

THE NUEVA CURRENT



Photo by Simone Summers

NEWS

The Innovative Learning Conference (ILC) has returned after a four-year hiatus, welcoming a decorated lineup from the co-founder of Instagram to the Provost of Stanford. [P 5]



Photo by Damian Marhefka

ARTS & CULTURE

Donning pearls, top hats, and lavish gowns, the cast of the fall play brings Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* to campus. [P 7]

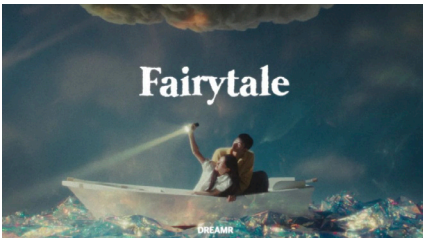
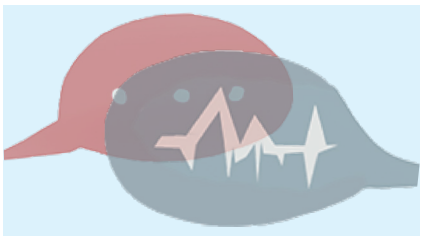


Photo by Dejavu Group

FEATURES

Joshua Koo '24 takes to the mic under the stage name DreamR. Read more about his journey in the music industry and his most recent single "Fairytale." [P 12]



Art by Anwen Chen

OPINION

Two student perspectives on the whether or not schools should release statements in response to or in the wake of major crises. [P 11]



Photo from Yahoo Sports

SPORTS

The 49ers are on a roll—garnering new records in the face of injury. Here's our recap and breakdown of the season so far. [P 20]

When free speech carries a cost

As free speech on college campuses becomes a contentious subject, community members examine civil discourse at Nueva



Photos and Illustration by Kayla Ling

By Ellie Kearns & Aaron Huang

I. WHEN WORDS FAIL

When Maya Bodnick '22 first saw the billboard truck on Oct. 13, she was terrified. Enlarged pictures and names of her peers were being paraded around campus on all sides of the truck, with the caption "Harvard's Leading Antisemites."

The campaign to doxx—to publicly release personal and identifying information about someone with malicious intent—Harvard students made national headlines. The targets were alleged signers of the Harvard Undergraduate Palestine Solidarity Committee (PSC) statement blaming "Israel entirely for the war in Gaza."

Bodnick, a Jewish sophomore at Harvard, wrote an Op-Ed the next day for independent Jewish news organization Forward, condemning both the PSC's statement and the doxxing.

"The trucks, the online doxxing campaign, and the [New York] Post cover function as billboards for hate, encouraging violence against these students," Bodnick wrote in the Op-Ed. "These doxxing attacks have not only endangered the students whose organizations signed the letter, but also have created immense fear and danger for the whole Harvard Muslim community."

Despite denouncing the statement and

larger doxxing campaigns, Bodnick believes in the preservation of freedom of speech.

"But even though I strongly disagree with the PSC statement, I still believe that all students have the right to freedom of speech and—more importantly—to feel safe on campus," she wrote. "Free speech matters because it is a fundamental pillar of our American democracy. If we silence ideas that we disagree with, we risk slipping into authoritarian censorship."

While Bodnick's Op-Ed focused primarily on the situation at Harvard, she believes the situation is representative of a broader issue at higher educational institutions nationwide.

"Harvard has a civil discourse problem, but it's not unique," she said in an interview. "It's emblematic of modern polarization."

These civil discourse problems have manifested themselves in various forms at universities across the country.

At Northwestern University, fake issues of the student newspaper *The Daily Northwestern* were distributed across their campus with the headline, "Northwestern complicit in genocide of Palestinians."

At Tulane University, two students were assaulted in a brawl when someone attempted to burn an Israeli flag during a pro-Palestine rally.

The events following the Israel-Hamas conflict are not the first time ideology-based animosity has arisen on college campuses.

In March, conservative judge Stuart Kyle

Duncan was invited to speak at Stanford Law School by the Federalist Society, a student group focused on the current state of the legal order. Duncan was shouted down by protesters and chastised by Stanford's Associate Dean of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, sparking a national debate around freedom of speech on college campuses.

Last year, distinguished universities like Emerson, Georgetown, Stanford, the University of Florida, and the University of North Carolina were ranked the worst for free speech in America by the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE).

