and limit vape usage on school grounds. Last year, East had an epidemic of vaping, especially in the bathrooms.

In comparison to last year, the vaping issue in the bathroom during class time has seemed to improve. Whether or not vaping in general has changed, the crowding in the bathroom, and vaping in the bathroom has

"One of the biggest distractions a student can possibly have is an addiction."

decreased significantly. However, during a class change, walking into a bathroom shows that vaping is still a problem. In the five minutes given to switch classes, students are able to pop into the bathroom, take a hit of their vape or two and continue onto class. It's simple. Until the district spends money on vape detectors or places teacher or staff monitors near the bathrooms, there won't be a significant change. It's that simple.

The bathroom changes have helped, but it's an indirect impact. Preventing students from bringing their phones to the bathroom does not stop vaping in the bathroom entirely -- compared to the impact vape detectors and or bathroom monitors would make. Whether or not the district spends the money on vape detectors or adds human monitors near the bathrooms, the district needs to do more if they want to see any significant impact in the vaping issue at Lakota East. •

On the first day of the 2022-23 school year, the Lakota East administration released students from their classes to announce the new agenda that would now be enforced in the school. These rules included mandatory cafeteria attendance during lunch (unless given a pass signed by a teacher), no hoods, and an extended bathroom process requiring a pass for a specific locker bay and a sign-out sheet, as well as no phones or electronics. Many students, including a few teachers, have expressed unhappiness and annoyance due to these new policies, with lots to unpack in each complaint.

One of the main instigators of these protests is the cafeteria policy. Students without a pass from a teacher have been forced to eat in the already jam-packed lunch room, which can be overstimulating and stressful for students who don't do well with crowds. Although the school provided a separate "quiet" room, that too became an overcrowded extension

"While Lakota's code attempts to promote safety, it takes away from student expression."

of the main lunchroom. Getting a pass from a teacher can also be a hassle, especially with the number of students trying to get one.

Another big issue in the school is bathroom passes. According to the administration, students must sign out to go to the bathroom using a QR code, and can only go one at a time. This already poses an issue to human bodily functions, as it can be understandably frustrating to need to use a restroom and be forced to wait on the 4+ people in line. It's mandatory to wear a lanyard with a certain locker bay number on them, meaning people are restricted to only using that restroom, which leads to more waiting if that bay is crowded. On top of this, phones and electronic devices must be left in the teacher's room during the duration of the student's time away, making the wait for a stall all the more boring.

Teachers can also fall victim to the policy,

EZRI COLPI: NO

sometimes having to use their small amount of free time being on hallway or bathroom patrol. The long process of getting a bathroom pass can also interrupt class time, as well as teachers who are trying to have a moment of peace while students bombard them in their classrooms to have lunch during their free time.

The ever-lasting issue of dress code comes into play this year as well. Most students have encountered school dress codes in one form or another- Despite how common they are, school dress codes and clothing policies often reflect and reinforce outdated and sexist stereotypes, and may be disproportionately enforced against students who are more likely to be policed or perceived as deviant by school officials. A growing argument that has started

this year is the banning of hoods, with the reasoning that other head coverings, such as baseball hats, are permitted. Many students are concerned with freedom of expression and stereotypical parts of the code. While Lakota's code attempts to promote safety, it takes away from student expression.

An ongoing epidemic in many local high schools- namely Lakota East- is addiction, specifically teenagers being addicted to vapes and other nicotine products. While this should not be tolerated, the school's attempt at preventing these unhealthy habits did very little. Students will still vape and smoke, especially in bathrooms, regardless of policy and expectations. It's important to reinforce authority, however it loses its power when the whole school is punished rather than the margin of students who need it. Installing vape detectors is a more effective tactic to combat the issue. No matter the number of people allowed in the bathroom, the overpowering smell of smoke and burnt artificial flavoring still remains.

While discipline in school is vital to helping students achieve strong academic gains, if

rules are too restrictive it teaches students to dislike school and see it less as a "safe space." The need for rules is understandable, however for a school to properly function in a way that is convenient for everyone, it needs to be flexible. Realistically, these rules will not be able to stay relevant and it will only be a matter of time before nobody will feel like enforcing them anymore, however if they were more relaxed and less of a nuisance, students would feel more inclined to follow them. •



EDITORIAL CARTOONS

PAPER SHORTAGE maddie behrmann



CRT AUDIT emily henderson



EAST SPEAKS OUT

Spark seeks out student opinions on the new block schedule.

interviews **kaitlin dwomoh** and **kyle smith** | photography **kaitlin dwomoh**

CALEB BAYS



SOPHOMORE

"It's kind of frustrating as it's kind of in the middle of the week. It's pretty helpful, but sometimes it can just throw off [the day], just in general. The fact that it's not Monday, Tuesday, or the whole week, but specifically Wednesday and Thursday, is kind of weird."

DANICA PIKE



SOPHOMORE

"I really do like the block schedules. I think for certain classes it's really good to have long days like science and art. There are some classes where it's iffy because there is only so much you can do. Overall, I think the block schedules are really good."

ANNA AXELSON



JUNIOR

"I despised it at first. I thought it was dumb and I thought we should choose one [block or seven-period schedule]. But I like it now because I have more time to study. It is also a good balance between classes and homework time. [There can be days where] I could not do my homework"

ASMA RAJA



JUNIOR

"I actually love it. I think we have more time to do homework. I don't take a NEXUS so it's perfect. Other people I know who are taking a NEXUS or don't even take a NEXUS hate [the new schedule] because it's just extra time."

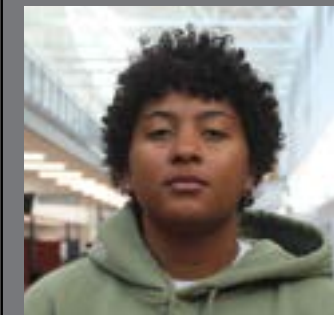
ABBY THEOBALD



SENIOR

"I like it personally because it gives me more time to get work done. On Wednesdays, I have no homework because I have the 90-minute bells to just do work. It's also good for labs and tests."

ANGELICA SPANGLER



SENIOR

"Honestly, I like it. I think it definitely speeds up the week. Once it's Wednesday and Thursday, you only have like 3 classes to worry about. You get more work done and don't have to worry about certain classes on a certain day. I think they should leave it in."

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