

MIRADA

THE STUDENT VOICE OF RIO AMERICANO HIGH SCHOOL, SACRAMENTO, CA



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Senior Leigh Taylor enjoys a rainbow at the end of a rainy school day.

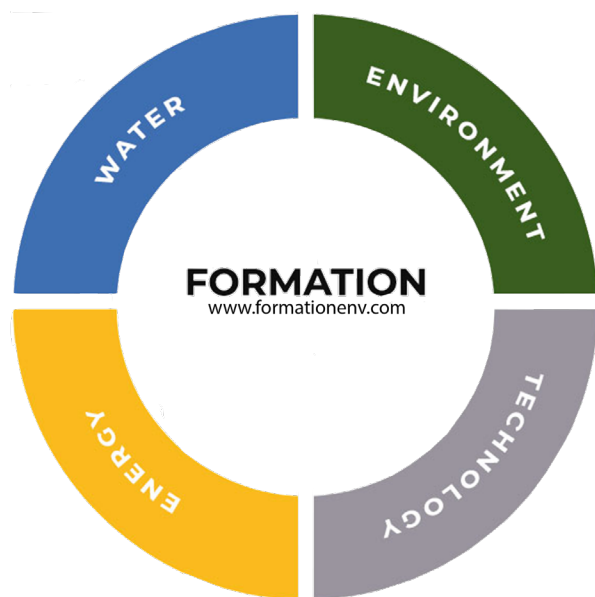
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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Hey Raiders, welcome back to a new semester! I hope you all have had an enjoyable start to the new year. Personally, I thought that 2022 was a good year but couldn't be more excited for everything that 2023 will bring. We are already halfway through the school year and though I know that many of you are getting tired, don't give up yet! There is so much to look forward to like dances, sports games and much more.



It has been a few months since our last issue of the Mirada came out, so this edition covers everything from winter sports to the holidays and now into this semester. It also features quite a few of the Mirada staff's opinions on topics from the voting age to Taylor Swift's latest album, "Midnights."

In addition to articles and thoughts from our staff, one of our goals with this edition was to give a voice to those not in Journalism. Whether it was asking students their opinions or profiling them, we hope to shine light on the outstanding and unique students of Rio Americano.

Since we have limited space in a magazine, we often cut down articles and pick and choose what to put in print. We encourage you to check out the Rio Mirada website, where you can read the full-length articles along with others that didn't make it into this edition.

We hope you enjoy our second issue of the magazine, and are excited to continue putting out content on the website and in print throughout the rest of the year.

- Edena Ichel

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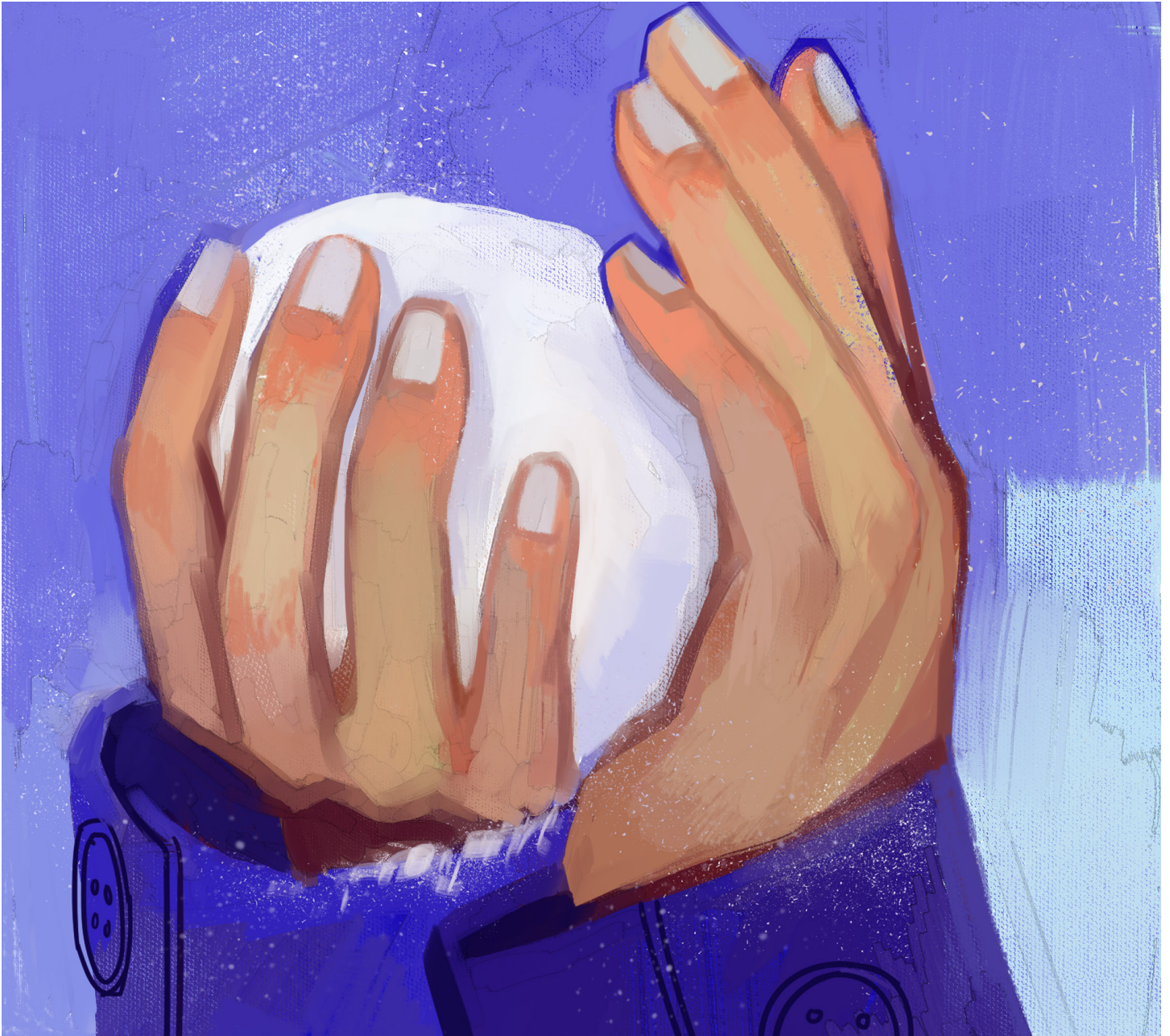
Policy

The Mirada is the independent voice of the students and a forum for diverse ideas, by Rio Americano's newspaper class.

The Mirada welcomes story ideas, comics, letters to the editor and opinion pieces.

Letters may be edited for space and content. Guest essays are the views of the individual writer and not necessarily the views of the Mirada or Rio Americano High School.

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Art by Luna Young

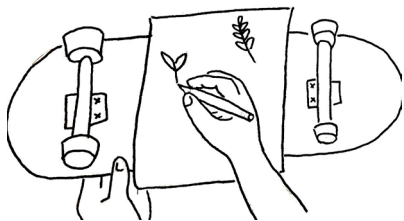
mini memoirs

We asked Rio students to share a vivid memory. But the catch was they had to do it in 100 words or fewer. Here is a sampling of our favorites.

'A fist of snow'

Brrr. I shivered in the backseat as my dad navigated the windy roads up Lake Tahoe. The snow fell in fluffy layers and the mountains looked picturesque. However, cars were bumper-to-bumper, and we only lasted an hour in this traffic. We decided to pull off the road to enjoy the snow on the side of the highway. I jumped off my seat and landed in feathery snow. My brother falls next to me, and I reach to grab a fist of snow, creating a perfect snowball. It lands directly on his face, which causes mine to erupt in a smile.

- Gia Loomis



Art by Emiliana Davis-Perez

Golden hour on the river

I went to the river to take pictures of the sunset. When I got there, the sun was casting a golden glow over all the plants and the animals. When I got to where I wanted to take pictures, I saw that someone was already there. A boy, around my age, drawing, listening to music, and working on his skateboard. I asked if I could take a couple pictures of him, he said yes. I took pictures of his hair, glowing from the sun, his hands, working on his art, him just being in his element.

- Wil Mann

Falling in love

It was the beginning of January, but that didn't stop us from eating ice cream in the chilling air. We walked down the leaf-covered streets, jumping over potholes side by side. We went into Dollar Tree, and walked up the aisles together, collecting various items. Outside we sat under the yellowed awning with our two balloons, painting our nails, and applying temporary tattoos. The paint chipped away, the tattoos faded, your balloon flew away, but I've still kept mine all these months. Everytime I look at its crumpled remains, I remember the night we fell in love.

- Emiliana Davis-Perez



My mother, M&Ms, and mountains

Growing up I hated skiing, I begged my parents to stay home every weekend we went up. Waiting in long lines, ice-cold fingers, and worst of all, those god-awful ski boots—getting one on felt like you were purposely dislocating your ankle. But the one thing that would get me through the day was the peanut M&Ms my mom bought for me. So, whenever I felt seconds away from freezing to death, I would reach into my pocket and pop into my mouth the warm comfort of an M&M, eternally thankful for my mother's great thinking.

- Lauren McQuoid

A gradual bond

When we first adopted our dog, he seemed to always be angry and there were times when he wouldn't stop barking at me no matter what I did. I couldn't figure it out and it discouraged me to be around him. It took a while, seeing him bark at everyone, jumping and biting at them, before I was finally able to understand. I started helping, tossing him a treat now and then and filling his dinner bowl everyday. It wasn't a lot to do, but it was all I needed to.

- Tyga Maldonado

The crash

The sun was poking out this January morning. My brother and I were running behind schedule, walking across the parking lot to class. The senior boy was late too, rushing in his silver SUV as big and clean as he was. I turned to see the car, moving fast without a sign of slowing down. It made impact and I was down, panicked as pain shot throughout my right side. My vision blurred with tears I held in. The boy got out, loomed over me, and explained how the sun was in his eyes. He cursed. "I can't be late."

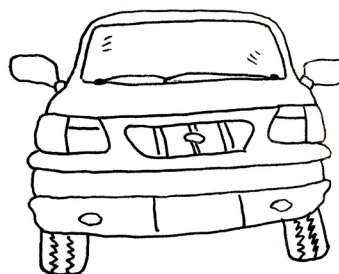
- Alexandra Lehrer

Our favorite spot

My friends and I are always looking to be busy together, which is difficult for a group of six teenagers who refuse to work. One day, deep into winter break, we didn't want to drive aimlessly around again, listening to music and burning gas, and we couldn't take another game of Clue.

