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HARPER'S CHOICE MIDDLE SCHOOL

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Little Mermaid Jr. brings under-the-sea magic to stage



David Hawkins,
6th Grade
Reporter

The HCMS production of *The Little Mermaid Junior* went on-stage May 9, 10 and 11th in the cafeteria. Unless you are in the cast, normal theater-goers don't usually know what's going on behind the curtains, but it took a lot of teamwork and time to create that under-the-sea magic.

In fact, the stage crew, those who work behind the scenes, are just as important as the actors on stage. There were about 11 members of the stage crew, led by stage manager Allie Mize, a 7th grader. Eighth graders Elizabeth Brown and Meredith Sorenson also helped lead the choreography.

The Little Mermaid Jr. is a story most in the audience will know and recognize. The most known characters from this show would be Ariel (played by 7th graders Elise Varoli/Ashleigh Thur as understudy), Sebastian (played by 6th graders Shaena Bullock/Kamil Roberts as understudy), Flounder (played by 7th grader Jackson Bank-Krokos), King Triton (played by 8th grader Julien Aboudi-Moutome), Ursula (played by 8th graders Liliana Choppelas/Samya Miles as understudy), and Prince Eric (played by 7th grader Sheraden Greenidge).

The show's directors were Social Studies teacher Jessica Padgett and music/chorus teach-



photo by Laura Cometa

A packed audience cheered at the last performance of *Little Mermaid Jr.* on Saturday, May 11th. The 8th graders gave a special thanks to the directors and were recognized for their final middle school show.

er Angela Pope. They made the joint decision to produce this year's spring musical *The Little Mermaid Jr.* Pope explained, "We have a large amount of strong performers in Drama Club, and our school benefits. We knew a show like *The Little Mermaid Jr.* would offer a lot of performance opportunities for a large group of people."

She added, "While the audience will immediately recognize

the [main] characters from the show, there are over 60 students involved with this production in its entirety."

It is a big commitment to be in Drama Club, and the students have to balance their school work with the added responsibilities of being in a play. Pope explained, "All students were selected to perform or be a part of the incredible crew based on how well they auditioned, the strength of

their crew application and recommendations, how well they have performed in previous drama club productions, and their behavior and reliability as students in our school."

Sixth grader Kayla Timmons played the roles of a seagull, a desperate princess, and understudy for Scuttle (the main seagull). She was glad that *The Little Mermaid Junior* was chosen as the musical this year. She explained, "It is a

classic and all the students and parents will know what it is."

"It was always fun to rehearse, but there were sometimes too many people who got stressed out," Timmons added.

Sixth grader Shaena Bullock played Sebastian the crab and spoke in a Jamaican accent throughout the play. She said, "I really enjoyed working with the cast and I would definitely recommend other students to join Drama Club in the future."

Eighth grader Greta Giuliano, who played one of Ariel's mermaid sisters, said, "The shows went really well, but there were a few behavior problems backstage and too much talking. I think that's one area that could be improved next time."

Sixth grader Geleisi Li, who played a seagull, chef, and sea creature, said that she joined Drama Club specifically to get over her stage fright. "This was the first show I was in since kindergarten, and it really helped me face my fears. I feel a lot better now acting in front of people."

Many staff members attended the play and had positive feedback. Cindy Six, G/T resource teacher, said, "I liked *Little Mermaid Junior* a lot. The physical space was small and worked well for the play. My favorite part was all the group numbers and my son's favorite part was watching Ursula's eels, Flotsam and Jetsam."

Everyone agreed that the twins, 7th graders Atiya and Naila Ba'th, were the perfect choice for the parts of Flotsam and Jetsam.

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8th graders explain projects at Science Fair exhibition



Deya Dimitrova,
8th Grade
Reporter

The 8th grade Science Fair was held on Thursday, April 4th from 6-8 p.m. in the HCMS cafeteria. In preparation for the Science Fair, the 8th grade G/T Science Students students selected a topic, designed an experiment, carried it out, and analyzed their results. Then, they presented it on a display board at the Science Fair.

There were 39 projects submitted by 65 students this year. Some students chose to work individually, but most worked in pairs to get the projects done. There were 23 judges, who walked around and scored the projects.

Nancy Prendergast is the 8th grade science teacher in charge of the Science Fair. She said, "The HCMS Science Fair has been happening for years and I have been in charge of it for 6 years now."

There were awards for the top 3 projects and many honorable mention awards. This year in first place was Upanshu Bajaj. His research question was "Does decaffeinated tea contain caffeine?"

In second place was Elias Wesal and Aidan Moon with their project entitled "Sound waves vs. insulation." In third place were

Alexus Halford and Samya Miles were their project called, "Sulfates vs. Hair."

The honorable mentions this year were awarded to Derek Baker and Thomas Fry, Amy Ingram and Sage Rivarde, Lindsey Sands and Sophie Sapp, Bruke Tewedros and Mikey Whiddon, Sama Ali and Devon McGuiness, Nyah Lastrapes and Bailey Hudgens, Karis Simmons, Oliver Song and Andrew Heffner, Liliana Choppelas, and myself, Deya Dimitrova.

All these students, plus the other G/T Science students in 8th grade worked for a long time on the projects. Prendergast explained, "Students begin working on their topics in September and work on the project through February."

There used to be a county Science Fair, where students throughout Howard County would compete. However, there has not been a county fair lately.

Prendergast explained, "Unfortunately, the county has not held a Science Fair Competition for the last several years. There is a State Science Fair that is held at Towson University in March. The winners this year or any student can present at the State Science Fair next year."

Prendergast added that she enjoys the Science Fair a lot. She said, "My favorite part of the Science Fair is the night of the science fair competition. The projects are so well done and I am bursting with pride at all of the



photo by Nancy Prendergast

G/T 8th graders hoped to earn high scores from the judges as they explained their projects on April 4th.

hard work that these students put into their own projects."

The 8th grade G/T science students had their own opinions about participating in the science fair and creating their projects.

For example, 8th grader Meredith Sorensen said that she enjoyed her project, worked alone on it, and it took her about a week to do the trials. Her project was titled "Testing the Strength of Bouncy and Sparkle Paper Towels."

On the other hand, 8th grader

Megan Wolters said that she did not enjoy her project because she did 150 trials and it took her about 3 weekends to get the work done. She also worked alone. She said her project was about ice melting conditions.

There are multiple tips that may be helpful for future science fair participants. For one thing, procrastination is a big no-no. It is the leading thing that causes stress and mayhem.

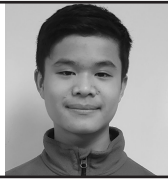
Another thing is to be organized. Keep all your notes in one

folder or binder, and draft a game plan. What are your materials? What are your criteria? Your constraints?

One last tip is to peer edit. You don't have to work in partners, but always find someone to help you go over your papers. They can catch last minute mistakes that may cause you to lose points.

Congratulations to all Science Fair participants, and best of luck to the 7th graders who will be participating in the Science Fair next year!

Ways to make CASH as a kid



Lindsey Sands & Oliver Song,
8th Grade
Editor-in-Chief
& Editor

How many times have you wanted to buy something, but you couldn't because you were basically broke? If your only income is birthday and holiday money, keep reading!

Now to all of you out there who get an allowance, kudos to you for convincing your parents to pay you for stuff you should do without incentive!

Unfortunately, random influxes of cash two or three times a year isn't enough to keep the rest of us afloat. If you spend all your money on a PS4 game, you won't have any for when the next one comes out. Sound familiar?

In middle school, no business is really looking to hire us. But if you need to make some moolah, there's still a lot you can do, so don't lose hope! We synthesized ideas from a few sources to give you a list of 22 things you can do to make some cash as a kid:

Babysit/Petsit: Watch people's kids or animals for them while they are away. You can also be a "mommy's helper," someone who watches the kids while the parents are home just to keep them occupied for a few hours. You can earn a few bucks per hour. Just make sure you find the right clients.

Technology Assistance: Help senior citizens and people who don't know how to set up their technology. Offer to set up a new laptop or make an email account for a reasonable price.

Movie Showings: Rent or buy a new or popular movie, and charge people to come see it. You can also buy popcorn and concessions and sell those, too. The theater can be your backyard as long as you have a projector and screen. Disney classics anyone? This method could work for other services. If you have a pool in your backyard, charge people for a pool party. Do whatever you think people will pay for!

Yard Work: Here's a job that never ends. Raking leaves in the fall, shoveling snow in the winter, mowing in the spring, and trimming shrubs and bushes in the summer. You'll have work all year round. That also means plenty of cash. You can work for neighbors, so you don't have to travel too far.

Walk Dogs: If you like animals and don't so much mind their waste product, you can walk dogs. If people are too busy to do it themselves, offer to do it for them – for a price, of course.

Sell Goods: If you like to make things, you can sell baked goods and crafts, such as jewelry or greeting cards. You could also sell animations. Making animation can be long and extensive, but you could earn \$100 or more. Disclaimer: When selling goods, don't sell drugs. That could land your butt in jail!

Clean or Organize: If you're really neat and tidy, you can use those skills to make some cash. Label and organize someone's desk space or garage. Clean your siblings' rooms or wash cars for money. There are a lot of things that need to be cleaned.

Take Photos: Get a professional camera and take photos for events like high school prom or weddings. You can also sell photos on Shutterstock and other picture-selling websites. If you can't afford a professional camera yet, use your phone.

Translate: If you speak a different language at home, you should hone your skills and become a translator for people.

Tutor: If you are really good at a certain subject – math, science, history, English, Spanish, or French – you could tutor someone who needs help in that particular area. Help fellow students excel in school and make money at the same time! Tutoring doesn't have to be only school related, though. You could also teach someone how to play a sport or an instrument.

Take Online Surveys: There are lots of apps and websites out there that pay you to take surveys. Survey Monkey and Swagbucks are good ones. For some of them you must be at least 13 years old.

Social Media: You could start a blog on basically any social media platform, like Youtube, Instagram, etc. Once you get a good following, you can make money.

GoFundMe: If you have a convincing reason for wanting to make money, create a GoFundMe account and convince people to donate to your fund. Warning: Your "Go Fund Me" project has to be real and honest, or you could end up getting sued and lose a lot of money!

Get a Job: There are plenty jobs at the mall, pools, restaurants, and athletic clubs. Of course, this is a great opportunity to earn steady income. However, most jobs require that you are 14 or older.

Lemonade Stand: Grab a few lemons, sugar, and water, and set up a stand. Sell refreshing lemonade on a hot day. In the winter, you could sell warm drinks like hot chocolate and hot apple cider.

Start a Business: If you have a product or service that people need, sell it! Use your ideas to make money. If you don't want to necessarily run the business, patent your idea

and sell it to a company.

Rent Your Stuff: Loan your DVDs, books, Netflix account, and more for cash. You could also rent storage space if you have some space available.

Book Repairs: You'll need a book repair kit, but books are always falling apart and in need of attention! Sell your book repair services to a local bookstore, library, and friends.