The placement of these highly regarded universities on the rankings prompts a question: how can these schools prepare students to become positive members of society if their campus suppresses free speech?

The polarization on campuses follows the rise of polarization nationally. Americans are becoming further entrenched in their political and ideological opinions, leading to larger, more extreme reactions.

This phenomenon can be seen in Republicans ousting their party's Speaker of the House and the subsequent challenges in finding a replacement; the Jan. 6 attack on the Capitol building in 2021; and even social media's cancel culture.

[CONTINUED ON P 10]

By the Numbers

Recent snapshots of campus life



Photo by Rachel Freeman

29

PERFORMANCES

at the biannual Coffeehouse, ranging from original songs to choreographed dances to student bands.



Photo by Kayte Chan

7

JUMPSCARES

by students in the Halloween haunted house set up by Student Council



Photo by LiAnn Yim

729

DOLLARS

raised by the Latine Affinity group's food sale on Oct. 4 to donate to the Chicana Latina Foundation



Photo by Simone Summers

494

ATTENDEES

gathered at Nueva's Innovative Learning Conference from Oct. 26-27.



Photo by Jim Munzenrider

DRUMMING AWAY

The steel drum band performed at SF Jazz Center last November with Grammy-winner Tony Lindsay and steel pan virtuoso Robert Greenidge.

Preparing for a pan-tastic performance

Steel drum band gears up for end-of-semester showcase

By Ethan Huynh

In the morning hours of block 5, students will often hear a musical clanging of metal from the portables.

That's the sound of Nueva's steel drum band, dubbed "The Children of the Pan" by director Jim Munzenrider, rehearsing for their winter concert in Menlo Park.

The hour-and-a-half-long performance will take place on Sunday, Dec. 3 at 6 p.m. at the Guild Theatre, a seatless venue. The program features songs including Enrique Iglesias's "Bailando" and Lord Kitchener's "Bee's Melody."

The band will also be accompanying internationally known steel pannist Jeff

Narell, percussionist Marquinho Brasil, who used to tour with Mariah Carey, and guitarist Scott Sorkin. Tickets can be bought on guildtheatre.com.

Prior to the Steel Band's performance, several Nueva Upper and Middle School student bands, including those from the Groove Workshop and Jazz Band electives, will open and perform at the same venue from 1-4 p.m. Unlike the steel drum performance, these will be free to watch and audience members can drop in or out at any time.

"There will be well over 100 students performing throughout the day, so classmates, parents, teachers, come out and support!" said Munzenrider.

Photo of the issue



Photo by Rachel Dawson

WORLD OF ART

Students in Mixed-Media Art, Painting, and Advanced Studio Art electives, taught by Upper School art teacher Rachel Dawson, went on a field trip to the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art on Oct. 20.

A quest to reframe Quest

Structural changes to the independent, year-long project aim to make it more manageable

By Gabriel Bernstein

Quest is a unique undercurrent of each school year, but, as seen in prior years, are often easily buried on students' priority lists. Changes made to the self-led project this year, however, intend to make the process more approachable, according to Quest coordinator Sushu Xia.

Xia, who also teaches History at the Upper School, is running the Quest program for the first time. Much like students do for their own Quest projects, she has set a broad long-term goal.

"For some people, Quest is an afterthought of an afterthought," Xia said. "The biggest thing I'm hoping to change is to have people think about Quest as something that's fun and worth doing."

To help increase overall student enthusiasm from its current level, Xia has made an effort to reduce paperwork and recognize the variation in people's schedules over the course of a year. For tenth and eleventh graders, the major change is that rather than a monthly check-in form, each student now has their own Google Slide deck to update as they

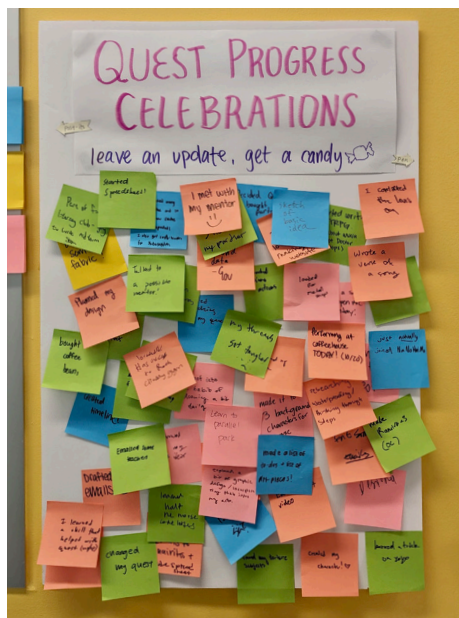


Photo by Gabriel Bernstein

POST-ITS & POSTERS

The wall outside the history pod is dedicated to Quest and populated with tips, tricks, ideas, and achievements.

move along on the project.