Eventually, we landed on the American River, a perfect solution because it was free and daylight was slipping. We headed to our favorite spot and spent the rest of the evening scanning the ground for round stones and trying to perfect our tosses.

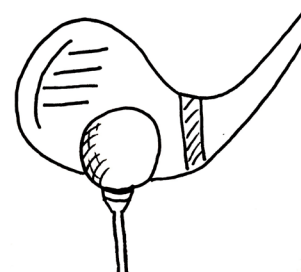
- Carmen Stangis



Victory is a swing away

Nervously, I lined my putt up and struck it in to save par, knowing that every shot counted. I walked off the ninth green, trying to read my teammates' staring eyes. It was a match against our rivals; despite several close calls, we'd lost 8 years running. As I handed in my scorecard, my team crowded around me. "We're up by five right now," my coach said, a reserved hope in his voice. He'd been here before. Everyone finished up, talking in hushed whispers, trying to add up scores in their heads. The rival coach walked up to us. "Congratulations."

- Ashley Lundberg



Mastermind of 'Varsity Blues' college admissions scandal sentenced to prison



By Mirada Staff

Rick Singer, who started his career as a private college counselor by advising Rio Americano students and later became the center of a national admissions bribery scandal, was sentenced to three-and-a-half years in prison earlier this month. In addition to prison time, Singer will have to pay over \$19 million for his involvement.

For years, Singer, 62, helped celebrities, business people and other rich parents leverage their wealth and privilege to buy their children's entry to some of the country's most prestigious universities through what he called the "side door." He used the more than \$25 million he received from parents to pay proctors to inflate admissions test scores and bribe coaches to list applicants as recruits to increase their chances of getting into the college.

"It was a scheme that was breathtaking in its scale and its audacity. It has literally become the stuff of books and made-for-TV movies," Assistant U.S. Attorney Stephen Frank told the judge at a Federal court room in Boston, the Associated Press reports.

Others previously sentenced to prison in the scandal include "Desperate

Housewives" star Felicity Huffman; "Full House" actor Lori Loughlin; and her husband, the fashion designer Mossimo Gianulli. But Singer's sentence is the longest, topping that of former Georgetown tennis coach Gordon Ernest, who got two-and-a-half years for taking more than \$3 million in bribes.

Ironically, it was Singer's cooperation with the investigation into the scandal

"It was a scheme that was breathtaking in its scale and its audacity. It has literally become the stuff of books and made-for-TV movies."
— Assistant U.S. Attorney Stephen Frank

that resulted in the conviction of many of his clients. According to NPR, he got his partners in crime to make incriminating statements during phone calls that he recorded secretly. The defense team cited his cooperation as justification for a shorter sentence.

They also noted his contrition regarding the schemes. Singer told U.S. District Judge Rya W. Zobel that he has "woken up every day feeling shame, remorse, and regret" over his role in the scandal.

The prosecution, however, was unconvinced.

"This defendant was responsible for the most massive fraud ever perpetuated on the higher education system in the United States," Assistant U.S. Attorney Stephen Frank stated in court. Frank said victims included legitimate prep athletes who had achieved at the highest level but were passed over for admission in addition to the millions of students who may have lost faith in the admissions process.

In 2021 interviews with the Mirada, a school counselor and a local college counselor described Singer as unethical and someone who pushed the boundaries of acceptable help for his clients. But, apparently, he began his illegal activity after moving to Los Angeles, and no Rio families were involved in the scandal.

For previous Mirada coverage of Singer and the Varsity Blues scandal visit riomirada.com.

Lists reveal 'Gatsby' is indeed 'Great'

By Logan Swain

I've often wondered what the greatest book of all time is. In my quest to discover which piece of literature truly deserves that distinction, I've sorted through dozens of lists, only to find conflicting rankings and divergent selections. I wanted a single, definitive source that would settle the question once and for all.

So I made it myself.

To create my list I collected data from ten other lists that ranked the greatest books from one to 100. These lists included polls of literary critics (Reader's Digest, Harvard Book Store, Modern Library), surveys of the public (Goodreads, Ranker, PBS, Waterstones, Penguin), and lists averaging other greatest-of lists (Greatest Books, Medium). I felt these ten lists were representative of the opinions of both academics and the masses, making it a more well-rounded selection overall.

With my sources in hand, I calculated the average position every book reached across all ten lists. For example, *The Catcher in the Rye*, which came in 11th place, had a mean ranking of 42.4.

And coming in at number one is F. Scott Fitzgerald's 1925 novel *The Great Gatsby*.

"I think it's an extraordinary

book, and it is an excellent choice," said English teacher Matthew Valencich. He had particular praise for its style and themes, which include the struggle to achieve the American Dream, the tensions between those of different social classes, and the inability to free oneself from past hopes and desires.

"Nick Carraway's discontent at Tom and Daisy's decadence and disastrous ethical choices," he said, is an attitude that has echoed throughout generations of Americans. "Stylistically, it is exceedingly well-structured."

English teacher Michael Mahoney succinctly summarized the book's plot.

"Guy pines for a girl, and he gets rich, and he dies in a swimming pool," he said.

Surprisingly, *The Great Gatsby*, though well-received at the time of its publication, wasn't immediately exalted. An article from the *New York Times*, published in 1960, reported that contemporary critics described it as "trivial" and "artificial".

Consensus wouldn't shift until 20 years after its publication-- and years after Fitzgerald's death in 1940. According to *Books in Action: The Armed Services Editions*, during World War II a non-profit organization distributed 155,000 copies of the book to fighting soldiers-- more than six times the total copies that had been published up to that point. This increased exposure helped drive a reappraisal of the work.

I concur with the opinion of the critics, the public, and Mr. Valencich. I also believe that *The Great Gatsby* deserves its status as the greatest book of all time. When I first read it I thought it was decent but hardly the best novel ever written. Retrospectively, I've realized that it truly stands the test of time, continuing to spark internal discussion months and years after a first reading. What stands out to me in particular about

it is its incredible complexity; for a book as short as it is, there are a seemingly endless number of themes, questions, and moments to ponder on.

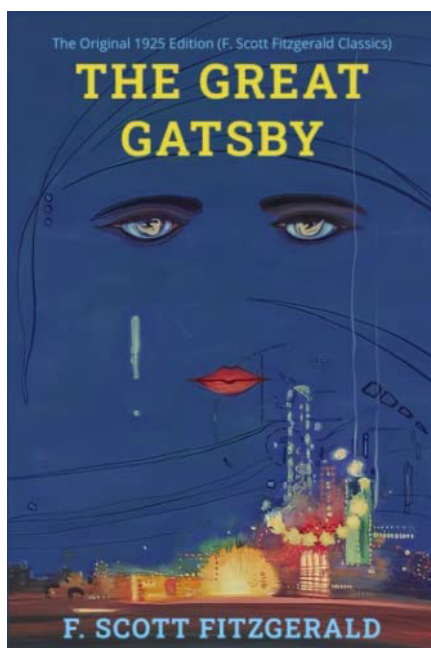
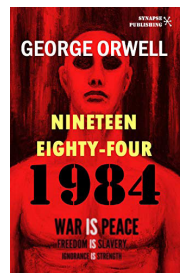
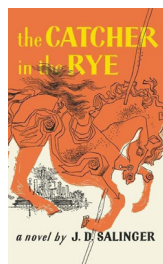
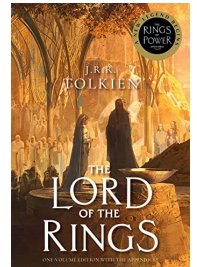
As for the other top-scoring books, I noticed that many are lauded more for their influence than necessarily their quality.

For example, *The Lord of the Rings* practically started the fantasy genre, and yet the book itself is boring. *Jane Eyre* seems like a straightforward romance until you realize that it pioneered the use of first person in storytelling. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* may not have been the first, or even best, dystopian work, but it had the widest impact on our cultural consciousness.

Of course, no greatest-of list, for books or any other category, is perfect. The very definition of 'great' varies among individuals. For one person it might be whichever literary work has had the most influence. To another it might be the novel with the most compelling language. And to someone else it could be the piece that they have the most fun reading.

Even my statistics-based list is not an exception to that rule. Its intended use isn't to directly compare the quality of two pieces of literature. *Brave New World* ranking slightly higher than *Anna Karenina* doesn't authoritatively mean that Huxley's book is better than Tolstoy's.

Instead, its goal is to see which books are broadly considered to be great, in hopes of generating a conversation about what makes a book 'great'. That's the ultimate purpose of not just this list, but every greatest-of list. And as long as that discussion is worth having, we will continue to make, revise, and debate these lists. Including me.

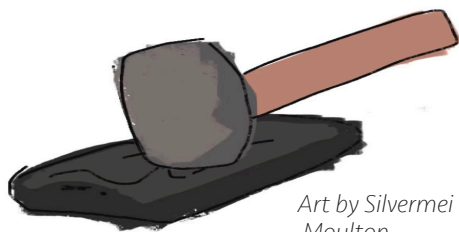


NEWS

By Mirada Staff

Rio students weigh in on current events

Seattle school district files lawsuit against social media companies over mental health



What is going on?

A public school district in Seattle filed a lawsuit against the executives behind big social media companies like TikTok, Snapchat, and Instagram. They want to hold the companies accountable for the mental health crises that teens experience while using social media. They claimed that the worsening anxiety, depression, eating disorders, and cyberbullying makes it harder for teachers to educate students and forces schools to take more action against mental health obstacles.

What do students think?

"Though I believe that social media does play a factor in harming mental health, I do not think a lawsuit will be successful in stopping it. With the current state of our world and technology, students have multiple ways to access information that will harm their mental health."
- Lee Mamangon (11)

"I am glad to see that the school district is trying to help their students by suing social media giants, however I agree with the students that they should be getting more mental health counselors at school and providing them with the resources to get help instead."
- Lauren Stevenson (10)

"The attention that the SPS is bringing to the situation is likely one of the earliest acts of many to shut down social media companies as they unethically profit off of the youth."
- Carmen Stangis, 11

New covid strains raise questions about possible course of action for schools



What is going on?