Grow a Garden: Grow plants. Sell flowers, decorative plants, or produce (foods) that come as a result of the plants. For example, if you grow tomatoes, you can sell them at a local farmer's market.

Refereeing and Coaching: Complete the necessary training to become a sports referee. Officiate toddler and youth leagues for soccer, basketball, baseball, etc. Once again, you must be at least 14 years old for this opportunity.

Odd Jobs: If you are looking for some quick cash, ask family and friends what they need done and offer to do it for a price. You can also use programs such as Fiverr, an online marketplace for freelance services, to get jobs. You can always wash cars!

Now, for our last suggestion, learn how to make money from: **Investing in stocks.**

You might think this is a grownups-only job, but it's not! HCMS Math teacher Richard Belizaire, says his 12-year-old son, Nathaniel, is already investing in stocks. He uses Stockpile, an app where you can earn money (and potentially lose money) by investing small amounts of money in real companies. Mr. Belizaire's advice is to "invest in things you use" and "don't be lazy." You may have to do some research, but if you learn how to invest you can continue earning money for life.

Finally, if you've read this far and your thinking that none of the are possible for you, remember that true financial success is a long-term goal. Take inspiration in the fact that you are growing up in Columbia and attending Howard County schools, which have created many success stories.

One of the most famous people from Columbia is Oscar-nominated actor Edward Norton. He is the grandson of James W. Rouse, the creator of Columbia and the namesake of the Jim Rouse Theater at Wilde Lake High School.

Norton attended HCMS and graduated with WLHS Class of '87. He was active in his school theatre productions, and since then he has starred in *Fight Club* (1999), *The Incredible Hulk* (2008), *Birdman* (2014), and most recently *Alita: Battle Angel* (2019).

Another former Harper's Choice student is 18-year-old Calvin Garrah, who is thriving on YouTube with a following of over 300,000 subscribers. He has worked with companies like American Eagle to promote their products through ad campaigns on his site.

Garrah says, "Don't let other people deter you. Sounds corny, but if you have an idea or dream, pursue it. If the kids who bullied me in school over my channel had made me quit, I wouldn't be where I am today."

There may be students even younger than you who are already finding success! HCMS sixth grader Sofie Crossland is already a successful paid actress. She has worked at Toby's Dinner Theatre since the third grade.

She's been in the play *It's a Wonderful Life* and most recently, she was in *Gypsy* this past January. Her advice for kids who want to make money is to "find something you love to do."

The first steps to earning money is planning. Write out your plan on a sheet of paper or online. Think about what you want to do and what others want done. What can you do that other people want to see?

The second step is to research. Some people might complain about not knowing how to start, or even where to start. Research online! So many people have done things that you want to do, and they make it easier for you by writing about it online!

The third step is to find the people who are already successful and talk to them. What is it that makes them so successful? What does their schedule look like? Is it possible for you to shadow them?

The final step is to put your plan into action! Do not worry if your plan flops in the beginning stage. Failure does not mean the end of the world. The right thing to do is to be resilient – pick yourself back up and try again!

As you can see, there are countless ways for you to earn money, even as a child. A huge variety of services are needed around the world today that you could fulfill!

The boom of the digital age has brought money-making closer to your fingertips...literally. With so many options, you are only limited by the limits you impose on yourself.

Believe in yourself. Anything is possible, as long as you have the strength and determination to do it!

Sources:

- Howtomakemoneyasakid.com
- Wikipedia/Make-Money-in-Middle-School
- "Job Ideas for Middle School Kids Who Want to Earn Money" on Newsday.com



Photos from top: A kid making cash, HCMS student and paid actress 6th grader Sofie Crossland, former HCMS/WLHS student YouTuber Calvin Garrah, and former HCMS/WLHS student Edward Norton, actor.



New in Town: Mr. Fisher is an all-around favorite



Shaena Bullock,
6th Grade
Reporter

Aidan Fisher is a teacher that just about every HCMS student knows. That's because he was hired to be a substitute teacher at Harper's Choice, so he's been in almost every classroom.

Mr. Fisher subs in classes when a substitute does not show up, and on other days, he supports the teachers to help improve the learning that students are doing in the classrooms.

He didn't always want to be a teacher though. He was born in Easton, Maryland, on the eastern shore, and for college, he went to Johns Hopkins University, a prestigious college right in Baltimore. To do so, he had to take extra steps during high school to make it in.

To get into Johns Hopkins, Mr. Fisher said he had to take a lot of Advanced Placement (AP) courses, which are college level courses that you can take during high school. He also had lots of extracurricular activities, including theatre and swimming.

Before he found his passion for teaching, he worked in New York in finance. When he returned to Maryland, his friend suggested trying teaching.

He fell in love with it. As soon as he tried substituting, he immediately knew he wanted to do it. He earned a Master's degree in teaching at Towson University.

In addition, in order to become a teacher, you have to study and pass a several standardized tests in order to be certified to teach. Just think of what all of your teach-



photos by Sarah KC and Shaena Bullock

Mr. Fisher helps students, whether he is subbing in a class (left) or helping Drama Club students prepare for a production (right).

ers had to go through!

The specific test he had to take was the Praxis exam. According to the Praxis website, the Praxis exam is a test used by most state education agencies to make decisions regarding the licensing of new educators.

Many students know Mr. Fisher and have compliments for him. Bereket Tewedros, in sixth grade, said, "Mr. Fisher is a great teacher and I can see him teaching more in the future."

Sixth grader Terry Larose agreed, "Mr. Fisher is very kind. He will stop and listen to what you have to say. He also gives you enough time to work on the assignments."

Students appreciate that Mr. Fisher is friendly and nice. He also takes time out of his day to stay after school and help with the HCMS Drama Club. Almost every afternoon, he stays and helps to direct and give feedback to the students on their performances.

"I was in the plays throughout high school," he explained, and his high school's theatre program was very good.

Cece Roca, a seventh grader in Drama

Club, said that she likes how Mr. Fisher "generates nice conversations and makes connections with the students."

Nevaeh Brown, in eighth grade, added, "He tries his best to make sure we complete the work assigned to us. He's definitely my favorite teacher!"

Since Mr. Fisher is a substitute teacher at our school, he does not know which school he will be teaching at next year. He plans to teach science in Howard County.

If you see him around the school, make sure to greet him and thank him for his time. His students next year will be very lucky to have him as their teacher!



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"The only security of all is in a free press." -Thomas Jefferson

From, Ms. Burnett

Have an excellent summer, HCMS!
-Mr. Ingram



Cougar Chronicle,
keep up the great work!



-Mr. Licker

The problem with vaping



Dan Asgedom,
7th Grade
Reporter

Vaping was originally meant for adults trying to get off cigarettes, but has been gaining popularity with teenagers for recreational use.

Vaping is the act of inhaling an aerosol filled with chemicals and an optional dose of nicotine that is delivered through a device resembling a pen, USB, or a vape unique unto itself. These devices, sometimes called e-cigarettes, vapes, or JUULs, are known for their telltale plumes of scented vapor.

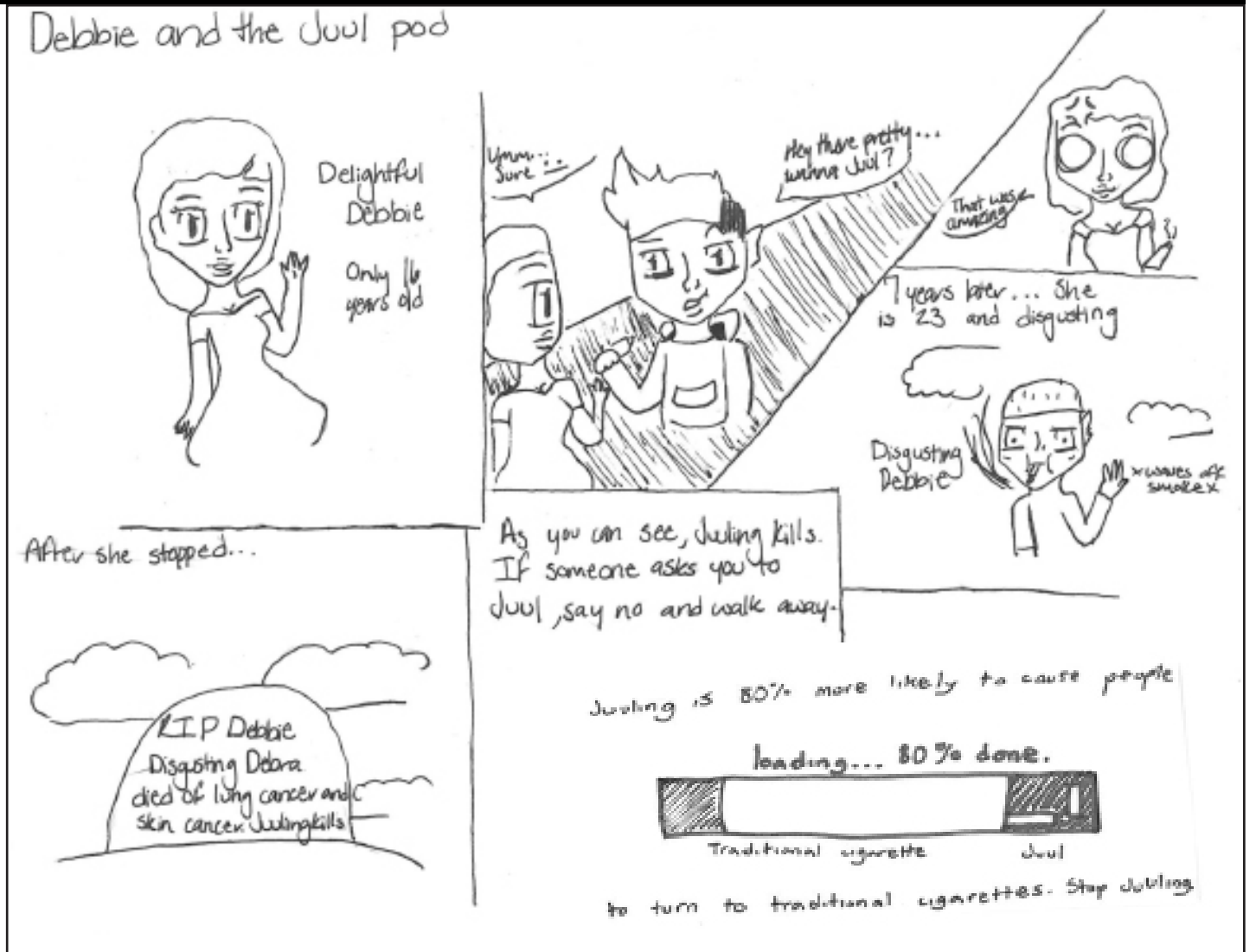
According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), vaping is an urgent problem with drastic consequences. The CDC describes an “epidemic of youth use” and estimates that the number of middle school students who use e-cigarettes has risen about 75 percent in the past year to about 3.6 million students, overtaking tobacco products in popularity.