"Sometimes you have a month where you don't actually have time to do any quest things and then you have another month where you do a lot of quest stuff," Xia said.

Xia suggested that the accumulation of ideas, photos, and other artifacts in the slides will make it easier to produce final reflection videos when Quest Expo nears.

To help navigate time constraints, she is also trying to make more room for Quest during advisory and will host Quest workshop WoWs starting in December.

For freshmen, Xia has designed a series of mini-Quests, such as swapping hobbies with someone in their advisory, to introduce the concept of Quest and help students formulate project ideas. Any of these bite-size adventures can be extended into long-term pursuits, and, as of November, the ninth graders can formally commit to a full Quest.

With a more positive outlook on the choice that Quest offers, Xia hopes students can consider Quest in relation to other commitments differently than they have in the past.

"My ideal is to have students think about Quest as on par with their other extracurriculars," she said. She noted the bonus of having choice over what to do, which is not the case in all extracurriculars.

To create a little light-hearted fun out of relatable experiences and challenges with the project, Xia has been posting Quest-inspired memes in the main stairwell. "People seem to enjoy the memes, which I'm happy about," Xia said, and added that she is taking submissions.

It is still early on, but Xia has heard about some exciting project ideas so far. Some Quests she thinks should be worth-looking forward to include: writing a West Wing episode based on the Emmy-winning political drama, making Ms. Frizzle outfits inspired by the adventurous teacher from The Magic School Bus, breeding Indian mustard plants, making a crossbow, and learning to tune a piano.

The outcomes of it will depend on students' mentality, but the updated framework Xia has designed carries the potential to refresh the environment around Quest and change how students view the journey to Expo.

Newly digital PSAT revamps testing landscape

This October, sophomores and juniors took the first online PSAT

By Ellie Lin

Cami Yen '26 started the online PSAT 30 minutes late, due to a technical error with Bluebook. But it was all right, because she finished on the ending sections 20 minutes early, just as almost everyone else in the WRC did.

Last spring, the PSAT piloted an online version of the test, and this past month, the official changes made it to Nueva, and the rest of the US.

With the transition to digital tests, College Board is “working to address inequities”—as announced on the College Board press release—through a few, instrumental changes: fewer questions, more time per question, resources such as a built in Desmos calculator and a math formula reference sheet, and adaptive testing.

The first two measures are present in the entire test. It is designed so that most students have “at least seven minutes to spare on each section [because] it’s time we stop confusing quick with smart,” as David Coleman, College Board’s CEO, declared.

However, the testing resources and adaptive testing are Math section only measures. Test takers are all given the same first math module, and depending on their success at those problems, they can get an easier or more difficult math module. With the easier resulting math problems, there is a lower maximum math score they can get.

On Oct. 11, juniors took the official PSAT, while sophomores took an online practice PSAT that implemented many of the same changes. Students have diverging opinions on the online format’s equity and accuracy in representing the grasp kids actually have on the knowledge of the test.

In the 35 minute math sections, Yen pointed out the inclusion of Desmos, an online scientific calculator, as a resource that defeats the purpose of what this section is testing.

“You can now utilize a Desmos plug-in function to do the math problem for you,” Yen said. “It’s no longer about whether you know how to solve every problem.”

Anna Aganina '25 worried that Desmos could introduce less equity, instead of supporting it.

“Not everyone knows the software [or has the resources to] actually prepare for the Math section,” said Aganina.

The digital PSAT, at a glance:

106

JUNIORS

Took the online PSAT this year.

41

FEWER QUESTIONS

The online PSAT has 98 questions, compared to the previous test’s 139 questions.

31

MINUTES SHORTER

The online PSAT is 2 hours and 14 minutes, compared to the previous test’s 2 hours and 45 minutes.