New covid strains have made an appearance in 2023 that are stronger than the older, more common ones. The CDC is worried that the new variant, called XBB.1.5, is more contagious and antibody-resistant than older strains. In some cases, schools are returning back to mask mandates and other COVID policies.

What do students think?

"I don't think [school districts] should be doing more because we finally got back to normal life and we need to learn how to live with covid since there's no sign of it going away anytime soon."
- Ava Fahn (11)

"Personally, I don't see schools taking any big steps to protect against covid nowadays, especially Rio. I think they should be reminding students that covid is still a real threat and is highly contagious. However, I don't think it's necessary to turn to anything more extreme than that such as masks or mandatory testing."
- Tatum McQuoid (11)

"If [strains] become more life threatening, the district or state should reinstate mask mandates and social distancing protocols. As of now, covid is becoming less of a threat because of vaccines, so there is not a need for major changes now, but they should be open to it in the future."
- Jonah Bluth (11)

Will publicized recent football injuries lead to decreased turnout at school tryouts?



What is going on?

The safety of playing football has been a hot topic with the publicized injuries of NFL players such as Damar Hamlin and Tua Tagovailoa. Both players suffered horrific injuries which occurred in the middle of games broadcasted around the world. With parents and students already being skeptical about playing football due to the risk of head injuries, some worry that football tryouts at schools around the world will decrease.

What do students think?

"I don't play football but I'm a cheerleader that saw every game of Rio's season. This year we witnessed Rio's own serious football injury when the quarterback on the JV team broke his leg during a game. The widely broadcast injuries of the professional players have definitely made an impact on the fans in the community as well, but I don't think the injury risk is enough for someone to stop playing if it's a sport they really love, because you take risks in every sport."
- Regan Daley (10)

"I think that kids should protect themselves better in football, whether that be with helmets or by avoiding full-contact football in general. It's important for kids to be able to express their creative side through sports."
- Basem Ghobashy (10)

Despite pandemic learning loss, Rio avoids statewide drop in CAASPP scores

By Logan Swain

The results are in. They're alarming. In late October, the state's Department of Education released statistics for the 2022 California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress, better known as the CAASPP test. Student scores fell statewide. Rio was unable to escape this decline. The percentage of Rio students who met English language standards stayed roughly the same—increasing 0.8%—but the percentage meeting math standards fell by 5.8%.

Principal Cliff Kelly had a theory as to why there was a drop in math scores but not in English scores. "My hypothesis would have something to do with distance learning," Kelly said. "Some of the skill sets you need to master in English are skill sets that don't require scaffolding on the same level that they do in math." For example, the English concepts of irony and symbolism don't require prior knowledge of each other.

"Oftentimes you can't really climb up the ladder of skills in math if you don't have a foundational understanding of math. If you can't do some of the basic things like adding, subtracting, dividing, and multiplying, then when you start doing advanced formulas it can be really difficult," he said.

Kelly believed the COVID-19 pandemic

was responsible for the drop in student test scores. "I think it's much more difficult when you don't have human contact to understand," Kelly said. Referring to students' habitual black screens on Zoom, he said, "It's hard to meet your individual needs when there's 36 kids, and all I see, if I'm lucky, is your face."

However, it's not all bad news. Rio outperformed both the San Juan School District and California in general in both subjects; statewide, reading fell by 4%, while math fell by 7%. Overall, roughly 60% of Rio students met the English language standards. For math, that fraction was just 36%. Kelly gave a possible explanation for Rio's better statistics: the school has a higher attendance rate.

Kelly hoped to see those figures rise. He said that the school faculty would take action based on that information. "That's how we try to look at data: now that we see that there's something that we want to improve on, ... we create some action steps that could potentially improve that."

There was also a noticeable disparity in the decline of scores among different demographic groups. Asian students at Rio, for example, saw a staggering fall of 33% in their math scores, while English language learners actually had an increase

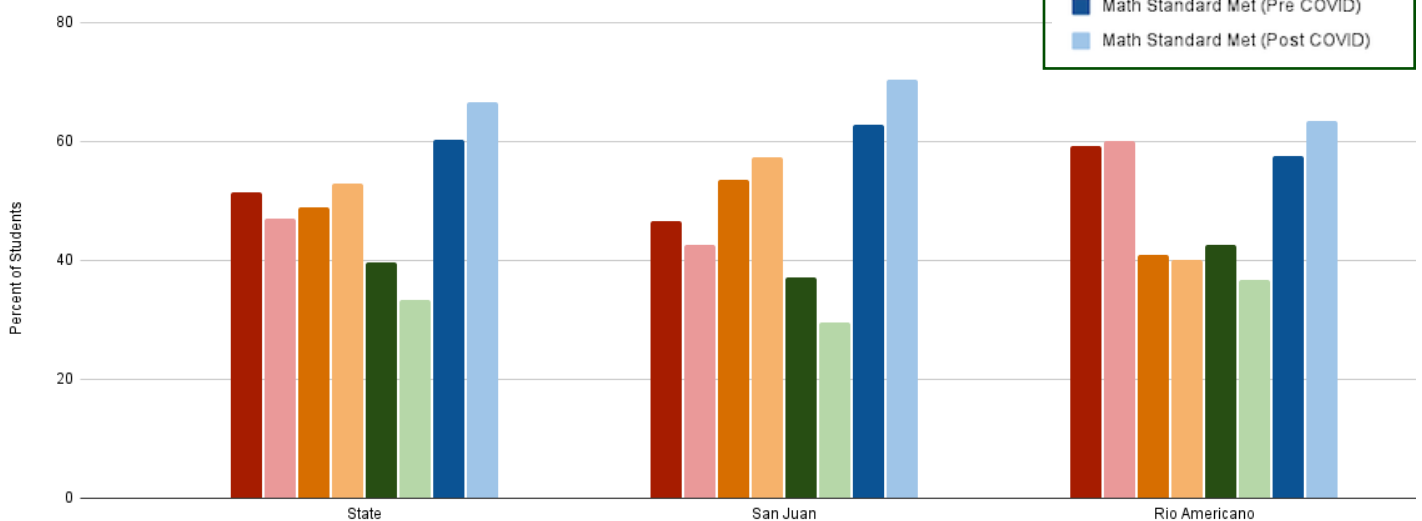
of 9% in their English scores.

English language learners are the fastest-growing segment of the Rio student population. "Knowing that, we try to create some supports around that," Kelly said. "The way I would go about trying to support them would be working with our EL classes that we have."

Another issue that may be distorting the test results is apathy among students, many of whom did not care about the CAASPP test since it didn't affect their grade. Does this lack of effort impact Rio's scores? "A hundred percent," Kelly said. He emphasized that accurate data is not only useful for students and their families to know where they can improve, but it is also used by the school to determine where it needs to focus its time—and money.

Still, Kelly doesn't believe that the standards set for students are too high. "It's our job to find more levels of support, more ways to support you," Kelly said. "That's the job of the school and the teachers, to try to find out as many different ways as possible to support students."

Percent of Students Meeting/Not Meeting CAASPP Standards



School plans to add 105 parking spaces to lot

By Mirada Staff

Students may gain 105 parking spaces and lose an excuse for being late to first period if plans are approved to expand and restripe school parking lots.

The San Juan school district has submitted parking expansion plans for review by the Division of the State Architect, which oversees construction projects at public schools. The plans would expand the lot by the west staff entrance into the lawn area at the front of the school that runs along American River Drive and the lot at the back of the school into the area where an old temporary building has already been removed.

“They are not taking any trees out in the back of the school,” Principal Cliff Kelly says. But in front of the school by the staff parking, they will have to expand the asphalt paving towards American River Drive.

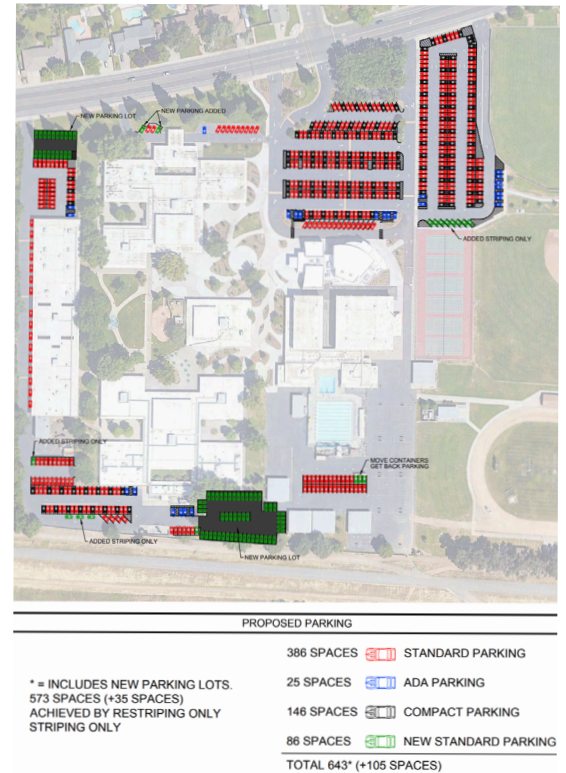
To deal with the flow of traffic and

accommodate students and staff, there will most likely be a redistributing of student and staff parking spaces.

“Staff may move to the back of the school,” said Kelly. Additionally, existing parking lots would be restriped to add compact car spaces and ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) spaces.

If approved, the work would be completed next summer before the start of the 2023-24 school year.

Rio now has 515 standard spaces, plus 23 ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) spaces, for a total of 538. Parking has become a problem as the school has increased enrollment by several hundred students in the past decade.



Prop 28 passage will boost arts, music funding

By Adam Abolfazli

California’s Prop 28, which passed with over 60% of the vote, will increase state spending on arts and music funding by \$1 billion each year with the hopes of ensuring robust arts programs in all public and charter schools.

The ballot measure does not raise taxes and the funding will primarily be used to hire new teachers in arts and music programs (15,000 new positions), with the rest used for materials. It ensures that at least 1% of public school funding goes toward the arts, music, and drama; though that may not seem significant, billions of dollars will be dedicated to the arts over time.