In Maryland, Governor Larry Hogan recently signed a measure raising the age for buying tobacco and nicotine products from 18 to 21. The law will apply to all types of tobacco products, including cigarettes, cigars, smokeless tobacco, e-cigarettes and vaping devices.

According to the Baltimore Sun, retailers will have to post signs warning that the products can be sold only to those age 21 or older. The law won't change the penalty for selling tobacco to those under age; fines that begin at \$300 for a first offense.

Surprisingly, the bill was supported by e-cigarette company JUUL Labs. The company's devices are popular with teens, but JUUL has worked to promote its product as one designed for adults who already smoke and want a different option.

In our school, the suspicion that vaping is taking place has risen amongst teachers



cartoon by Kayla Timmons and Geleisi Li

and students, but it has not been confirmed. Seventh grader Amaya Copes stated, “I see it everywhere on social media and in the bathrooms.”

On the contrary, 8th grader Samadhi Davis said, “I don't think it is a problem in this school.”

Assistant Principal Kristin Terry agreed, saying, “I hope it doesn't happen here.”

Yet, based on the statistics, it is probable that some students at HCMS are using this technology. Between 2013 to 2014 alone, e-cigarette use among high school and middle school students tripled, according to the CDC. It is estimated that 50% more

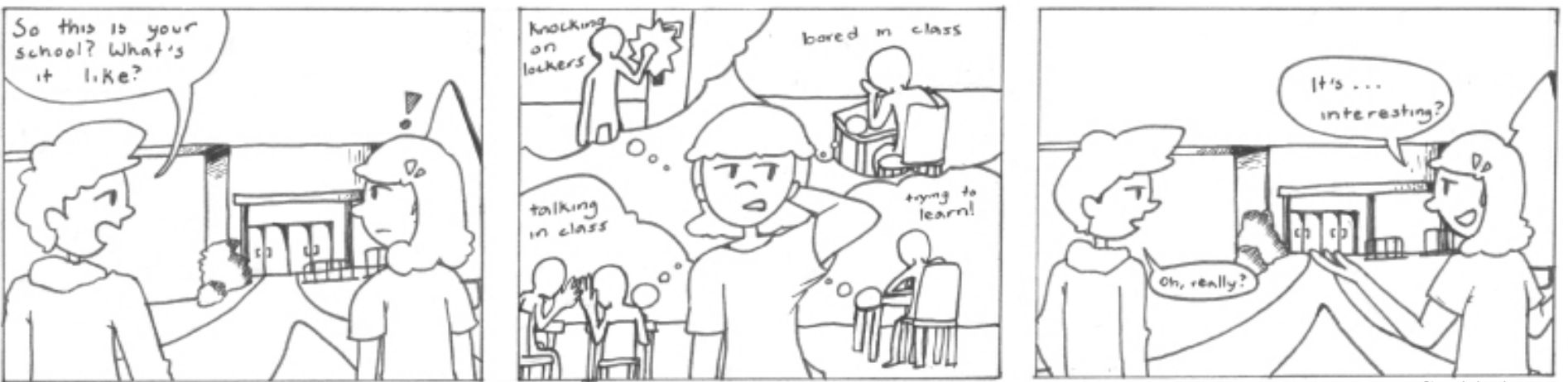
kids vape nowadays, compared to smoking traditional tobacco cigarettes.

The rise of e-cigarettes has both doctors and politicians alarmed. Dr. Steven Masters, a family practice physician, said, “Because it's so addictive, when kids start using nicotine by any means, they're going to get a good chance that they'll get addicted to it and start smoking.”

U.S. Senator Chuck Schumer said that the rise of “gadgets like Juul, which can fool teachers and be brought to school, demands the FDA smoke out dangerous e-cigs and their mystery chemicals before more kids get hooked.”

If you think vaping is harmless, think again. This year, a University of Southern California (USC) study showed that e-cigarette users developed some of the same cancer-related molecular changes in oral tissue as cigarette smokers.

According to Cancer.org, cigarette smoking is the number one risk factor for lung cancer. In the United States, cigarette smoking is linked to about 80% to 90% of lung cancer deaths. People who smoke cigarettes are 15 to 30 times more likely to get lung cancer or die from lung cancer than people who do not smoke.



cartoon by Geleisi Li

How can we make middle school work for all?



Greta Giuliano,
8th Grade
Editor

I received many responses to my article in the first edition of *The Cougar Chronicle*, entitled, “Disruptive students affect everyone's chance to learn.” In that article, I asked why some students were so disruptive in our classes.

But maybe I was asking the wrong question. Maybe I should have been asking: How can we improve our school structure so that kids don't feel the need to be disruptive?

For one thing, we are academically divided in middle school and that can lead to some students acting out. For our core subject areas, we are either in a G/T class or an on-grade level class for any subject

other than math, which does have honors. Seriously?!? We only have two levels of learning.

Now think back to our elementary school Language Arts classes. There were like 4-5 different reading groups who read books at a reading level beneficial to them. Even in high school, you can take on-grade level, Honors, G/T, and AP classes. So, the real question is, why does middle school get neglected like the middle child?

I would like to know why middle school was passed over when they were deciding how many levels were in a subject. Sure, there are multiple levels of math, but that's about it. Additionally, there is also only one level per grade of a foreign language.

That means that kids who are more proficient in the language or even fluent already are mixed in with the kids who are just starting out. In high school you can take Honors level World Language, why can't we?

With classes divided up like this, it can cause some behavioral problems.

Now, before you come at me for discriminating against anyone, I am not trying to target certain groups of people. In response to my last article, I am aware that there are a share of disruptions in G/T classes and I have experienced them too.

In the cases of some kids, being in a G/T class might be too challenging for them, but being in an on-grade level class might not be challenging enough. This is where having more than 2 levels of a class would be helpful, because there would be a middle ground that might be just right.

However, English teacher Kathleen Keck, disagreed. She said in an interview that on-grade level kids are challenged at just the right level, but some G/T kids get overwhelmed.

When Ms. Keck was asked if she thought there should be more than two levels of classes for English, Science, and

Social Studies, she said that there shouldn't be. However, she added that teachers should give different levels of assignments to different students within the same class.

She also said that the rules for G/T have changed, and there are more ways now to get into G/T. You don't have to pass the G/T test anymore. Parents are allowed to override teacher recommendations and test scores to put their children into G/T classes.

So, if you care as much as I do about this issue, I invite you to help me try to persuade the school system to add more classes to the middle school level. Maybe the school board doesn't even realize this is a problem!

Or maybe you have some other ideas for how to make our learning environment more productive and less disruptive. If so, send me a Letter to the Editor and tell me your ideas. If we want change, we will have to make it happen ourselves!



OPINION · LA OPINIÓN · L'OPINION

Abuse, stress, and isolation: Teen depression on the rise



Kayla Timmons,
6th Grade Reporter

Depression is a difficult topic to address because it is a huge umbrella term covering many subtopics. Depression is actually defined as “a mood disorder that causes a persistent feeling of sadness and loss of interest.”

Also called major depressive disorder or clinical depression, it affects how you feel, think and behave and can lead to a variety of emotional and physical problems.

It takes to more than just occasional sad feelings to make you depressed. Depression is often the result of repetitive trauma in some form. It can stem from abuse or feelings of isolation.

According to ChildHelp.com, in 2014, U.S. state agencies found an estimated 702,000 victims of child maltreatment. Dosomething.org states that “2.9 million cases of child abuse are reported each year.”

Does abuse lead to depression? Christopher Withee, an 8th grader, thinks so. He explained, “Yeah, especially with verbal abuse. It can make someone feel bad.”

To be clear, about 19,000 chil-

dren had to be protected from emotional abuse in the United Kingdom alone in 2017 research, which is a fact by nspcc.org.uk.

Emotional abuse has a clear connection with verbal abuse. When it comes to children, one of the six main major causes of emotional abuse is verbal abuse. According to Preventchildabuse.org, “The adult humiliates the child with repeated name-calling, harsh threats, and sarcasm that continually ‘beat down’ the child’s self-esteem.”

It can all lead to depression. HCMS guidance counselor Denise Adams said, “Depression is a chemical reaction and there can also be situational depression, which is when you have a lot of stress.”

If someone told you that they had depression, what would you do? Adams said she would teach them breathing exercises, have them speak to their parent, and depending on the depression, have them go see a doctor. She added, “I would offer them a space to chill out and teach them how to manage symptoms.”

Some students aren’t sure if they have depression. Elizabeth Perez-Rivas, a 6th grader, commented, “I don’t know if I’m depressed. If depression means having stress about school, then maybe. If you have problems in school and not turning in work, it

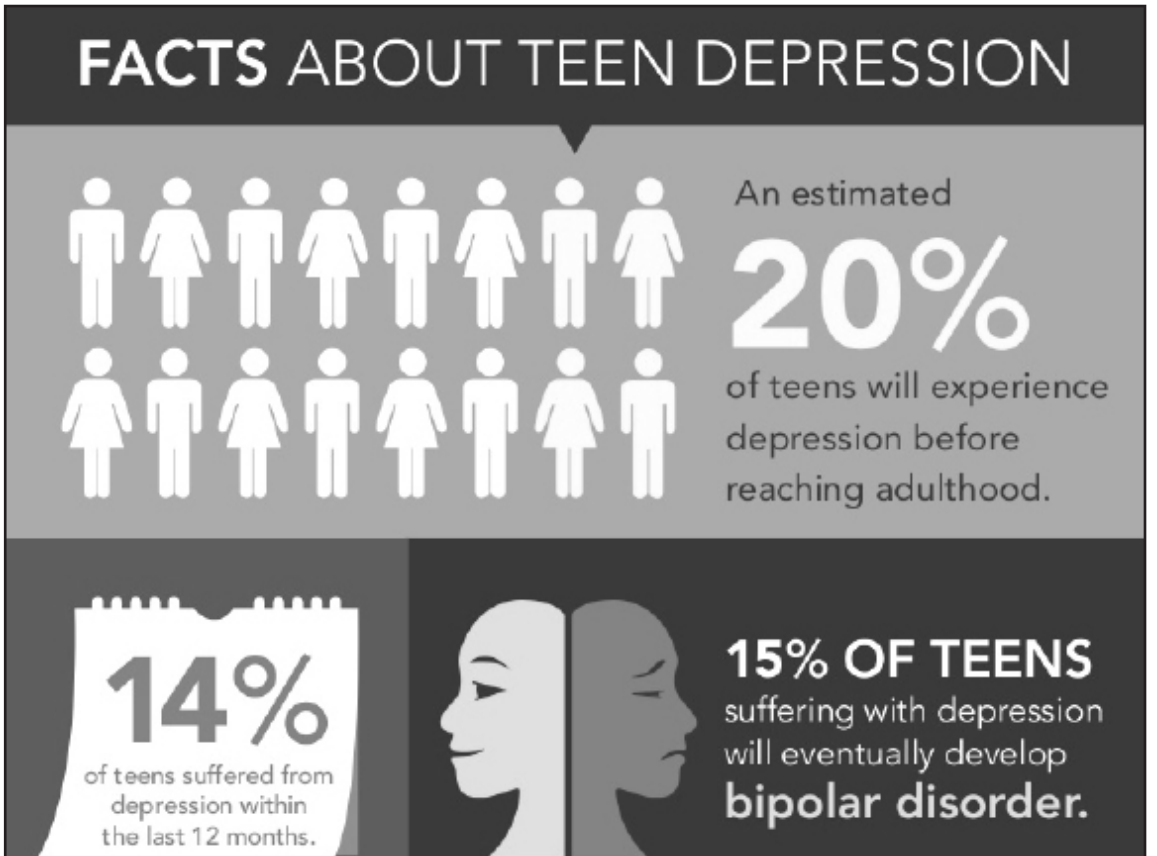
can cause stress and headaches.”