The entire test evokes these questions of equity. Penelope Chung '26 noted the equity that could arise from the supposedly easier test, especially in regards to the resources gap in studying for the PSAT.

“I think the questions aren’t so hard that you have to really prepare,” said Chung.

Eric Wang '26 agreed, but wondered how an influx of higher scores would affect the curve.

“Everyone’s going to be at the top. I think that might make it kind of hard to make a standard,” said Wang.

Some students think adaptive testing is an important tool for such equity. By adapting to the test taker’s ability, it strengthens College Board’s attempt to “actually test your intellect,” as Charlotte Rosario '25 said.

However, Rosario enjoyed the actual experience of adaptive testing.

“I liked the comfort of starting out the first module with something pretty easy, and something I felt confident in, then gradually getting [to] that harder section,” Rosario said.

On the other hand, Cara Wang '25 noted the unclarity around how the adaptive

nature of the PSAT could affect her testing experience.

“It was undeniably a factor that made me feel less prepared going into the test,” said Wang.

Nate Bomze '26 agreed, and described the College Board’s decision to adopt adaptive testing as “incomplete.”

“[Testing data] is how we know the extent of huge education ramifications, [such as how the pandemic harmed] our educational system.” Bomze said. “If we lose this ability to compare academic performance [with past years], we lose this comparison for the future,” Bomze said.

The PSAT is not the only test moving online, and is a part of a larger push towards online, supposedly more equitable standardized testing. The ACT will begin to offer an online version of the test in December, and the SAT will be only online in 2024.

Rosario views these changes as an indication that standardized testing will become less and less important to the college application process. “In the end, the world is changing, and the SAT and the PSAT are probably gonna get less and less important.”

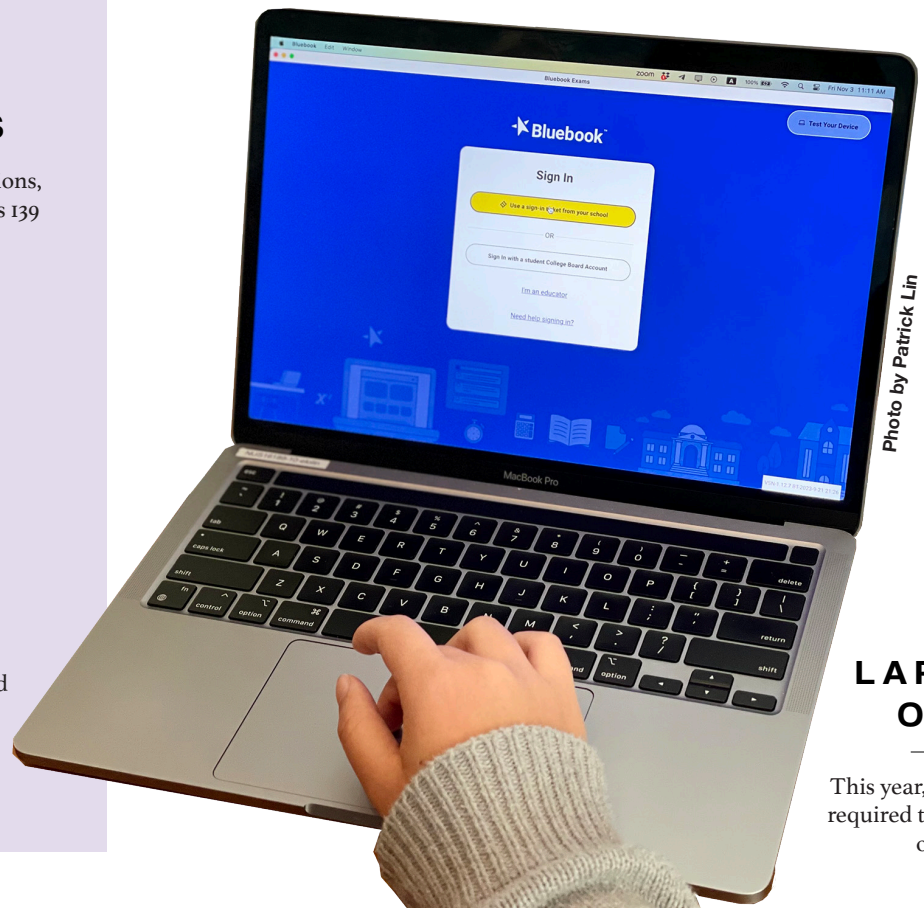


Photo by Patrick Lin

LAPTOPS OPEN

This year, all students are required to take the PSAT online.