Schools will have discretion on which types of arts and music classes are prioritized, representatives for Prop 28 told the Mirada. The funding will increase the number of arts and music teachers in California by 50%.

Educators have long raised concern over arts classes falling short across the state. “Seventy-two percent of high



Sophomore Sienna Barelli paints in AP Art.

schools fail to provide a high-quality course of study across arts disciplines,” Proposition 28 reads.

Proposition 28 received strong support, including from celebrities like Dr. Dre and Katy Perry as well as education leaders and music companies such as Universal Music.

“Arts are the glue which brings

together literacy, math and critical-thinking skills to help students succeed in school and in life,” Prop 28 author Austin Beutner said in a statement following the ballot measure’s success. “Prop 28 will make sure every student from pre-school to 12th grade will have the opportunity to participate in arts and music at school. This is a big step forward for public education.”

Ceramics teacher Rene Worley described the passage of the bill as “cautious optimism.”

“I have been teaching the arts for 23 years and I feel that we finally have a seat at the table,” she said. “I am old enough to remember the effects of budgetary constraints as a legacy from Proposition 13 when I was a student. When I voted for Proposition 28, I did so as a conceptual wish, not thinking support would actually come our way. So now I am beginning to dare to dream along with my colleagues in coming up with the most productive solutions to our amazing windfall.”

Gaslighting is the 2022 word of the year

By Logan Swain

What word sums up 2022?

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, it's gaslighting, which it defines as "the act or practice of grossly misleading someone especially for one's own advantage."

Merriam-Webster's choice was not subjective; according to the Associated Press, it was the word that saw the greatest increase in searches over the previous year—with the number of queries surging by 1740%.

Gaslighting is not a new actor on the cultural stage. The American Dialect Society deemed it the "most useful" word of 2016.

And its origins date from even further back—the plot line of a 1944 movie involved a man who convinces his wife she is going insane by manipulating her memories and perception of events. The movie's title? Gaslight.

The word has found recent relevance, however.

"It spiked in popularity as it became a frequently used word on multiple social media platforms," junior Carmen Stangis said. "In real life, it has made its way into conversations as people describe their relationships, applied in a variety

of contexts that may make the word deceptive, comedic, or emotional."

Merriam-Webster is not the only publication that chooses an annual word. Collins English Dictionary, a British publication, selected permacrisis as the word that best represents the year, citing a calendar crammed with chaotic happenings.

"I think permacrisis is very fitting for this year," junior Emilie Thoreson said, "because of the enormous human rights issues we are facing around the world, the war in Ukraine, SCOTUS [Supreme Court] decisions, and worsening climate change that made itself very apparent in this summer's heat waves."

"I think that this word reflects the times, as the world seems full of political instability and economic uncertainty," junior Finley Younger added.

Meanwhile, Oxford polled the public, who reported that goblin mode, a term popularized by social media, was the word that best describes the past year.

According to junior Ellery Kaye, going goblin mode "is all about rejecting social norms and being yourself."

Junior Jack Haskin connected to the word on a personal level.

"Goblin mode really sums up 2022 for me," he said. "The first time I went goblin

mode, I realized how powerful of a tool it really is. Long day at work? Go goblin mode. Got a lot of homework? Go goblin mode. Going goblin mode has significantly changed my life."

What is your word of the year for 2022?

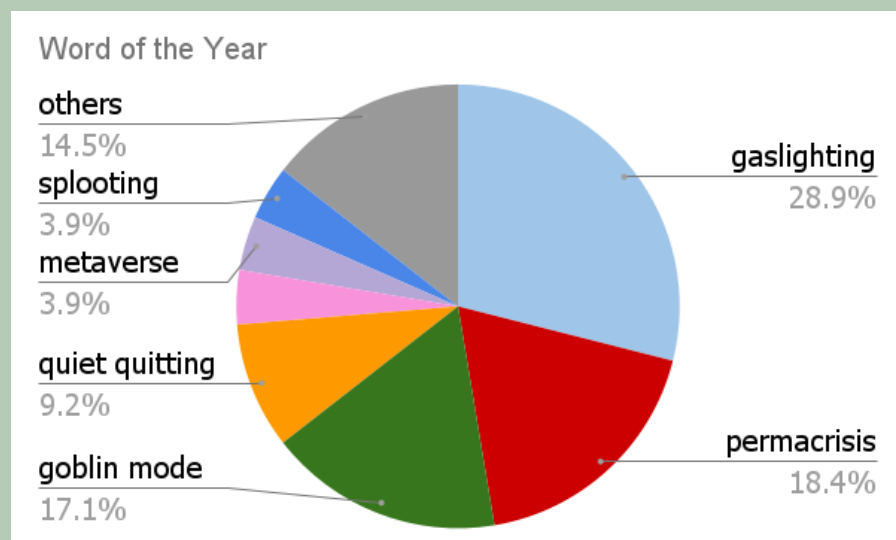
"Quiet quitting. I like this phrase because I have seen it demonstrated in many of my classes this year. Lots of students are worn out from all the classwork and have decided that a good grade is not worth the misery they feel while attaining it. On the longest and most boring days, I've even wished I could quietly quit and just do enough to get by, but in the end it never seems like the best option."
- Sofia Arredondo (11)

"I think omicron best describes 2022 because for the past few years COVID has entered our lives and there have been many variants, it has brought people together and unfortunately torn people apart but it is something we all have in common."
- Genevieve Ferrera (11)

"I think that metaverse is the best word to describe 2022. Through recent years, the use of technology has rampantly increased, fixating people on the new innovations of technology, a virtual "world". This includes the positives (such as connectivity, relationships, and more), as well as the negatives (such as unrealistic expectations promoted or the superficiality of online users and influencers."
- Ava Kaufman (11)

Gaslighting is Rio's word of the year

We surveyed over 70 students using words that made the finals for word of the year by Merriam-Webster, Collins English Dictionary, and Oxford English dictionary.





Quayle works to build backdrop for non-profit theater company Royal Stage.

Keilani Quayle soars as first girl at Rio to become an Eagle Scout

By Anna Schmid

Junior Keilani Quayle is the first girl at Rio to become an Eagle Scout and one of the first in the nation to achieve scouting's highest rank since Scouts BSA allowed girls to join in 2018.

Quayle was one of the first Rio women to join Scouts. She joined Scouts in seventh grade. One of the main reasons Scouts allowed girls into troops is because little siblings would come to their siblings' events, but would not be able to participate because they were girls.

After Quayle joined, she experienced sexism from other people who were fellow scouts as well as other leaders. It took her a couple years to make friends with some of the other boys in the troop because they were suspicious of the girls. Once Quayle and some of the other girls had leadership positions in the troop, the boys talked to them because they had to, but only after Quayle confronted them. The boys would also make misogynistic jokes. After about two years she made other friends that were not just girls. Quayle feels there is less sexism now, but still some prejudice toward the girls.

"I talked to the boys in charge and worked out the situation the best I could," she said.

As a Senior Patrol Leader, she works with other patrol leaders and parents to help oversee the 80 scouts in the troop. Quayle helps younger scouts develop more skills to move up the ranks.

"I like being able to help the other scouts advance and want to help them go where they need and want to be," said Quayle. "I help them get to higher ranks and it is so rewarding to see the progress they make."

To achieve the Eagle rank, scouts must do a community service project, so Quayle made sets for an amateur theater company she is involved with.

"Most people choose to do park benches," she said. "I chose a reusable backdrop for the theater. I made three for a non-profit theater company called Royal Stage."

Lightweight and easily moveable, Quayle's backdrops look like a triangular prism with two doors on each side so that the scenes can be changed.

Despite a rough start to scouting, Quayle is glad she stuck with it.

"I enjoy Scouts because it gives me an outlet to be whoever I want to be," she said. "And it creates unbreakable bonds with people who I wouldn't have been friends with otherwise."

After school, he's CMD The Rapper

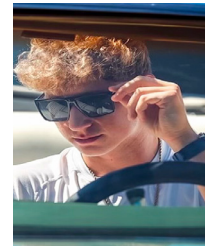
By Alina Trainor

If you were at homecoming last year, you might have heard sophomore Chase Dinaburg's first rap song, "Flying." You may also know him as CMD The Rapper on platforms like YouTube and Apple Music, where he releases his songs.

Dinaburg has been making music since sixth grade, where he became inspired by the stories hidden behind the lyrics.

He was introduced to music at a very young age by his father, who often brought him to concerts. Now, his dad supports his music career.

"My dad has gone through everything with me, funded everything, celebrated our success, [and has] been through my bad songs early on," Dinaburg said. "I grew up listening to a lot of music and my dad introduced me to different cultural music which is what inspired me to create my own."



Chase Dinaburg

One of Dinaburg's biggest motivations to write songs is his family. He enjoys sharing and creating songs for the people he loves.

"My family inspires me and I like to get them involved. I did my first song publicly with my sister," he said.

Although it may seem odd, Dinaburg's favorite music genre is actually opera. He loves that artists can share their feelings through their expressions while singing.

"I like opera because you can feel their voice depending on what story they are telling and it's on a deeper emotional level than other genres," he said. "I love that you can show emotion through your voice and you can tell a story through your passion."

Dinaburg feels that he can communicate with people through music. He explains that he enjoys putting it out into the world.

"It's fun to make something people can relate to because it's a language anyone can speak."

For Autumn Olagues, riding is more than horsing around

By Adam Abolfazli

You can often find senior Autumn Olagues at the horse racing track preparing for her next rodeo competition. Riding since she was very young, Olagues now participates in the High School District 3 Rodeo Team, where she competes once a month.

Olagues' competition specialties are Barrel Racer, Pole Bender and Breakaway Roper. "In barrel racing you go around a cloverleaf set of barrels as fast as possible without knocking the barrel," she explains. "Pole bending is waving of six poles then leaving the pattern with the fastest time possible without knocking the poles. Breakaway roping is holding your horse back next to a chute then roping a calf." Her competitions this year have earned her four buckles (awards).

Olagues has a huge commitment to her horses. "My favorite part about riding



Olagues rounds the first barrel and heads toward the second during a jackpot rodeo.

is the horses," she said. "I have been training this past year and the rewards of training horses is my favorite part. My least favorite part of riding is probably horse injuries; injured horses are a more difficult part of riding." She also cleans her horses' stalls daily and feeds them three

times a day.