Helina Amara, an 8th grader, added, “Depression is being sad, with no motivation, and you just want to sit down and perish or die.” She said she has experienced depression, and she wants

students to know that it’s not something that should be thrown around like a joke.

Depression is a real thing. Not something that is made up to get attention. If you think you have depression or need help control-

ling it, call 866-299-4987, a depression hotline where you can speak to someone anonymously. There is also 800-273-8255, which is a suicide hotline, if you are feeling suicidal and you need someone to talk to.



Dating does exist in middle school, but why?



Victoria Contreras,
6th Grade Reporter

People usually make jokes about students dating other students, but there are kids in this school who really do date.

You’ve probably seen some things happen in the hallways or at lunch that have to do with

two people (if you know what I mean). Personally, I’ve seen a lot. I have friends and peers that date, and trust me, being the third wheel is NOT FUN.

You have to be stuck watching two lovebirds hug and stare into

each other’s eyes! As I was saying, I’m sure you’ve experienced the same.

Even though there are younger couples, I decided to talk to 8th graders instead. Jessy Rubio Vijil and Kendall Keemer, 8th graders,

have been in a relationship for about a year. That to me is pretty long, since the relationships I’ve heard about only last for a couple of weeks.

I also found out that Jessy was in a previous relationship and it lasted one year as well. I guess older people have relationships that last longer!

I’ve also heard from some students that there are guys with “side chicks.” I bet most of you already know what a side chick is, but for those of you who don’t, basically it means having a girlfriend while dating another person. It’s usually kept a secret.

I feel strongly about this because why can’t you stay loyal to the one you’re with? I mean, I think you should at least break up with the girl before you go date another one!

There are also weird facts about dating too! Here are three I found on Factslegend.org. Fact number one: Before a couple enters into a serious relationship, they will usually go on at least 6-8 dates.

Fact number two: Studies suggest that most breakups take place within 3-5 months of a relationship. Fact number three: In workplace scenarios, 4 of 10 relationships end up in marriage.

It’s weird how some of us are single and know so much about this stuff, huh? I guess it either comes from past experiences and/or by observing couples.

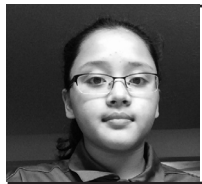
I’m not sure why people date in middle school. I mean, sure you may want to ask out your crush or something, but someone once said that there’s a time for everything.

To be honest, I think we’re too young to be in a serious relationship, but for those of you who actually have a good relationship in middle school, good for you!



cartoon by Victoria Contreras

Vandalism has a negative impact our school



Sarah KC
6th Grade Reporter

Many of our school resources have been vandalized in the past school year. When I go into classrooms, the bathroom, and even in the hallways, I see writing on the walls, desks, and sometimes on the materials too.

Math teacher Brian Fuller said he has seen vandalism in his classes. He explained, "It has been primarily with items like rulers and pencils. In the scheme of life, a 30-cent ruler or a 10-cent pencil isn't a major issue to replace, but the idea that a student disrespects my property and destroys something that doesn't belong to them is what concerns me the most."

I agree; those items are easy to replace, but in my opinion, it is much more important to teach students the concept of valuing someone else's property and being careful with items that don't belong to them. There have also been calculators that students have written on and ruined, which adds up to more money.

Nancy Prendergast, 8th grade science teacher, said, "I believe that vandalism is and has been a problem for some time in our school." She said that earlier this year, a sink in the boys' bathroom near her classroom had flooded because someone had jammed a cucumber in it.

Prendergast believes that vandalized items, such as bathroom sinks, bathroom stalls, lockers, and laptops, should be replaced and fixed. She added, "I also believe that those students who are responsible for any vandalism should receive appropriate consequences for their actions. For instance, students who flood the bathroom should be the ones who clean it up. Students who damage items should work with the maintenance department to get a better understanding of what needs to happen to fix the items that they damaged."

Sixth grader Jayla Copes agreed that vandalized items should be replaced, but



cartoon by Amari Gravely-Smith

she added, "I don't really care about vandalized items. Kids are going to keep on doing it and [the school] will keep losing money if we keep replacing the items."

School Resource Officer Leah Littlefield stated, "If items cannot be cleaned, then they should be disposed of. Students should not be vandalizing items in the first place."

Many students agreed with me that they see vandalized items often around

the school. Sixth graders Emily Kiv, Jayla Copes, Scarlett Lopez, and Elizabeth Perez-Rivas all stated that they have encountered vandalized items on more than one occasion. Atiya Ba'th, a 7th grader, said the same thing.

When I sit down at my desk in various classes, most of the time I see writing on the desks. Ella Moss, a 6th grader agrees, "It's so annoying because you can't focus in class. People try and communicate with

each other from different classes by writing on the desks. Students draw inappropriate things on the desks too."

In fact, it's more than just the desks that people are writing and drawing on. It's on the bathroom walls and classroom materials too.

In the end, if "students or teachers see something, then they should say something!" exclaimed Prendergast. I couldn't have said it better myself.

The past's truth: We need justice for the people



Daesha Johnson
7th Grade Reporter

Bill Cosby... R. Kelly... Michael Jackson. What do these three mean have in common? Unfortunately, it is not just that they were rich, successful, and famous African American men.

All three of them have been accused of crimes of a sexual nature.

Bill Cosby gained fame as an actor in his popular sitcom, "The Cosby Show," in which he played the role of a doctor/dad. He also created the 1987 spin-off Sitcom, "A Different World."

Although he was well-known for his comedy, what he was accused of decades later was no laughing matter. Who would have thought that he had hurt so many woman, and caused them to have such traumatic experiences?

The only man who knew was Cosby himself, and he thought that he could get away with it. According to court documents, two women by the names of Andrea Constand and Victoria Valentino were drugged and assaulted by Bill Cosby. He was sentenced to 10 years in jail because of his age (he is now 81

years old).

It's such a shame what people do and think that their not gonna face any consequences.

Bill Cosby was found guilty on charges of sexual assault.

Next we have R. Kelly, who in my opinion, is a disgrace and also deserves to be put in jail. He has been taken to court before, yet hasn't served any time as he always somehow gets out of charges. He has been accused of sexual assault, child pornography, and even for creating a sex cult. As of now he has been charged with sexual assault and has been thrown in jail.

Third on our list is Michael Jackson, one of the most famous artists of all time. He has been accused of molesting young boys, as well as videotaping them. He died in June 25, 2009, before he could face charges.

I went out and asked people what their opinions were on these situations. Social Studies teacher Amy Smith replied, "In the early 90s I used to listen to R. Kelly, but now I believe he has used his power to mistreat women and justice is going to catch up to him."

Faith Ozenne, a 7th grader, said, "I would still listen to R. Kelly's music because it's inspiring and it's good, but I think it kinda has to do with what happened."

However, another 7th grader, Allie Mize, had a different per-



From left to right: Fans feel a mix of emotions about Michael Jackson, R. Kelly, and Bill Cosby.

spective. When asked about Michael Jackson, she said, "It's a shame because he was a fantastic singer and performer. I don't listen to his music anymore because of what he did, even though he isn't living anymore. It sucks though because I really loved his music."

Shantel Leverett, a community member and parent, said, "Bill Cosby admitted to doing

the things he's been accused of at least once, so in my opinion it's right that he should face consequences for drugging women and taking advantage of them."

She added, "In my opinion, R. Kelly and Michael Jackson should also face consequences for their many years of abuse of women and children. Unfortunately, these men have been able to escape justice due to the fact

that they both had money and power in the height of their careers, but I hope that justice will be served for all the people who were impacted by the hurt and pain they both caused."

Who would have thought that people who were once considered idols, could do these things? It turns out that some people may not be the people they seem to be, but I'll leave it to you to decide.



LETTERS • CARTAS • LETTRES

The COUGAR CHRONICLE



Mission

The Cougar Chronicle staff aims to uphold the highest standards of journalism and ethics in order to provide accurate information and promote the voices of Harper's Choice students.

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Respond

The Cougar Chronicle invites staff, students, and community members to submit their responses and opinions by writing Letters to the Editor. We do not accept anonymous submissions.

Support

We appreciate your ad purchases and donations to print this newspaper. Ads do not represent the views of the school, staff, or newspaper.

The Cougar Chronicle receives hundreds of "Letters to the Editor." While we regret we cannot print all of them, here is a selection.

"Get informed about the quality of your education" by Dan Asgedom:
I really enjoyed reading this article. Even though it's embarrassing, I still think it's important to have people know the quality of their education. What you said in the beginning was very true "How will this help us in life?" is a very well used term and opinion. I often think that too. Thank you for this article, maybe after people read this, they'll realize we need to make a change.
-Jordyn Chaimiti, 6th grade

My questions about this article are: What lead you to write about this? Was it to inform the HCMS students about their academic achievement or to inform teachers about their students low success rates? I found this article very interesting and will consider looking a little more into this in the future.
-Peace Williams, 7th grade

I do think our school is a little slow, but it's our job as students to do the best we can. Teachers also have to make school not fun, but interesting, so students wanna learn more. Also to better our education, we have to actually try harder. I'm not gonna lie, in some of my classes we take notes and the next week we take a test and some adults are just plain rude. Let's make our education interesting and more compelling to learn.
-Joseph Otah, 7th grade

I was shocked when I read this. My parents said Howard County schools were some of the best in the nation. To find out that less than 40 percent of our students are proficient in math is truly shocking.
-Ben Walter, 6th grade

How did you find all of this out? How long did it take to find this all? Also I agree with you because in math, all we do is take notes for a week, then take a test. I think if teachers let us enjoy ourselves while doing our work, it would be less boring.
-Taha Ali, 7th grade

"Is John Wall worth all the hype? Are the Wizards a good team?" by Joshua Cofie:
John Wall isn't worth all the hype. He is just a regular NBA player that gets attention. Also the Wizards were ok until they removed Kelly Oubre.
-Riyadh Assani, 7th grade

Can the newspaper have more stuff like this? This is interesting and I believe that this is important. We should see more of this in the newspaper.
-Bereket Tewodros, 6th grade