PSA: Here’s what the “Attendance Summary” means

New Nexus system helps students and administration track attendance habits

By Kayla Ling

Upon opening the Nexus—Nueva’s new internal website—this fall, students were greeted with a large, unfamiliar subsection on the homepage. In the “Attendance Summary” section, students and parents will now see a record of students’ absences and tardies for any given class, further separated into “excused” and “unexcused” categories.

The Attendance Summary appears by default on the Nexus system, according to Upper School Master Scheduling & Academic Data Coordinator Kevin Dineen. But, lacking clarity or context from the administration about this new feature, rumors have swirled about the repercussions of tardies or absences.

However, Dean of Students Jackee Bruno and Dineen reassure students not to worry.

Currently, students should not expect any repercussions from the “unexcused tardies” or “excused tardies” they may accumulate on Nexus, according to

Dineen. The unexcused tardies occur when a student arrives to the class after it begins without informing their teachers in advance.

Dineen and Bruno believe that the “Attendance Summary” may help students avoid habits of tardiness and absences.

“Sometimes habits aren’t noticeable. Like, you don’t notice you bite your nails until you bleed,” Bruno said.

While there aren’t standardized

consequences for tardiness or absences, Bruno highlighted that for a student struggling academically or in a given class, the Wellness Team may consider an outstanding attendance record to understand how to best support the student.

“It’s not the end-all-be-all of their discussions. It’s just another piece of silverware that they can use to dig apart the meal,” said Dineen, continuing that a well-performing student with the

occasional tardy would not be affected by this practice.

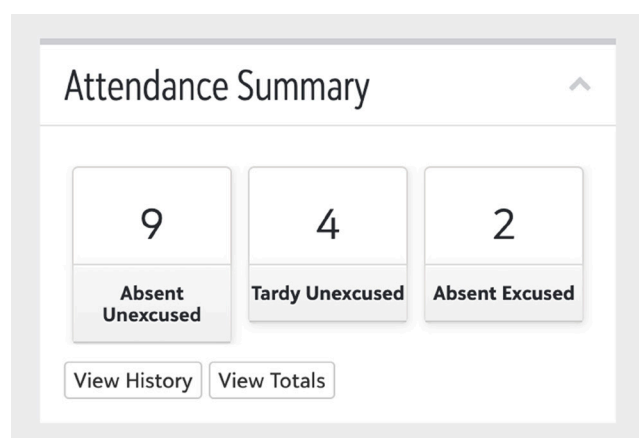
Additionally, school-wide attendance statistics can help the administration and Wellness Team identify problem-areas in the schedule and adjust school policies for accessibility. For example, continued trends of arriving late to mid-day classes might shift the duration of passing periods in coming years. Or, morning tardies could signal the need to work with Caltrain to adapt the A.M. train schedule.

Dineen and Bruno, on behalf of the administration, emphasized that supporting students is and always will be the core goal. If students have any remaining questions about attendance, Dineen and Bruno welcome them to simply ask.

“I want [students] to understand that they need to be in class on time because that’s what you need for education. And if there’s a reason that they can’t be on time, whether it’s mental health or logistics, they should speak on it,” Bruno concluded.

TRACKING TOOL

Students and parents can now view a detailed breakdown of tardies and absences by visiting the Nexus dashboard.



SF Mayor London Breed faces challenger ahead of 2024 election

Newcomer Daniel Lurie uses his mayoral bid to criticize Breed on her public safety record

By Gabe Hawkins & Jackson Hayward

After being elected in 2019 with 70% of the vote, San Francisco Mayor London Breed had already declared her 2024 re-election bid when political newcomer Daniel Lurie announced his campaign for mayor on Sept. 26.

An heir to the Levi Strauss clothing empire, Lurie has never held elected office, but founded a nonprofit in 2005 called Tipping Point Community, aiming to reduce poverty in the Bay Area. By granting funding for projects like the Chronic Homelessness Initiative, Tipping Point seeks to address the city's homelessness crisis by creating affordable housing units. Lurie believes that Tipping Point's nonprofit collaboration with the city government will parlay into effective policy-making in City Hall.