Olagues' involvement with horse racing has only just begun. Her practice lasts for about one hour every day, and she recently moved to a five-acre property to have more room for her horses. On top of that, she has other aspirations. "My family is really supportive of my wanting to train and become a vet tech, and we all ride and work with horses so this is a great development for us," she said.

She also dispelled a common misconception about riding. "Most people think riding is zero work, but in order to be successful at a rodeo, you have to work on not only your horse but yourself as well," she said. "It's not as [if] many people sit on a horse while they do all the work, especially when it comes to [riding]."

When she is not riding, Olagues works and plays volleyball.

Zima Creason reelected to San Juan school district board

By Jaiden Crabtree

After being reelected to Area 3 of the San Juan school board, Zima Creason says she is ready to focus on many issues facing the district, including campus violence and academic achievement gaps.

This was the first time San Juan elected board members by district. Creason defeated Alex Zamansky to represent



Zima Creason. Photo provided by her.

southeastern Arden-Arcade and south Carmichael, an area that includes Rio Americano.

After her victory she was chosen by her colleagues to serve as board president during

a Dec. 13 meeting. She said she looks forward to working with the board, district staff and community members to address concerns.

"I am proud to be in close communication with the group 'Moms Demand Action' who have done a lot of work to develop recommendations to keep campuses safe. The board recently

Trustee will represent Rio's neighborhood after winning vote in first election by district.

adopted a resolution to implement one of their recommendations regarding gun safety notices," Creason said. "Academic outcomes are also incredibly significant. Frankly, we are not where we need to be... [and] it is a nationwide problem."

While she offered her opinion on many issues, Creason stressed that she was speaking as an individual board member and not on behalf of the district or the board as a whole.

Speaking more to academic issues, Creason states her passion for teaching that will advance students beyond traditional education. She believes that schools should connect students with employers and teach them important life and work skills.

"While students are with us, they should be provided with education focused on life skills and other training opportunities that focus on real world

success like how to manage your credit, how to live a healthy lifestyle, how to file taxes, how to vote, etc," Creason said. "Some of this is already happening. It is a systemic issue that must be addressed at the federal and state levels."

She uses her political connections through her job as Executive Director of the nonprofit California EDGE Coalition, whose website states it is dedicated to "the idea that post-secondary education and training is the doorway into economic mobility."

"I'm happy to share that in my day job I work on this issue, and I am able to bridge that work with my policy leadership role in the SJUSD," Creason said.

She invites those who'd like to share ways to improve their school to email her and reach out.

Students' voices matter, she said, because they "are the experts of your lived experience. Please, be in touch with your school administration when you have ideas to make your school better."

You can reach Creason at zima.creason@sanjuan.edu.

Taylor Swift's *Midnights*: bop or flop?

By Logan Swain

To say that “Midnights” had a successful release would be an immense understatement. At one point, every position on Billboard’s Top 10 songs was occupied by a track from the new album. It smashed Spotify’s record for the most streams in 24 hours. Its number of first-week sales—almost 1.6 million—was the highest since Adele’s “25,” a full seven years ago.

Swift’s dominance of the music industry is indisputable at this point.

Since her first number-one album, 2008’s “Fearless,” she’s racked up a record-setting streak of smash hits. I enjoyed listening to Taylor Swift when I was a child. The fact that she’s still dropping chart-toppers over a decade later is a testament to her genius as both a singer and a songwriter.

She owes her enduring success largely to her ability to adapt majestically to the shifting music scene. Swift is no stranger to musical evolution. Nearly every new album she has released contains a noticeable shift in tone and style from her previous project. “Midnights,” for example, incorporates more synths and studio effects than her stripped-down pandemic-era albums “Folklore” and “Evermore.” At the same time, it does not depart radically from her previous work, but rather builds on elements introduced in past projects. The synths are reminiscent of “1989,” the darker, more personal lyrical content parallels “Reputation,” and the same basic theme of romantic relationships that permeates her other compositions is equally present.

With a runtime of just over 44 minutes, *Midnights* is Swift’s shortest album since her eponymous debut in 2006. That is one of the album’s greatest strengths, preventing it from overstaying its welcome. Swift recorded an additional seven songs, released as surprise bonus

tracks on the same day as the album. Her decision not to include them may have been the most brilliant thing about its creation. Too much of a good thing is a real phenomenon, especially when it comes to albums. *Midnights* nails the balance between quantity and quality in a way that Swift has not achieved for years.

If there’s one downside to the album, it’s the dearth of upbeat moments. Nearly every track paints a bleak picture, making the sonic dreamscape often feel more like a nightmare of melancholy, bitterness, anger and regret.

“That’s exactly what she’s going for,” junior Jaiden Crabtree commented. “It’s supposed to be depressing.”

And now for the tracks. In general, the melodies stay away from being complex, which contributes to the dreamy atmosphere that “*Midnights*” oozes. “Lavender Haze” sets the tone for the rest of the album with its ambient-esque production.

“Snow on the Beach” is, well, weird but freaking beautiful, as the song says. “You’re on Your Own, Kid” builds gradually from a sparse, gloomy love song to a powerful tune about self-empowerment. The sparkly track “Labyrinth” sounds like it was recorded in a cave made out of crystals. It repeats its chorus four times in a row, a technique that hasn’t graced our ears since “1989”’s excruciating slog “Out of the Woods.” “Mastermind”, possibly the weakest track of the bunch, is a bizarre way to end the album: with a fizzle, not a bang.

Some highlights of Swift’s figurative language include “Don’t put me in the basement when I want the penthouse of your heart” on “Bejeweled,” and “Karma is a cat, purring in my lap ‘cause it loves me” from “Karma.” If these metaphors sound ridiculous, it’s because they are.

All in all, “*Midnights*” is a stellar addition to the Taylor Swift canon and firmly cements her reputation as the twentieth century’s preeminent musical artist. Final rating? 8 out of 10.

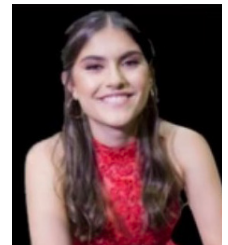


Taylor Swift's latest album, "Midnights"

Salome Ospina's involvement in five bands leads to musical success

By Adam Abolfazli, Brooklyn Hendricks, and Alina Trainor

Sophomore Salome Ospina holds an impressive musical resume with nearly 10 years of piano experience under her belt. Ospina is a part of the National Youth Symphony of Columbia, the Sacramento Youth Symphony, the jazz band The New Traditionalists, as well as the Rio jazz band and concert band. She says that her participation in the Rio band program has been an amazing experience.



Salome Ospina.
Photo provided by her.

Salome Ospina is a member of the National Youth Symphony of Columbia, which runs in the family. “My mom was a student there around 30 years ago,” she said. “She’s really good friends with the director, so I got the opportunity because we got in touch.”

For the most recent performance, she played Concerto No. 2 in G Minor, which took about two years to learn. She is also practicing with the celeste, a special type of piano.

Additionally, she says playing jazz and classical piano have their differences. “It’s entirely different, like two completely different worlds,” Ospina said, “but you can use one to help with the other, if that makes sense.”

Nerves often affect her, but she still pulls off a stellar performance. “I don’t even know how to describe how nervous I was,” she said. Performing the piano for 28 minutes by memory and staying motivated was very difficult.

Ospina also has aspirations to continue with music. “I do hopefully see myself with a future in music,” she told the *Mirada*. “I’d love to become a music teacher or just be able to play the piano and make a living off of it.”

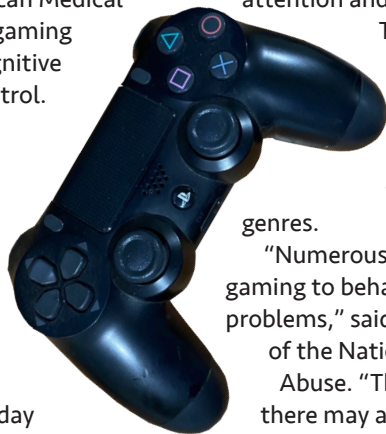
Are video games good for you?

By Jace Thompson and Logan Swain

Contrary to what your parents may say, there may be a number of benefits to playing video games. Research from the Journal of the American Medical Association shows that gaming can actually improve cognitive abilities and impulse control.

The study examined over 2000 children who played up to three hours of video games a day. It concluded that gaming can actually help develop skills and strengthen the brain in ways that apply to everyday life situations. The greatest benefits were seen in decision-making, perception, attention control and reaction time.

"We found, basically, that children who play three hours or more of video gaming per day outperform kids who never played any type of video games in terms of impulse control and working



memory," the study's lead author, Bader Chaarani, said in an interview with NPR. "In addition to this better performance, we are seeing brain activation changes in key areas of the brain involved in vision, attention and memory processing."

The researchers speculated that the type of game played can affect how beneficial it is. However, the study did not analyze the differences between genres.

"Numerous studies have linked video gaming to behavior and mental health problems," said Nora Volkow, the director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse. "This study suggests that there may also be cognitive benefits."

Studies have also shown that playing video games can increase your capacity to process what you are seeing by improving a visual function known as contrast sensitivity. This ability allows people to detect even the smallest of changes in background colors. Having a high contrast sensitivity is important when it comes to activities like recognizing faces, reading or

driving at night.

"I would say for the most part that playing video games is beneficial," junior James Roof said. Junior Owen Armstrong added, "I think that gaming is beneficial because many games let you show your creativity."

My favorite game is...

"Minecraft. It's the only video game I really play but I love it and have been playing since I was young."
- Lainey Szejda (11)

"GTA V because it has the best story and the most to do."
- Nathan Kuper (10)

"When I used to play, my favorite would have had to be Call of Duty or Fortnite. I loved trickshotting in COD and the fact your reaction time had to be really fast. I loved Fortnite because it was hard. There was aiming, building, and editing."
- Ryan Schoenfelder (11)

Tickets, please: backlash continues after Swift concert sale overwhelms Ticketmaster

By Adam Abolfazli and Logan Swain

When event sales website Ticketmaster began the presale lottery for Taylor Swift's upcoming Eras tour, fans went wild. Those interested in tickets could sign up for a presale lottery, and if they were selected, the tickets would be available to them sooner than those without presale status. However, demand for the concerts was so extreme that Ticketmaster's system shut down. All of the available inventory was sold during the highly exclusive presale.