"How to care for your pet teacher," by Andrew Heffner:
This is the most amazing article I have ever read. I would like to say that I will definitely do these. My teacher will be much happier now with these tips. My one question is, how can I tell if I overfeed my pet? I don't want them to conquer the world.
-Liliana Choppelas, 8th grade

"Do you know about HCPD's Bear Trax program?" by Officer Littlefield:
Bear Trax is a good program. You can have fun in the summer camp. You can make new friends as well. Bear Trax is run by police officers. You eat breakfast, lunch, and dinner. All in all, it's a really good opportunity.
-D'Asia Dendy, 8th grade

"National Junior Honor Society inducts first HCMS students," by Nuriyah Minhas:
What do people do there? I was one of the people with a 3.5 GPA to go to the auditorium, but wasn't really clear on what we would do.
-Vincent Murray, 8th grade

"Soap shortage, profanity on the rise," by Naila Ba'th
I'm not trying to be rude with this, but if it is, I am sorry. Kids in this day and age are gonna curse a lot, with social media influencing it. In the 80-90s, it was looked down on, but now, even parents use profanity. I know it is wrong, but now there is nothing we can do. Don't get me wrong, I would get in a lot of trouble if I did it, but it happens a lot. (BTW good writing!)
-Brianna Caesar, 6th grade

I agree with some of what you said. It's important to know what should and shouldn't be said in a professional environment, however speech shouldn't be censored. I agree that yelling swears in the hallways is rude

and shouldn't be happening, but schools that fine kids for it are taking the issue too far. We have more pressing matters to worry about at this school.
-Megan Wolters, 8th grade

"Putting a stop to racism is important," by Tatianna Trafton:
One question I have is, what is the county doing to prevent these things? They need to pay close attention to who they hire and who is in their schools. I agree with Ms. Six and it's good to believe, but sometimes we have to realize reality.
-Amaya Copes, 7th grade

"Sure we love it, but is social media good for us?" by Greta Giuliano:
This is a great article and it was very interesting to read. I believe although there are age restrictions on social media apps, some 12-year-olds and younger are responsible enough to have social media. I believe if the child is below age but has permission from their parent/guardian, they should be permitted to have an account, but the account should be watched over by a parent/guardian. I believe that if an underage child decides to make the decision of having an account, they should be extremely cautious.
-Maura Sanchez, 8th grade

Social media is a source of entertainment. Sure people use it too much, but people use it regularly to chat, check what's going on, or to post stuff. I wouldn't call social media "bad." People overuse it, but most people just use it for fun.
-Elias Wessal, 8th grade

My thoughts and questions are that this is completely obvious. Nothing is really that much "good for us." Even water sometimes can't even be good for us. Too much could literally kill us. But what I myself honestly think is that social media should be a platform everyone should be able to use. I feel as if a "younger" person is using it, who isn't supposed to, then it's simply the parent or guardian's fault for not controlling what their child or loved one is doing. Anyone is and should be allowed to express themselves whether it's Snapchat, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, or more. And if someone can't handle having a phone or device where they can access the internet, then they probably

shouldn't have one at all. But I guess that's up to the parent.
-Elizabeth Williams

"New in Town: Cougars welcome Mr. Belizaire," by Arianna Miller:
How did you know all this? Did you interview Mr. B? But, either way, I liked this article; it was nice.
-Kelly Buuza, 7th grade

"Tech Talk: The good, the bad, and the broken," by Caleb McKenna:
I agree with this article. It is very often that I need to put a computer back because it is missing a key or the battery is loose. Sometimes, 2 or 3 keys are missing. This is very unfortunate because it makes it difficult to type. When it's hard to type, it's hard to learn and finish work.
-Michael Whiddon, 8th grade

"Student council gets a start," by Sarah KC:
Your article was well-written and I love how you mention people's names to credit them on what they have done. You have well-written, specific facts included in your article like the specific number and proportion of students in the council. You sponsored the student council very well.
-Helina Amera, 8th grade

"Law & Order hits the stage," by Deya Dimitrova
The development of these plays takes lots of effort and are a joy to watch and produce. I am a participant in the upcoming musical, so I understand how dedicated you have to be to learn your lines.
-Nevaeh Brown, 8th grade

"Do 'fidgets' help you focus?" by Liliana Choppelas:
Fidget spinners do actually help a lot of people focus and relieve stress, but I think most people use the fidget spinner just to play with like a toy. I know a lot of people who use the excuse "I have anxiety and stress" just to play with the fidget spinner during class. I personally think that it is a distraction to most people who play with it. There's even tricks people do with them. I've tried a fidget spinner before, and it completely distracts me from what is going on.
-Zohra Salehi, 8th grade



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Razzle dazzle and all that jazz... Local high schools present *Chicago*



**Lindsey Sands
& Sophie Sapp**
8th Grade

In theatre, competition is fierce. Singing, dancing, acting; the whole shebang. That's why when three Howard County high schools all decided to put on the show *Chicago: The High School Edition* this Spring, we knew we had to investigate.

Chicago is one of the longest running American musicals in Broadway history, winning 6 Tony awards, 2 Olivier Awards, and a Grammy. *Chicago* is an adult-themed musical written by John Kander, Fred Ebb, and Bob Fosse. However, the "high school edition" is a much milder version compared to the raunchy innuendos and racy jokes of the original.

The story is set in 1920s Chicago and follows Roxie, who is imprisoned for killing a man who tried to leave her. When she gets to prison, another inmate, Velma Kelly is her rival. Both out to get the same big-shot lawyer and a shot at fame, Roxie and Velma clash.

Every year, high schools put on Spring musicals that wow the crowds and bring the magic of theatre to Howard County. Students practice for weeks on end perfecting their triple threat or building stunning sets. So, who worked harder on their *Chicago* production – River Hill, Wilde Lake, or Glenelg High?

Unfortunately, we did not have the opportunity to see the Glenelg High production, but we did have a chance to compare the productions by River Hill and Wilde Lake High Schools when we saw the shows in March. Both schools had amazing performances!

Aidan Fisher, the in-building substitute at Harper's Choice, also saw River Hill's production of *Chicago*. He said that the show was "awesome," and the "whole company was great." He gave the show a 9 out of 10 because there were some microphone issues for some of the songs, which it made it hard to hear.

Other crowd members at River Hill's production had similar thoughts. Charlie Smith gave the show a 10 out of 10. He said, "[The] leads were really good, and the production was very well done."

Audience members also had comments at Wilde Lake's performance. Jack Reading, a sixth grader at Harper's Choice Middle School, thought the musical was "funny, but hard to understand," and gave it a 9 out of 10.

So, whodunnit better?

Pricing: River Hill had 4 shows from February 28 to March 3 going for \$15 a ticket at the door, and Wilde Lake had 3 shows from March 7 to March 9 with tickets \$14 at the door. As no-income middle school students, Wilde Lake's pricing was preferable. One dollar makes a big difference in the lives of ordinary 8th graders. Another thing to note is the bake sales. Both bakes sales were all store bought, prepackaged snack food. You could not eat in either theatre. Wilde Lake's bake sale was everything for a dollar and River Hill's was more varied in price.

Sets: The sets are the first thing the audience really sees. Both schools had elaborate sets that formed the back-

drop and had areas for the actors to climb on. They are an important part of the story telling; they set the scene. River Hill's set had cool art deco patterns that really reflected the time period. It had beautiful spiraling staircases that really added the "razzle dazzle" to the set. Wilde Lake's was a black piece with a trim of bright blue lights. In terms of being creative and fitting the theme, River Hill's set was superior.

Costumes: One area Wilde Lake really excelled in was in costuming. To have a good show you want the audience to really believe what they're seeing, so that they don't have to suspend their disbelief too much. Wilde Lake's costuming was better the River Hill's, and here's why.

Starting with the leads in the shows, although the actual dress was similar, the hair was vastly different. In the 1920s, the style popular with women was ear length hair or you would probably put up your hair to give the illusion of shorter hair. River Hill's production's hair was, for the most part, not really done at all in the style of the time. One person of note who had proper hair styling was Kitty the Pineapple Heiress portrayed by Katie Urban.

This is in stark contrast to Wilde Lake where almost every principle character had a wig or their hair styled in the style of the times.

Another difference in costuming was the ensembles. Both female ensembles wore black shorts, tight tops, and fishnet stockings. This, we thought was a good choice on both parts. It was not really of the time, but the stockings tie it in enough that you got the idea. In jail, Wilde Lake's ensemble wore just the fishnets and black but in River Hill's some people wore dresses. Sometimes Mama wore one too. This was very confusing trying to figure out who was in jail and who wasn't.

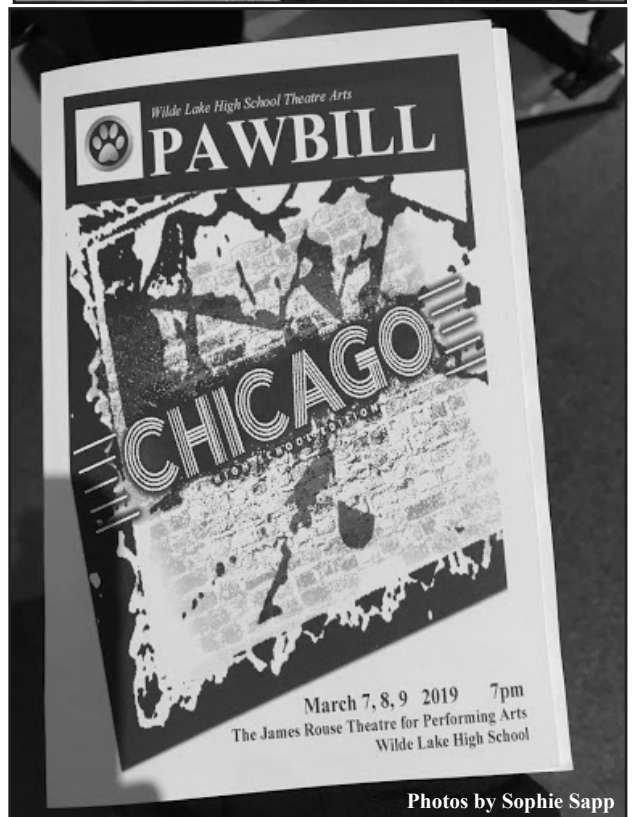
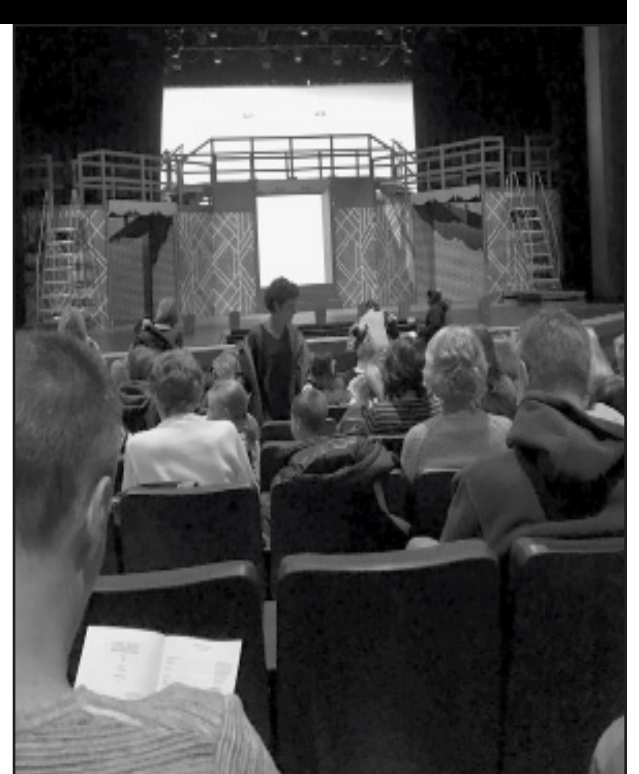
The male ensemble was another story. River Hill's male ensemble wore black pants and mesh tanks tops for the most part. We both agreed that this was in poor taste. It was supposed to go with the raunchy theme of the show, but we felt it didn't mix well with story.

Wilde Lake's male ensemble wore period clothes, including dress pants, button downs, and suspenders. This really tied into the time period and made it more believable.

Another factor was the fact that Roxy was supposed to be a redhead. The show makes multiple references to this, but because we saw River Hill's show first we were very confused. River Hill's Roxy was blonde. Whenever they would make reference to her hair color, it was confusing. Wilde Lake's Roxy did have a red haired wig, so when they referenced it, it made sense.

Acting: The acting in both shows was outstanding. All the actors were exemplary, especially if you think of how young they were. It takes a lot of courage to act. One thing we appreciated from both shows was the effort. Many actors tried to do voice which we thought was super cool. However, sometimes they might have gotten a bit carried away. A few of the actors in River Hill's show seemed like they were doing New York accents in a show about Chicago. This definitely caught our attention.

Dancing: Wilde Lake also had amazing choreography that helped tell the story. The ensemble performed it well although there were points that seemed less practiced. The dancers would not show the confidence that they were doing the correct moves. It was almost as if the moves were questioning themselves. This only happened every once in a while though, so it was not to big a deal.



Photos by Sophie Sapp

Top: River Hill's large set piece was front and center stage in their performance. It featured art deco patterns and brick detailing that pleased the eyes. **Bottom:** Wilde Lake's playbill popped in bright yellow.

River Hill's choreography was something we struggled with. Their dancing had similar issues to Wilde Lake, but was not any worse. The gripe we had was that the actual choreography was not used as a storytelling device. There were times when it was with the story, often solos or duets when the song was about specific people. Unfortunately, when the whole ensemble was dancing, it often felt like they were just moving to be moving and not helping the story along.

Standouts: River Hill had some stand out performers. Ryan True did an amazing job as Billy Flynn. The singing, acting, and dancing were all there. The same goes for Ashleigh Steinberg as Matron "Mama" Morton. Henry Grinnell executed a heart-wrenching "Mr. Cellophane" that made many fans ache for Amos Hart. Finally, everyone got a good laugh from Ainsley Little as Hunyak, the Hungarian who only ever said, "Not guilty!"

Wilde Lake had some standouts as well. We were very impressed by the dancing by the two leads Velma and Roxie played by Maggie Van Vranken and Sydney Lowry, respectively. It felt very genuine, especially when they were dancing at each other. Another standout was the ensemble. Everyone in the ensemble was really acting. Not only were they singing and dancing but also using facial expression and body language to portray the story of their characters.

Our Final Verdict: Wilde Lake offered the best experience for *Chicago: High School Edition!* That said, both productions were outstanding, and both cast seemed to enjoy performing and preparing for the show.

Wilde Lake High School's Velma, played by Maggie Van Vranken, said that she "practiced every day for three months." She said that despite the hard work, drama is fun, and she encourages everybody to join theatre.

Ashleigh Steinbergh, River Hill's Matron "Mama" Morton, went to Folly Quarter Middle School and has been in 8 of River Hill's shows. She says that if you want to be in theatre you should "go for it."

Theatre is a fun, exciting opportunity. Don't forget that we have a Drama Club right here at Harper's Choice. Hopefully, you went to see Harper's Choice Drama Club's production of *The Little Mermaid, Jr.* on May 9-11th.

Music throughout the ages



Aniya Douglas,
7th Grade
Reporter

Music has evolved drastically throughout the years, so much so, that people today forget all the other musical genres that have occurred. But different musical genres have inspired each other. Rap didn't just show up one day; it was inspired by scatting, funk, soul, and disco in the decades before.

Music represents freedom, independence, and even more. It has been a building block of confidence. It helps us with certain emotions – helps us cope. Music helps calm me. Music can be anything. Tapping, humming, whatever your heart desires.

Music is always changing little by little. No one knows precisely how the origins of music started or when. Why not try listening to music from other times in history so you can hear some-

thing that is new and different for you? According to Softschools.com, the Baroque Period in Europe (1600-1750) had strict musical forms and highly ornamental works.

In the Classical Period (1750-1830) music was lighter and clearer, less complex, and primarily homophonic.

In the Romantic Period (1830-1900) music sought to express emotion, both negative and positive. Orchestras became much larger during this period. Operas became increasingly popular (1900-1960), with large opera houses working in many cities.

Jazz music (1910s) had become popular in New Orleans and spread throughout the country, with distinct regional variations. Jazz was highly influential, and remains popular in modern forms even today.

Country music (1920s) had its origins in the songs of the Appalachian Mountains. By the early 1920s, it was developing into a new genre, popular in the Southern states.

Jazz led to the birth of a new genre, Big Band Swing Music (1930s). These

were large bands, producing lively dance music.

Rhythm & Blues or R&B (1940s) relied on the sounds of blues music and a strong beat.

Rock music (1950s) pulled from many genres, including blues, jazz and gospel, as well as country music. By the mid-1950s, this music was largely guitar driven, and eventually fueled a growing youth culture.

Contemporary Folk music (1960s) integrated various musical traditions from around the world.

Rap and Hip-Hop music (1970s) have their origins in house parties in New York City. These musical genres initially relied on beats found in funk, soul and disco records, but provided a new, exciting form of expression.

By the 1970s, rock music wasn't rebellion enough, and Punk Rock developed. Punk music used limited instrumentation, harsh sound, and shorter songs. Lyrics were typically anti-establishment.

So, what do you know about the music you listen to? How did it originate?



Xbox vs. PS4: Which console beats the competition?



Caleb McKenna,
6th Grade
Reporter

I am not trying to personally get you to buy a Xbox, but I am going to convince you that Xbox One X is a better console than the PS4 Pro!

Let's get into the BIG facts! First of all, the Xbox One X is the most powerful console in the world as of April 4, 2019, and that's no debate. Yes, you might say that the PS4 Pro has had more sales, but more sales doesn't mean it's better. If you think about it, the PS4 Pro is cheaper so that's the one parents would go for. Also, if all your friends have a PS4 then you are more likely to buy one.

But there are clear factors that make Xbox superior. Just look at Xbox exclusive games. Xbox has Forza, one of the best racing series out there, and Halo. Xbox also has Roblox, which may sound cringey, but it is one of the most successful multiplayer games ever.

PS4 does have some pretty cool exclusive games, such as the newest Spiderman game and Detroit, but I still think that on this topic Xbox wins.

I do agree that the PS4 Pro is rated a little bit better because it is less expensive. One issue is that PS4 Pros don't need batteries and Xbox One X's do. However, you could use rechargeable batteries and you can also plug in your controller to your console, so the batteries don't add much to the Xbox One's price.

If you use rechargeable batteries you only buy them once and not anymore. The other Xbox expense is Xbox Live gold subscription, but you also have to pay for PS4 Plus so they are equal on that.

I know it sounds like you have to spend a lot more money for the Xbox One X and the PS4 Pro is preferred, but at the end of the day we are only comparing the two newest consoles. Also the Xbox One X is just a better console and that is facts, not opinion. The reason why it is better is because it has better graphics, runs faster, and is overall a stronger console.

Another thing that is really cool about the Xbox One X is because Xbox has design lab which is a service that can let you make your own custom color control-



lers. So basically you can design your own controller with different color bodies and buttons.

Mason Hall, an 8th grader, owns many consoles but prefers Xbox over PS4 and Nintendo Switch. On the other hand, Taniya Flanagan a 6th grader said that she prefers PS4 because she thinks the controller is better and the players were less toxic. I would have to respectfully disagree with her, because I think the Xbox controller is much more comfortable to use.

I do agree that PS4 has Virtual Reality, which is a pretty cool concept. Xbox does not have VR, so on that topic PS4 wins.

So I personally think Xbox is better, and you are getting more for what you paid for. I hope I was able to persuade you to like Xbox, and that you have now come to your senses if you preferred PS4!



Pierre Kanga,
6th Grade
Reporter

Without a doubt, PS4 has the best console. PlayStation's newest model, PS4 Pro, beats Xbox One X by a landslide.

The sales for the PS4 Pro are a staggering 91.6 million consoles sold, and have gained 18 million over the past year. On the other hand, Xbox One X sales are 29.4 million sets.

It's true that Xbox may be an all-around stronger console. The Xbox One X can stream BluRay movies and run some

games at 4K quality.

The PS4 Pro cannot do either of these, but to counter this, PlayStation has very good exclusive games, including Detroit, Spider-Man, The Last of Us, and God of War.

Each of these have been best sellers for video games. Also, the PS4 Pro will soon be able to run games at 4K.

Another reason why I think PlayStation is better is the fact that it has easy streaming services. What I mean by this is that you can upload gameplay to YouTube and Twitch, which makes it easier than doing it on Xbox.

In addition, PlayStation has a better camera. Some might disagree, but Xbox hasn't made a new camera in several years, with the Kinect being made in 2009 and getting discontinued in 2013.

On the other hand, the PlayStation camera came out in 2016. This camera can stream facecam videos or anything on it at 1080p.

The PlayStation camera can also recognize your face while you log into your PS4. You can turn on your PlayStation and the camera will recognize your face and log you right into your account.

Also, PlayStation has the offer of Virtual Reality, something that Xbox doesn't have. PlayStation VR games include Job Simulator, Beat Saber, and SuperHot. Those are just the biggest ones though.

The PlayStation VR allows players to see games and other things close up. It also has controllers called PlayStation VR Sticks. These allow you to interact with the game. A good game to use these on is Beat Saber.

Beat Saber is a game where you need two PlayStation VR Sticks and you have a color on each. Then, colors of boxes will come around and you have to hit/slice them with the right color. As you can guess, for some people at least, that it is fun!

I also surveyed multiple people and the majority of the people I asked said that PS4 is better than Xbox. I didn't just ask boys either; some girls wanted their voices heard and said Xbox was better.

Sixth grader Deandre Hill agreed, "PS4 is way better than Xbox."

Some of the kids I talked to even added language that I can't/shouldn't say. So take it from me - I personally have the PS4, and believe me, it's as good as it sounds!