The sale used adaptive pricing, meaning that the cost of tickets would change based on demand, with additional fees increasing already sky-high prices. Outrage from Swift's fans, Ticketmaster customers, and even U.S. Congress members ensued, with concerns that Ticketmaster has monopolized

online concert ticket sales. In a recent congressional hearing, the president of Live Nation, the company that owns Ticketmaster, defended the program, arguing that automated bots flooded the website. (Bots that purchase tickets can then resell them for a gouged price.) The company official also said that the website did not decide the prices.

The Department of Justice is now investigating Live Nation for violating the Ticketmaster-Live Nation agreement rules, according to the Associated Press.

Additionally, angry Taylor Swift fans sued Ticketmaster for the debacle that resulted in astronomical prices and extended waiting times on the website. However, some blame Swift for putting profits first.

To be eligible for the presale, senior Esti Shapiro entered her email into a

presale raffle.

"You got a boost in the raffle if you bought \$60 worth of Taylor merch from her website," Shapiro said, "which is stupid."

After receiving her presale code, Shapiro waited in line for hours, only for the tickets to be sold out before she had the chance to buy any. Being a Capital One cardholder granted Shapiro access to a second presale. However, after more hours of waiting, she again left with nothing.

"I had to buy a ticket from a reseller," Shapiro said. "It was \$500 for what should have been around \$220."

Though Swift does not plan to stop in Sacramento, many Rio students were able to secure tickets to other concerts, while others were left out and will have to wait until the pop singer goes on tour again.

I'm 17 and I want to vote



By Anna Schmid
Staff Writer

The Sacramento City Council will add a non-voting teenager to sit in on meetings to offer input and help represent the city's youth commission. While this is a small step forward in recognizing the value teenagers can provide on key issues that affect young people, it does not go far enough. Teenagers who are 17 should be allowed to vote. They have the ability, knowledge and experience to effectively participate in elections. By lowering the voting age to 17, teenagers' voices would be better represented in our democracy on important issues, including the use of income tax and healthcare policy.

There are 21 million employed people between the ages of 16 and 24, including several million 17-year-olds. These teenagers pay income taxes, which are then allocated by the government based on voters' preferences. For example, government decisions affect how much money is spent on welfare programs such as food stamps, child nutrition and housing assistance.

These taxed teenagers have opinions on where their tax dollars should be spent. Because the voting age is 18, 17-year-olds are essentially being taxed without representation.

Teenagers should also be represented in healthcare policy. For example, on the California ballot in the recent midterm, Prop 1 amended the State Constitution to protect access to abortion and contraceptives. This is vitally important to young women. In California alone, 11 out of every 1,000 teenage girls ages 15-19 give birth. Furthermore, there are about 15,000 total reported rapes and 1 in 20 of those rapes will result in pregnancy. Women of childbearing age deserve to have a voice in reproductive rights to protect their autonomy and physical health.

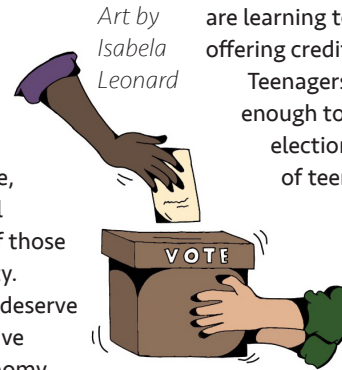
Critics argue that the voting age should not be lowered to 17 because teens do not have the incentive to vote. They also argue the current voting age of 18 is still young enough to make an impact on a teenager's future. Although 18-year-olds may have more education and experience, there are

mature 17-year-olds who want to better their futures and get into college. This can often start in a high school government class, typically a graduation requirement, which provides students with general knowledge of how the government works, including elections, giving teens the ability to participate effectively in an election. Teachers can also help build voting momentum by applying what the students are learning to the real world or even offering credit to vote.

Teenagers are mature and educated enough to participate effectively in elections. A significant number of teenagers are active in the

workforce without the tax representation they deserve. Teenagers have a right to participate in healthcare policy that affects their own bodily

autonomy. The voting age should be lowered to 17 for state and federal elections because teenagers are active, participating members of society. The Sacramento City Council is a leader in recognizing the value and perspective that young adults bring to the table. Hopefully many will follow.



Art by
Isabela
Leonard

Mental health and homophobia; what is the correlation?



By Jaiden Crabtree
Managing Editor

Being a teen in the LGBTQ+ community in America isn't always easy, as many students know.

It's saddening to see how people, grown adults especially, can dismiss the cries of the younger generation. A poll taken between 2001-2019 showed overwhelming support by millennials for same-sex marriage compared to older generations.

The effect of homophobic attacks can last a lifetime. The National Library of Medicine reports, "Well-established research demonstrates that lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons have worse mental health outcomes than their heterosexual

counterparts, highlighting important but poorly understood mental health disparities associated with sexual orientation... For example, a meta-analysis of four decades of research concluded that lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons had higher rates of mental disorder, substance misuse, suicidal ideation, and self-harm than did heterosexuals."

Gay marriage was officially made legal across the country in June 2015, and researched compiled by PNAS shows that hate crimes against those attracted to the same sex seem to have decreased. For that reason, many would argue that looking into how teens' mental health is affected would be irrelevant, but I disagree.

This previous year in California alone, the attorney general reported that anti-gay (male) hate crimes make up the majority of sexuality hate crimes, with a total of 246 victims. This seems minor, but when compared to the number of anti-

heterosexual hate crimes, the contrast was clear. In 2021, there were zero victims of anti-heterosexual hate crimes. More acceptance doesn't mean there aren't victims, especially when the most vulnerable age group is young adolescents.

During the pandemic, there was a 33% surge in homophobic hate crimes, according to NBC News. The people being targeted were the victims of baseless accusations created during a time of uncertainty and spitefulness. When people shout slurs, they don't think about anyone but themselves. To sweep this under the rug would be an injustice to those who are still struggling and lacking the help they need. California is a progressive state, yet many others aren't. So what's being done for those under-represented LGBTQ+ young adolescents in conservative states? As a young, female, gay teen, it's disappointing that no one is listening. It's time they do.

No snogging?! British high school's ban on physical touch and relationships goes too far



By Brooklyn Hendricks
Staff Writer

Hylands High School in Chelmsford, U.K. recently banned all physical contact and romantic relationships between students. Assistant headteacher Catherine McMillan wrote in a letter to the school community that students engaging in "any aggressive physical contact, hugging, holding hands, slapping someone, etc.," risked forfeiting their lunch or break. "We want your child to focus on their learning while in school and we don't want them to be distracted by relationship issues," the letter explained. However, the high school went too far with this ban; it is actively counterproductive.

Prohibiting physical touch does

nothing for the school and can impact students' health. Not all human touch is bad or sexual, though these rules make it seem like it is. Students should be able to hug or shake hands with their friends when they see them. Hugging friends is normal and good for students. It's a way of greeting and connecting with others. Humans, especially teenagers, need physical touch to express emotion and to comfort each other.

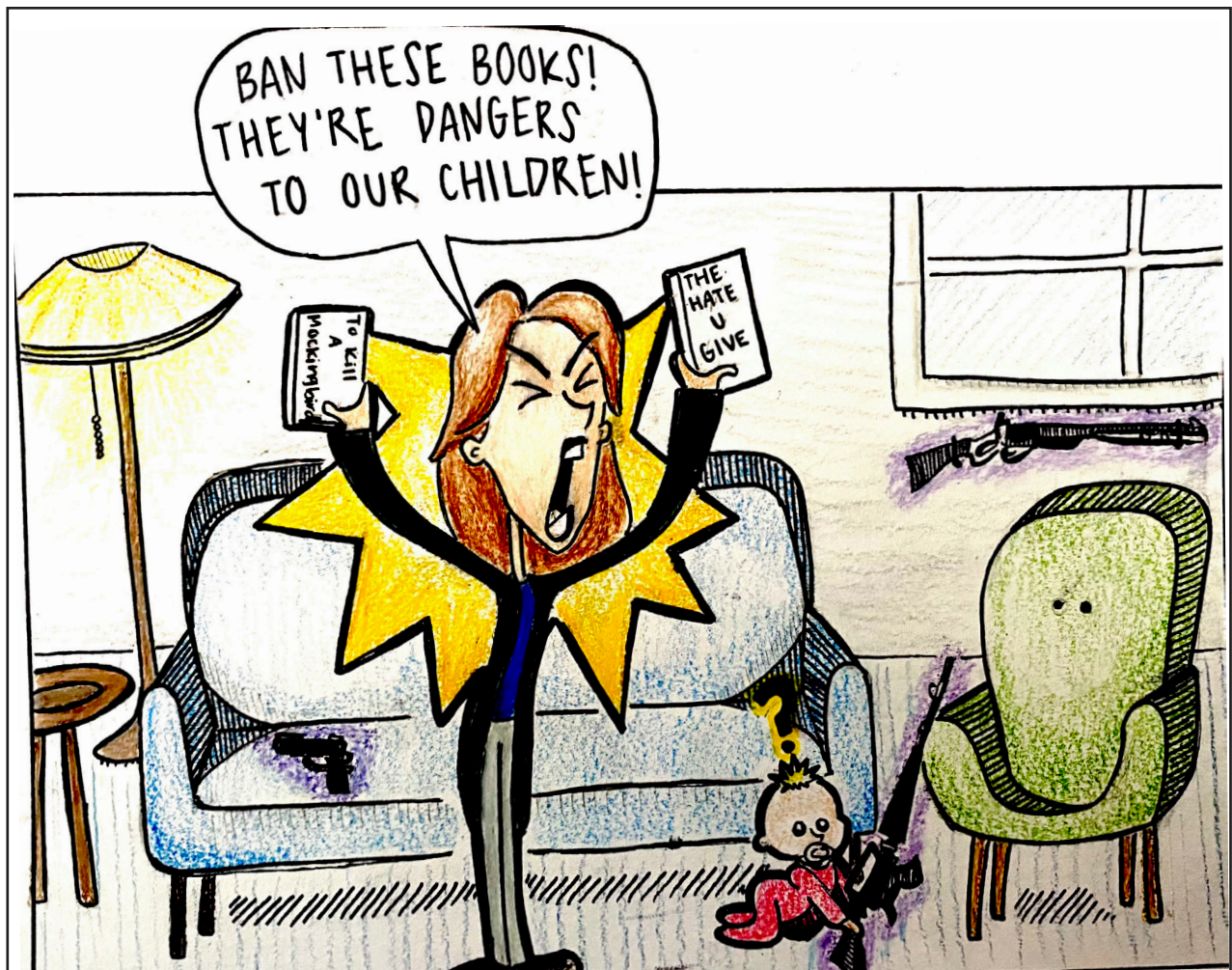
Physical touch is a part of normal daily activities, such as hugging your friend when seeing them. Not being able to do any of that is ridiculous, and isn't helping or benefiting the students at all. Learning respectful greetings and being able to control yourself is important, especially as a teen. We learn control by having these interactions every day and with friends at school.