The psychology behind dangerous internet challenges



Oliver Song,
8th Grade
Editor

The internet can be a dangerous place, especially for uninformed young people who are attracted to internet challenges. Most of us would look at these challenges and think they're dumb, but unfortunately, some kids get lured into trying them, and some even end up dead.

What is it about these challenges that makes them so popular? The latest Momo suicide challenge was put down just as quickly as it started. This death challenge started over a sculpture of a Japanese urban legend and quickly spiraled out of control when little children started doing dangerous things, like turning on the gas burner without lighting it. Methane gas, when released in high concentrations, will explode.

Some group inspired challenges can be fun and innocent, like the mannequin challenge. But other challenges are dangerous and are costing kids their lives. The Tide pod challenge killed kids who thought it was cool to

eat Tide laundry detergent pods.

In the ice and salt challenge, people poured salt on themselves and held ice to their bodies. This resulted in people getting severe burns as salt, commonly used on icy roads, has a very low freezing temperature.

When someone does an internet challenge and attention is attracted to it, more people begin want to try it.

This is commonly called the bandwagon effect, where a situation becomes a fad and trend and increases in popularity as more people want to adopt it.

According to Healthychildren.org, an online magazine published quarterly by the American Academy of Pediatrics, many people who do internet challenges are teens. Teens are often impulsive and drawn to behavior that causes attention.

This is because the part of the brain that handles rational thought, the prefrontal cortex, is not fully developed until we are in our mid-20s, making teens more susceptible to do things they believe are popular or "cool".

There also other factors that come into play that determine a teen's susceptibility. Whether or not they have been pressured by their peers is also important. Ac-

ording to Verywellmind.com, teens are often compelled to do things that they believe will make them more popular. They want to be included and recognized in their social life.

If everyone is doing it, I should too, right? Wrong. According to Psychologytoday.com, the bandwagon effect does not allow for each individual to examine their particular values and beliefs. Things on the internet can often overpower what little rational thought teens have, manipulating them through some dangerous yet alluring internet challenges.

Similar to propaganda, you have young adolescents watching others do dangerous things and being inspired to follow their lead, without thinking through the consequences.

Principal Adam Eldridge believes that dangerous internet challenges are ridiculous. "I think it's a problem," he said, "Social media is a very big problem in school."

However, media paraeducator Jill Cruz pointed out that some internet challenges can just be fun incentives, and are not dangerous. "Internet challenges can be fun and appropriate, and they can be a good way to try out new things," Ms. Cruz said. Of course,

she does not mean the dangerous ones.

When asked why these challenges are so popular, Mr. Eldridge replied, "I don't know. They don't appeal to me and I would never do them!"

Colin Choi, an 8th grade student, said, "I think people are curious and want to try new things."

Ms. Cruz added, "People want to see if they are capable of doing internet challenges," but some people take it too far.

Most people would agree that we need to prevent dangerous

challenges from luring kids on the internet. If you are faced with an internet challenge, evaluate the dangers of it.

Is it asking you to do harm to yourself or someone else? Are you putting anyone down by doing this challenge?

If you answered yes to any of those, you should stay away from those challenges. Mr. Eldridge recommends limiting use and exposure to social media and talking to trusted adults and parents when confronted with internet challenges.



Momo, the Japanese sculpture, spawned an internet challenge that used threats to lure kids into doing more and more dangerous stunts.

How strong is our embrace of diversity at HCMS?



Geleisi Li,
6th Grade
Reporter

There are an array of cultures at HCMS, courtesy of everyone who attends this school! An official HCPSS profile of the school from January 2019, detailed that around 50% of Harper's Choice is African-American, 18% is Caucasian, 16% is Hispanic, 8% is Asian, and the remaining 8% is made up of other races.

That makes us one of the most diverse schools in Howard County, and possibly in the nation.

Of course, race is not the only measure of diversity. Culture is defined as "the customs, arts, social institutions, and achievements of a particular nation, people, or other social group" according to Dictionary.com.

Cultures are constantly changing, and people have to adapt to them as they change. Over time, society has become more open to different cultures, but sometimes an increase in diversity can make some individuals more intent on claiming their own superiority.

In our country, people of all different ethnicities, cultures, and beliefs have the freedom to express themselves, and inevitably, sometimes they can clash. But why?

For one, the culture shock of immigrants coming to the United States can be overwhelming, which may cause discrimination on either end. When I came to Maryland, the buildings and general suburban feeling of Columbia contrasted greatly from the bustling, urban environment I was

used to where I'm from in China.

Another possibility is that people just aren't accepting of other cultures, or they aren't taking the time to get to know other cultures. People may not be making an effort to get to know others better, resulting in possible discrimination.

Sometimes even in this day in age, we are reminded of deplorable events in American history (i.e. school segregation, slavery, Jim Crow laws, etc.).

Regardless, civil rights have advanced, and quite a few students at Harper's Choice reflect this thought. People are certainly more accepting of others, and more diverse cultures have been integrated into schools all over the United States.

Noah Davidson, an 8th grader at HCMS, says that he feels relatively socially accepted despite being one of the few Jewish students at Harper's Choice. "It's very diverse," he says, "There are a lot of different backgrounds and cultures here."

Personally, I feel that Harper's Choice is doing well as a school at supporting different cultures, especially with recent activities looking to explore diversity, such as "Who Is Harper's Choice?"

In addition, at the Night of Excellence on May 16th, the World Language teachers hosted an International Food Festival, where families brought in tons of different foods from cultures around the world. If you didn't get a chance to attend, the food room was packed with delicious foods and aromas – and hungry visitors!

The Night of Excellence ended with a World Cultures Fashion Show, where HCMS students modeled clothes from their cultures and from around the world. The models were greeted by a packed cafeteria and loud cheering from the audience throughout the show.



Protesters rallied for equal rights in the 1960s, and as a result we are able to attend diverse schools that aren't segregated, but do we still speak up to defend equality?

Many students and parents who attended those events said they felt proud to be a part of the diverse family that makes up Harper's Choice!

Unfortunately, even at places like Harper's Choice there is still room for improvement. Juan Guzman in 6th grade, says that he has heard racial slurs used in a derogatory fashion at HCMS, mostly in hallways and outside of classes.

Therefore, diversity and acceptance are

still in need of improvement here at Harper's Choice. As a suggestion from a few students, putting posters up or encouraging students to stop using such derogatory terms might help to spread the word about cultural diversity at Harper's Choice.

All in all, a push for more acceptance is likely warranted at Harper's Choice; we shouldn't just settle for what we have now, we should strive to be better and teach others to be better along with us!

Your birthday isn't special!



Andrew Heffner,
8th Grade
Reporter

Full disclosure: your birthday might be important to you, and that's fine! In some people's cases, like 8th grader Kyle Roberson, birthdays can be a day of gratitude and relief.

"A family member of mine has a multitude of health conditions. Every year on their birthday, it means they've made it one more year," he explained. In cases like these, birthdays are a time of hope. But for most of us, just because it's your birthday doesn't mean you should receive special privileges!

Unless you're super popular, you probably only have about 5 people who really even care that it's your birthday. Literally everyone who has ever been born has a birthday, all 7 billion of us. Besides, you didn't do any of the work to be born, your mom did!

Nicole Chase, an 8th grader, agrees, "Your birthday doesn't mean that you get special privileges. It's just a day." This is exactly my point. Your birthday does not equal entitlement.

Yeah, it's nice when you get a "happy birthday" from one of your peers, but other than that, it's a day like any other day. The truth is, billions of people don't know who you are, and quite frankly, don't care. Thousands of people also share your birthday, so is it really all that special?

Additionally, I have seen people exploit the fact that it's their birthday to justify bad behavior. One person I know stole something on their birthday and said, "Oh, it's ok because it's my birthday."

Not naming names, but another time, I also witnessed a drink being stolen, and once again, the justification was that it was that person's birthday.

Some students bring in cakes to school on their birthday to celebrate with their friends. Then again, some people might not have friends, and then their birthday is practically obsolete. Students who can't bring these kind of treats for their peers might feel ashamed or left out.

Birthday parties are also quite costly. According to Coconutcoveplay.com, a company that helps plan children's birthday parties, a child's birthday party can cost around 300 dollars for 10 kids. These costs can come from food, decorations, entertainers, and rentals.

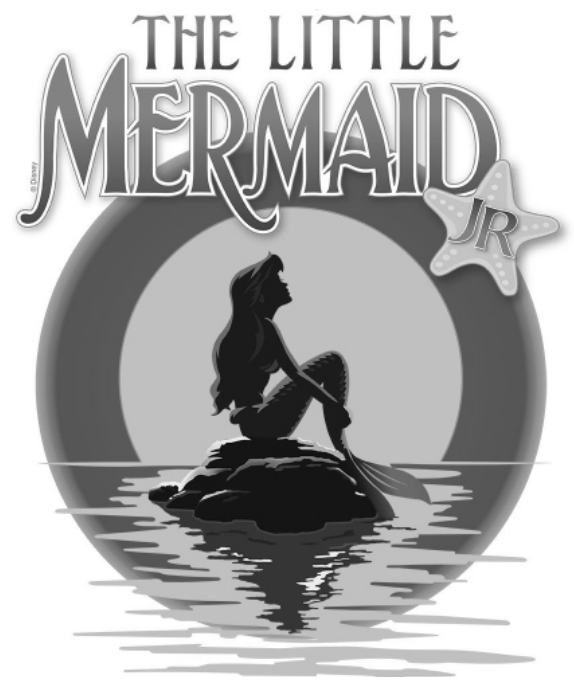
Even if you don't have a party, birthdays can be quite expensive for your family members. If you have generous grandparents or extended family, they probably send you a birthday card with money in it. If they give you money every year, this can add up.

Some cultures around the world don't even celebrate birthdays. In fact, Christians didn't even celebrate birthdays until around the 4th century, because they considered birthdays to be a pagan tradition.

Christians started to celebrate birthdays as a way to bring in people who celebrated pagan traditions. There are still some places in Africa and Asia where birthdays are not normally celebrated.

Of course, there are a few birthdays that might actually be worth celebrating. At age 16, you can learn to drive and get a learner's permit. At 18, you're a legal adult and you can receive your real driver's license in Maryland. When you turn 21, you can legally drink alcohol.

If you're going to celebrate a birthday, make it an important one, and remember, you are not entitled to anything special just because it's your birthday!



continued from page 1

Spanish teacher Laura Cometa said, "My daughter loved Ariel, Prince Eric, all the mermaids, princesses, and animals, but my favorite characters were Ursula, Flotsam, and Jetsam. They played their roles so well!"

Those who attended the play might have noticed a few differences between the play and the movie. There were a lot more songs in the play and the plot was changed in a few parts. Pope and Padgett explained, "We have added in a couple of different lines to give more students and opportunities to perform. We have also split some roles... in order to give performers more times to be on stage."

Overall, the show's directors were very happy with the way it turned out. Pope and Padgett commented, "For Drama Club students, in spite of any difficulties they may experience during the school day, these performances are their moments to shine. It takes courage and vulnerability to sing, dance, and emote in front of a crowd."

Padgett and Pope agreed, "It also takes a lot of collective trust, responsibility, commitment for a cast and crew this large to give up their personal time and come together for something greater than themselves!"

We hope you had a chance to see the performance.





SPORTS · DEPORTES · LES SPORTS

RYAN'S RATINGS: P.E. games



Ryan Olney, 6th Grade Reporter

P.E. games tend to be fun, but there are flaws in all of them. Some games have no space for defenders, some are too heavy on strategy, and others just need brute force to win. So it's been left up to an average person when it comes to athletics – me – to review some of them. Since I'm a 6th grader, I'm going to review the 6th grade completed units.

First, I want to take a look at **BADMINTON**. From appearances, it seems easier than tennis because of the birdie's high drag and how it falls slower, which makes it easier to hit. That's not a bad thing though, because that means it's easier for beginners. Really there's not a lot of strategy to this game, which also makes it great for beginners. Also, I've noticed that a certain group of people will usually pick this out of all the other stations, so some students definitely enjoy it. So, I'll give it a score of 7.2/10.

Next up is **VOLLEYBALL**. Volleyball is interesting because it's pretty hard to hit the ball, and even when you do, it might not go anywhere, but it's quite satisfying to hit the ball anyway. Also, there's more ways to hit the ball than in badminton. But this also means that it has a steeper but higher skill ceiling. It's like reverse badminton, so I think that it should get a similar score. I'll give it a 6.8/10.

FLOOR HOCKEY is like hockey, but on the floor. It's basically ice hockey, but easier to play. Good offense and good defense is rewarded. It's pretty fast-paced and strategy pays off more than just randomly charging in without a plan. The only real problem is the sticks; they can

easily send the puck flying, disrupting the flow of gameplay. It's fun, exciting, and not as dangerous as real ice hockey. So, overall I'll give it a 8.8/10.

Next up **TABLE TENNIS**: I think it's almost impossible to hate table tennis. Even if you can't hit the ball well, it's still pretty enjoyable and you know it's not the game's fault, it's just that your hand-eye coordination is the equivalent to a bat trying to hit a fastball blindfolded. The main difference between this and the other tennis rip-offs is the first word "table", so it's basically the single player mode for tennis.

Also the amount of ways to try and mind-game your opponent into submission are honestly surprising. If that sounds too complicated, this one was successful in getting a diet version, ping-pong, and that's not just the same thing as a sport in a different environment *cough* beach volleyball *cough* *cough*. Anyway, I give this one a 7.5/10. I'm aware that I didn't really criticize it, but you really start to feel why this isn't the most popular sport just by playing it. It's just a bit too complicated to play seriously.

TCHOUKBALL: first off, why is it called that? What language is it? Turns out it's Swiss and it's named after the sound it makes when you throw it at the net. It was created because people were getting injured too

much playing other sports. So, what is Tchoukball? It's basically handball for people who like defense. But the defense is not even defense, there's no real point in playing defense, which is my personal pet peeve towards physical games. Plus, the game is rather slow if people are close to the person with the ball, and it's hard to get the ball from the other team without stopping the game entirely. But enough with the negatives, what are the positives? Well, it's just handball basically, but throwing the ball into the net is much more satisfying than just having someone catch it like in handball. But there's nothing truly unique around Tchoukball, so I'll give it a 6/10.

WHAT ABOUT DANCE? No, 2/10. Forget dance! It just exists for no reason. (j o k e)

Overall, most of the 6th grade units were all over a 6 rating, which is passing. Luckily, no one can make a whole unit out of relay races. All of the activities could be someone's favorite, which is the interesting part. Every sport has its pros and noobs. Like even if you're a god at basketball, you still might be a drunk water spider with a broken leg in synchronized swimming.

Anyways, if you don't agree with me, send me a 5 page essay on why dance doesn't deserve a two, and if you do agree with me, don't send me anything!



Bottom: 8th graders do "Mission Impossible" in P.E. class.

Aries March 21 - Apr 20	Taurus Apr 21 - May 21	Gemini May 22 - June 21	Cancer June 22 - July 22	Leo July 23 - Aug 22	Virgo Aug 23 - Sept 22
Libra Sept 23 - Oct 22	Scorpio Oct 23 - Nov 21	Sagittarius Nov 22 - Dec 21	Capricorn Dec 22 - Jan 20	Aquarius Jan 21 - Feb 19	Pisces Feb 20 - March 20

Student Horoscopes

By Kayla Timmons, 6th grade

Aries: The student who is always trying to sneak onto their phone or eat in class, but gets straight A's.

Taurus: The student with a messy backpack, who can never find their papers, and who always want to bum gum off someone.

Gemini: The student who goes to school in sweatpants and has dried drool on their forehead, but somehow makes it all good.

Cancer: The student who always has paper and pencils for anyone who needs them.

Leo: The student who everyone admires, has super neat handwriting, and everyone has a secret crush on them.

Virgo: The student who always volunteers to read during popcorn, the teacher's pet, has color coded index cards for everything!

Libra: The student who every teacher loves, who complains about getting a B- on a test, and who rolls their eyes at everyone while walking in the halls.

Scorpio: The student who always violates the dress code, probably flipped off a teacher, and can't put their phones away during class.

Sagittarius: The student who lets you borrow their homework, sets trends, has ton of friends, and skips school.

Capricorn: The student who nobody is even sure who they are, but somehow their name is always floating around the school.

Aquarius: The student who loves English and science, loves to read, has very few friends not because of unpopularity, but because of pickiness.

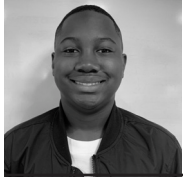
Pisces: The student who freaks out over small things, but always says everything is fine.

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SPORTS COMMENTARY: Do Boston Celtics go from main contender to losing the star player?



Joshua Cofie,
8th Grade
Sports Editor

The Boston Celtics have long and rich history in the NBA, with 17 championships. The range of legendary Celtics expands from Bill Russell to Robert Parish to Larry Bird to the late John Havlicek and even Kyrie Irving.

Now you see the whole problem was with the last name, Kyrie Irving. Irving joined the Celtics because he didn't want to be under LeBron James' shadow when he was at the Cleveland Cavaliers, although this whole thing happened because LeBron called him a kid.

Salty much, Kyrie? Now he's

not happy playing for the Celtics, although Boston is a championship contender team. The C's run the risk of losing their star, but they still have a good roster to work with.

One of the reasons Kyrie wants to leave the C's is to join the New York Knicks, who have a high chance of drafting one of the top draft prospects in the 2019 draft class, Zion Williamson.

During the All-Star Game, Irving and Kevin Durant had a very discreet conversation in the tunnel leading to the game. Fans speculate that they were making plans to go to the Knicks and create a super team with Zion.

However, ESPN shot down these speculations on First Take when Max Kellerman and the man of a million words, Stephen A. Smith, got in a heated discussion over the destination of this

new dynamic duo.

Stephen A. had this to say: "Kevin Durant is too soft to play in New York. If he can't handle the media in San Francisco, God knows what he's gonna do in New York."

Now, let's get back to my opinion. You see, the Knicks have a higher chance of getting the 5th overall pick. The Hawks have the 1st pick in the draft according to the lottery. If the Knicks can finesse the 1st pick, then they can get the first piece of the Knicks' Mission Impossible, Kevin Durant.

By the way, I don't think Durant is soft, he's just allergic to the Media.

KD has also been thrown around in the news lately about wanting to leave the Warriors. But in my opinion, KD might stay with Golden State. The man

has got 2 championships, and he's ok there, if we ignore the beef between him and Draymond Green (which maybe we can't). If you watch Shrek, we all know Donkey (Draymond) can't shut up.

Let's get back to the Celtics. According to Tankathon.com, the New York Knicks are getting the 1st pick in the 2019 draft if they get lucky in the lottery. Watch them mess this up like they always do!

The Knicks have the chance to draft the greatest draft prospect in history, even rivaling LeBron James and Michael Jordan. If they royally screw this up, like they always do, they might not ever get a ring.

Now let's get back to why we all came here. Kyrie leaving the Celtics isn't that big of a problem. Gordon Hayward has been averaging 25.3 points, 5.6 rebounds,

and 2.6 assists, with a 35.3 3 point percentage.

Hey, that's pretty good. He's been on a scoring surge lately, once scoring 30 points off the bench in a game. That's not that bad of a stat line for a secondary player, considering the homie came back from a season ending injury.

In conclusion, the Celtics have nothing to worry about. The Media isn't the enemy, it's Free Agency. The thing is that it's not definite that the Knicks are getting the first overall pick, which sorta disproves the whole thing, but hey, the bread must come in somehow, homie.

Imma just leave this here to show what could be in "The Big Apple". Dang, chief, this is actually pretty long.

Double Dutch program takes HCMS by storm this year



Sophie Sapp,
8th Grade
Reporter

Double Dutch is a game in which two long jump ropes are turned in opposite directions. It is excellent exercise, lots of fun, and great for the soul according to participants.

When student assistant Denise Thompson began her job at Harper's Choice Middle school in October, she noticed our school's lack of a double dutch team, and she immediately saw an opportunity.

Thompson started the first session in November and is running double dutch through June 14th. The meetings are on

Fridays after school.

You don't need any skill to start out, and anyone can come to learn, according to Thompson.

In March, there were 26 kids on the team, but Thompson hoped to increase in the second session. A new session started in April and Thompson hoped to be able to do two practices a week. She also planned to add in some step moves to make a interesting routine to present to the school at some point. The team was also set to get t-shirts for everyone on the team.

Thompson has long had a love for double dutch, since she joined her school's team. She found it to be not only great exercise, but also a way to express herself and communicate. It is a way for kids to learn how to, in Thompson's words, "Talk to each other, not talk at each other."

Nowadays, it seems like young people



photos by Denise Thompson

The Double Dutch team strikes a pose (left) and hits the ropes in the gym (right).

communicate more and more through technology and less often meet face-to-face to work together. Double dutch can also help build self esteem and help students meet new people.

In talking to students who participate on the team, I began to realize it was not just about the sport – it was about the people who do the sport.

Seventh grader Shay-onna Dailey, one of the co-captains of the team, said, "It's a place to escape, and where people support you."

This was also reflected in what her co-captain, 7th grader Sahryha Brown, had to

say, "Everyone there respects each other."

This group of kids say they are not interested in any drama from other areas in life. They came to have fun, learn, and be friends. Both Daily and Brown also mentioned the satisfaction they got in their leadership roles, helping people.

The Double Dutch team is building relationships and teaching skills that can be used through academics, careers, and life.

So if you are at all interested and available, head on over. You don't need any skill and it is open to all grades. Bring a friend and learn some cool moves or just get in some fun exercise time!

A special thank you to the family of Sarah KC for supporting our school newspaper!

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-Pierre