It is understandable that the school is doing this for the students and to make

a safe learning environment. Rules about physical contact at school are good for the atmosphere to some extent. For example, it would be acceptable for there to be a ban on kissing at school. However, no school should have the power to ban hugs or restrict handshakes. Despite the school's reasoning that this ban on physical contact benefits the students, it doesn't. This won't make them focus more on work. They won't learn any self-control, because all they know is that if they touch someone or hug a friend they will get punished.

The only benefits the school could see from this are fewer fights and less inappropriate touching between people at school. However, those benefits are inconsequential compared to the potential damage the rules could have on students' well-being and mental health. All in all, it's an extremely outdated look for a 21st-century high school.

CARMEN SENSE by Carmen Stangis



The **BIG** Question: What is the best present you've ever received?



Art by Isabela Leonard

A pop-up volleyball court so I could keep playing during quarantine.

- Livia Bacchi (11)

After a horrible year of one lockdown renewal after another, my family brought home a golden retriever puppy. He brightened a very dark year and made it feel like a very merry Christmas.

- Sofia Arredondo (11)

A homemade dress from my friend; she spent all summer on it.

- Neely Hebert (11)

Christmas of 2015 I received a Frozen karaoke set.

This may sound silly, but I had never really explored my love for performing arts and music until then. I would use this karaoke set every single day, and then I went on to learn how to play guitar and a series of other instruments. Now, I love to perform for local theater companies, dance, sing, and more.

- Ava Kaufman (11)

The best Christmas present I ever got was when I got roller skates. I used those every day and got their use out of them.

-Angelina Souza (10)

The gift of a personal computer (PC). This device has allowed me to hear the voices of people who I know over the COVID world shutdown.

- Matthew Murphy (9)

By far the best Christmas gift I've ever received is a trip to Europe. My parents gave us a travel guide to some of the places we were going and inside the book was an airplane ticket.

- Cyan Overholt (11)

The best holiday present I received was back in 2015 when I got my iPad Mini. It had caused so many happy memories for me and I wish that it still worked.

- Jasmine Walton (9)

In July, for my 16th birthday, my grandpa gave me his old guitar. A Guild D50 from 1978, that he wrote songs on, sang to me when I was a kid, sang to my dad and his brothers when they were kids, and only 3 months into my guitar career, he decided to pass it down to me.

- David Ranney (11)

A bike I got to have fun with my friends, my brother, and his friends all together riding our bikes around our neighborhood.

-Madison Burt (11)

The best holiday present I ever received was my car.

- Grace Stone (11)

My chameleon, Boots, is the greatest gift I ever received. It can't be topped because I love her so much; she really brightens my day.

- Aleah Adams (11)

SENIORS RULE ON SOCCER FIELD



By Eric Aflaki and Jace Thompson

The playoff-bound men's and women's soccer teams turned in dominating performances on their senior nights.

The men beat Del Campo 10-1 on Feb. 2 to improve to 17-1 (9-0 in Capital Athletic League), and place themselves in a good position for home-field advantage in the playoff as they try to repeat as Sac-Joaquin Section champions.

Several seniors combined to inflate Rio's goal total. Blake Rennie and Brady Kerr scored one a piece, while Quinn Mahoney added two and Andrew Collins recorded a hat trick.

Seniors Nate Herring and Kodai Gosse, combined for a shutout in goal, although neither saw much action. At the end of the second half, Herring returned as a striker, and the Raiders focused their offense on getting him a goal, but the closest he came was an open shot that careened off the top bar.

"It was fun playing with my fellow seniors, the people I've been playing with for four years," Gosse said.

The women beat El Camino 2-0, Jan. 26, with goals from seniors Emma Ellis and Kacey Renga.

Seniors goalies, Julia Curcuro and Sophia Ferguson, combined for the shutout.

"We always work together and keep each other going and root each other on, especially in tough situations," Curcuro said. "We were tied 0-0 in that game and we came out and ended up winning 2-0."

A later 10-0 bruising of Capital Christian and 0-0 tie with Del Campo improved the team to 7-0-6 (5-0-4 in league).



Seniors shined on senior night, leading men's and women's teams to victory. Clockwise from the top: Blake Rennie presses up the field against Del Campo, helping Rio to 10-0 win. Kyle Norris moves around the defense to score. Olivia Loomis dribbles the ball in the game against El Camino, which Rio won 2-0.

Photos by Rami Al Mufti and Owen Armstrong.

That's a wrap

Girls' Varsity Volleyball

By Anna Schmid

The 2022 season came with highs and lows for the team. They finished third overall in Sections and made it to round one of States. They performed well, with a final record of 34-9 in the overall season, and went undefeated at 12-0 in the league.



Junior Liv Bacchi reaches to hit ball back over the net.

There were two main high points of the season: winning against Christian Brothers and winning a tournament that they haven't won in 20 years.

"Christian Brothers are our league rivals and each year we work our hardest

to beat them," said junior Emilie Thoreson.

After a tough few years of losing to Christian Brothers, the girls pulled off a 3-1 sweep twice during the regular season. They remember the games as difficult and stressful, but are thankful for the support from their coaches, family and friends.

They made it far in Sections when they had a tough loss to the Vacaville team. However, they were still playing in the States tournament.

To make the girls feel supported, their coach has team talks before practices and games. This gives the girls a chance to say what they need to.

"[Our coach] does his very best to make himself more involved with our well-being and help us grow as people outside of volleyball," said Thoreson.

Boys' Water Polo

By Brooklyn Hendricks

It came down to the last seconds when Rio faced D1-rival Granite Bay in the Sac-Joaquin Sections quarterfinals.

Granite Bay had repeatedly fought back when Rio took the lead and had the chance tie with 20 seconds left in the game. But goalie Harper Gardner and the Rio defense kept Granite Bay out of the net, and the Raiders were able to run out the clock for a 7-6 win.

Senior Cade Winston called it the "high point" of a season that was filled with memorable moments. The Raiders went 5-0 in league to repeat as Capital Athletic League champions, and they went undefeated in a tournament hosted by Jesuit on their way to an overall 21-10 record.



Junior Lucas Von Hagel prepares to throw the ball.

Throughout the season, brothers Mati and Lucas Ruano were the top scorers for the team with Mati racking up 80 goals this season and Lucas coming in second with 59 goals.

On the defensive end, the team's goalie Harper Gardner (10), had an amazing season with 184 saves and 37 steals, and even scored one goal.

Boys' water polo had a great year, ending the season 5-0 and winning their league. They then went into the postseason playoffs, but their streak ended in the semifinals when they lost to Davis, 13-3.

Despite their defeat, the boys kept their heads held high.

Girls' Water Polo

By Brooklyn Hendricks and Jace Thompson

The girls' water polo team went undefeated in their league with a flawless record of 4-0. They made it to the Sac-Joaquin Section quarterfinals where they were defeated by St. Mary's.

The game was tough for Rio; they were down 3-0 at half then fought their way to 3-3 by the fourth quarter. Sadly, St. Mary's defeated them in the last quarter 5-3, knocking them out of Sections.

Before this, however, the Raiders' season was packed with impressive moments, including a win against St. Francis, one of their main rivals.

The players believe that one of the reasons they were so successful was their team chemistry.

"Before games, we always dance before we get in the pool, then we have team talks to talk about our plans during the game," said Naomi Pai (11).



Senior Mary Leveroni receives ball before throwing.

Their connectedness was not the only reason for their successful season; on offense they had many stars including Jada Ashen (11) and Alyssa Johnson (12). Both players made major contributions in the season, scoring many goals.

Players expressed that the offense couldn't have been so successful without their goalie Kate Densmore (12). Senior Mary Leveroni also helped block many shots and often got the ball back for the team.

The team had an amazing year together and looks forward to the next.

"It's been really fun," said player Maisy Moore (10), "and we have grown so much as a team."

Jace Thompson wins MVP of Jack Scott; Rio wins tournament

By Jack Fedota

Sophomore Jason "Jace" Thompson was awarded Most Valuable Player of the 47th annual Jack Scott Tournament after averaging 21 points over the course of three games and leading the Raiders to their first Jack Scott title in five years.

Thompson also broke the three-point record for the tournament by accumulating 16, breaking the previous record of 15 by Cole Thaira of Kennedy High School in 2015. Thompson's record-breaking performance contributed to the team winning this year's tournament, but he doesn't take all the credit.

"Winning the MVP was a pretty big honor, honestly," Thompson said, "because it could just as easily have gone to Luke [Mason] or Miles [Lake]. Winning the tournament was definitely a team effort, all five starters played to the top of their games, and then the players off the bench came in with a lot of energy and kept us to that high standard."

Thompson noted the importance of the team's defense while in the tournament and said, "We had to lock in defensively. Sometimes we get lazy and let things get past, but as long as we were working hard, talking, and

[communicating] on defense, it helped turn it into offense."

Rio beat Fairfield in round one 84-36 before topping Woodcreek in the semifinals 55-51. In the final, Rio then beat Ponderosa with a score of 66-45.

Thompson also performed well last year. He ended the season as number one for three-point percentage and three-point makes for California division two. Additionally, he was number two overall for three-point scoring in division one. Thompson has become known as a dominant offensive threat, but he also takes pride in his defense as well.

Winning the Jack Scott Tournament is a good first step for the Rio basketball team, but Thompson still has his eyes ahead further into the season. He said, "This year I really want us to win [the] league, and I know we can if everyone plays their role." The team chemistry is very apparent when watching the boys basketball team play, and it makes sense that they have been so successful starting out the year. With the emergence of sophomore guard Jace Thompson, the team hopes to go all the way this season.



Thompson makes jump shot during a home game against El Camino. Photo by Eric Aflaki.

GOLFER EMERGES AS ONE OF BEST IN STATE

By Jack Fedota



Taylor Baker

Taylor Baker, a sophomore girls golf player, has quickly emerged as one of the best prep golfers in the state. Baker shot a staggering 65, or seven under par, in her league tournament, advancing her to the divisional championships. She then shot a 69, or three under par, finishing first out of 102 golfers. Now she is advancing to the Masters Tournament being held at Mickey Grove Golf Course.

Baker's accomplishments also have earned her the distinction as the Rio Americano Athlete of the Month.

Baker said the award was "really cool," but she got more excited talking about her championship play.

"Both of these rounds have been personal records for me at any course I've played," Baker said while talking about her recent playoff rounds.

Baker also explained the excitement she had to continue playing. On top of being an incredible golfer, Baker has incredible qualities that she contributes to help out her team.

Steve Kronick, head coach of the girls' golf team, has seen her leadership up close. Kronick has high praise for Taylor and said, "Taylor is an exceptional player and person. Her dedication and discipline towards golf are to be admired."

Baker is not just an ordinary high school athlete who slips through unnoticed. She certainly will be getting lots of attention from college programs, yet according to

Kronick, she still sees herself on the same level as everyone else. Kronick said, "She approaches the game with a maturity beyond her years. Whether at practice or on the course, she is respectful and helpful at all times to her teammates and opponents, regardless of their level of play. Taylor is simply a delight to have on our team."

Baker's success clearly comes from her ability, but also her humble attitude and approach to the game. She has been earning the respect of coaches and even opponents.

Kronick said, "Opposing coaches not only appreciate her skill level but also have remarked how courteous and helpful she is."



NIL deals need a refresh to preserve college football competition



By Ashley Lundberg
Sports Commentary

When University of Alabama football coach Nick Saban said that Texas A&M “bought every player on their team,” he started a firestorm. But what was largely ignored in the ensuing controversy was the spark that exploded the powder keg—the NCAA’s decision last year to let players profit off of previously-forbidden name, image, and likeness (NIL) deals, allowing student athletes to earn money from sports, their team, or outside entities. While legalizing these deals initially seemed like forward progress, it has backfired; NIL deals are ruining college football competition.

The ban on NIL deals ensured fair and free recruiting for all teams, regardless of the size of their booster clubs or budgets. Unlike professional leagues, where players typically go to whichever team will pay them most, college teams couldn’t have bidding wars where the schools with the most money won. While NCAA rules prohibit “NIL compensation contingent upon enrollment,” this is poorly enforced. Boston College standout Zay Flowers received multiple offers from third parties, one of an astounding \$600,000, to transfer prior to this season, according to ESPN. Sports Illustrated reported that a University of Utah player was offered almost \$1 million to transfer. Players are going to attend where they will profit most, which is the bigger schools. Smaller ones will struggle to recruit in what is often already an uphill battle for them.

Even if the NCAA had better enforcement against this rule, “legal” deals are still problematic. Anyone can make deals with athletes as long as they don’t include a contingency to attend a certain school. Avid University of Miami supporter and billionaire John Ruiz made around \$7 million in deals to Miami athletes (for which he has since been investigated by the NCAA), the Miami Herald reported. Following this, Sports Illustrated reporter Ross Dellenger found that “Miami poached from UCLA and West Virginia for a total of four players, all starters.” It is impossible to see how the prospect of bigger NIL deals at Miami did not affect these athletes’ decisions.

“Certainly, the idea of NIL was not to recruit guys from other teams, induce them to come to their schools and pay them

money or pay recruits on the front end,” Ohio State Buckeyes coach Ryan Day said. “But that’s what this has become.”

The biggest losers of this are small schools. Groups of donors from particular schools have started to form “collectives,” which exist only to provide NIL deals to players at their school. The University of Tennessee’s collective has done almost \$4 million in NIL deals. This has led Greg Schiano, head football coach at Rutgers, to raise concern. His school’s moderate-sized program has raised \$400,000 for NIL deals through their collective; a sizable sum,

“...the idea of NIL was not to recruit guys from other teams, induce them to come to their schools and pay them money or pay recruits on the front end...But that’s what this has become.”

- Ryan Day, Ohio State Buckeyes Coach

but still only 10% of Tennessee’s fund. This system favors the powerhouse colleges, with more well-funded supporters to give college athletes richer deals. As the gap between the good and bad teams widens, competition will plummet. Gone is the classic game where the underdog team rises up against the powerhouse. Expect to see more dramaless blowout wins for the favorite.

Now, over a year after NIL deals were legalized, something needs to happen to prevent college football from spiraling out of control. The NCAA needs to take charge of the NIL landscape, and create a fair environment for all teams. Administrations across the nation need clear, uniform rules regulating how much they can be involved in players’ deals. A solution, perhaps a salary cap, needs to be presented to prevent recruiting from becoming a booster spending war. All college athletes deserve an even playing field to pursue the sport they love, and, hopefully, profit off it—the right way.

Rio adds temporary lights to soccer field, brightening up students’ games

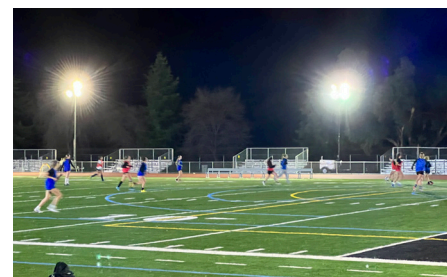
By Jack Fedota

Rio has made improvements to the lighting on the football field, and there are now six temporary lights for the upcoming soccer season. The lights will stay on the fields until the beginning of the lacrosse season in March. With Daylight Savings time, it has started to get darker earlier in the day, making it difficult for our six soccer teams to practice and play games. However, by the time the lacrosse season comes around, lighting no longer presents itself as an issue, leading them to be removed.

Athletic Director William Taylor worked hard to get these lights, and with the help from generous Rio parents, he was able to get the district to provide the soccer teams with lighting. Taylor acknowledged the generosity of both the district and parents.

“The district actually provided us with four of the eight lights, but the big thing is that these lights run on diesel fuel,” he said. “A Rio parent is actually paying for the gasoline through their company. It’s estimated that by the time the lights leave, the parent will have donated over \$4000 for diesel fuel.” The parent noted that they wanted to stay anonymous and just let the kids play and practice whenever they needed to.

Although the lights allow the soccer teams to practice later on in the evening, there have been some complaints from the players and the coaches. The lights are able to illuminate the entire field, but they don’t shine very high into the sky, leading to problems when the ball is kicked high on plays like goal kicks. This is a major reason why home games start at 3:00 p.m. latest. Even though the lights weren’t there for the football season, Taylor didn’t rule out the possibility of having them for “early morning practices” next season.



Girls’ varsity soccer team practices with new lights on.

Elective Word Search

l h n p h o t o g r a p h y j
 b a n d m b l b z d p g n k p
 u z k o c m e d i c a l q w o
 b s w u e y u h z m i j q e a
 u a f j r r q k n s n w d i a
 b p r d a i o g c k t m s b v
 c w e x m z t b c f i u d t d
 r e n t i o z g o h n h o h c
 s d c c c i p q f t g p g e m
 p m h n s j i j l t i l k a x
 a d v m e p a a b v n c z t j
 n o r w w c n n e u d g s e b
 i y e a r b o o k n w p d r h
 s p r s s o z q j a a m i i m
 h b v w i x u o r u r c a i l

It's time to pick electives for next year. Even if you can't find room in your schedule, can you find the classes here?

Word Bank:

- Photography
- Yearbook
- Medical
- Spanish
- Robotics
- Painting
- Piano
- French
- Ceramics
- Theater
- Band
- Jazz
- AP

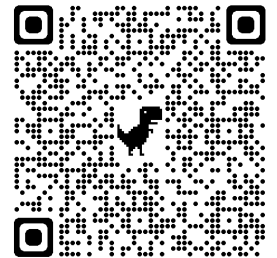
ZOOMED IN

Can you identify this close up of a spot on the Rio campus? Submit a photo of the spot through the QR code by Friday to enter a contest for a free Pound-Plus chocolate bar.



Photo by Cameron Cheetham.

* You must be signed in to your school email account to submit a photo



G A M E S

Words with Rio puzzle: Every answer contains the letters RIO in order. The number of letters is in the parentheses.

1. Of a higher nature or kind (as Rio is to El Camino or Jesuit) (8)
2. A desire to know or learn (9)
3. A group of three (4)
4. A violent disturbance of the peace by a crowd (4)
5. Mr. Friedman, if you find his dry humor very funny (9)
6. Steph Curry or Clay Thompson, for example (8)
7. Devotion to one's country (10)
8. What Basterds are in a Quentin Terantino movie title (8)
9. Rio has six of them a day (7)
10. Extremely comfortable or elegant, often expensive (9)
11. A kind of roll (7)
12. Extremely mad (7)
13. Breakfast cereal (8)
14. A puppet with strings attached to its limbs (10)
15. Not funny (7)
16. Something hard to explain, exciting wonder, or surprise (10)
17. A constellation named after a Greek hunter (5)
18. Last name of Senior class president Madi (4)
19. Italian plumber who saves a princess (5)
20. A two-wheeled horse-drawn vehicle (7)
21. A bird or a Baltimore baseball player (6)

1. _____
2. _____
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14. _____
15. _____
16. _____
17. _____
18. _____
19. _____
20. _____
21. _____

Answers:

1. Superior
2. Curiosity
3. Trio
4. Riot
5. Hillarious
6. Warriors
7. Patriotism
8. Inglorious
9. Periods
10. Luxurious
11. Broche
12. Furious
13. Cheerios
14. Marionette
15. Serious
16. Mysterious
17. Orion
18. Rios
19. Mario
20. Charlot
21. Oriole



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