At the Potrero Hill community center where he launched his campaign, Lurie criticized Breed's record on public safety.

He recalled a time where he was chaperoning his two young children to school, and witnessed a man walking through the streets nude and screaming. This, Lurie said, was the catalyst for his mayoral bid.

"At that moment, I realized that we just had so much more work to do," said Lurie. "I couldn't just sit by as people are really mentally ill, living on the streets without care."

In line with his vision to promote public safety in San Francisco, Lurie advocates for increasing staffing in the San Francisco Police Department and bolstering its officer presence in high-crime areas like Chinatown and the Tenderloin. In tandem, he plans for more after-school programs and job training for at-risk youth, and specialized care units for mental health responses.

So far, Lurie's campaign has garnered early successes; following his first two weeks, he announced a \$230,000 fundraising haul.

These gains may be a broader reflection of

the city's overall satisfaction with Breed, who has faced ongoing media scrutiny for the city's public safety issues—June polling indicated a 66 percent disapproval rating. Also in June, the San Francisco Chronicle published an op-ed: 'London Breed is flailing, and San Francisco voters know it,' rebuking the mayor's unfulfilled promises to address the rising use of fentanyl in the Tenderloin neighborhood.

Contrasting media skepticism, Breed announced a controversial policy on Sept. 26 that mandates substance use screenings for individuals seeking welfare assistance, specifically the County Adult Assistance Programs (CAAP). The move drew significant criticism from progressives and homelessness advocates as a shift to the right for the Democratic mayor. Rather than combatting substance abuse itself, critics say that the policy demonizes San Francisco's homeless population. Meanwhile, the city's substance use programs are unable to take additional patients, presenting an additional stalemate.

With a ranked-choice election, San Franciscans will have the chance to cast their votes with multiple candidates across parties on Nov. 5, 2024, coinciding with the

presidential election.

While the main standoff seems to be between Lurie and Breed, another challenger, Ahsha Safai, announced his campaign in May. Safai, a member of the Board of Supervisors from the south of the city, has also focused on crime. A dearth of media traction has lessened his standing in the race, but June polling indicated he would win a head-to-head with Breed, a prediction that no longer holds substantial ground.



Photos by Mike Kuba (Lurie), Eric Risberg (Breed)

HEAD TO HEAD

Daniel Lurie (left) and London Breed (right) will face off in San Francisco's 2024 mayoral election, which takes place on Nov. 5, 2024.

WORD ON THE STREET

Faculty weigh in on the SF mayoral elections

"I'd love to see more of [Lurie's] concrete policies, such as what he intends to do with major issues like crime and homelessness; he isn't doing that right now."

— Chelsea Denlow
History teacher & San Francisco resident



"[Breed is] the incumbent holding office, but is also trying to emphasize the extent to which there has been a spike in crime. That's a difficult way to gain support."

— Simon Brown
History teacher & Oakland resident



"I get concerned when [Breed and Lurie] talk about increasing police presence. It's so unequally distributed, and just not where it matters."

— Alex Brocchini
History teacher & San Francisco resident



Photo by Martin do Nascimento

GOING GREEN

"We're not only doubling down, we're just getting started," Newsom said in a statement after signing the two climate bills.

Landmark state climate bills signed into effect

Governor Newsom passed new legislation that aims to increase corporate carbon transparency

By Natalie Lai

Critiques of the lack of corporate accountability in addressing climate change frequently circulate on news outlets and in political debates, but how much of a carbon footprint are large companies really contributing?

Californians will soon find out.

Several weeks after its approval by the California Legislature in September, Governor Newsom signed two landmark environmental bills into law on Oct. 7 as a part of the Climate Accountability Package, which aims to expand understanding of climate-related risks nationwide.

The laws, Senate Bill 253 and Senate Bill 261, will require all large companies that produce

or sell goods within the state to publicly disclose a breakdown of their carbon footprint, or scope 3 emissions, in detailed reports preliminarily set to begin in 2026.

The Senate Bill 253 requires companies with annual revenues over 1 billion dollars to report a wide range of direct and indirect carbon emissions such as emissions from global operations, supply chains, and even estimated emissions during a consumer's use.

Similarly, Senate Bill 261's biennial reports call for companies with annual revenues over 500 million dollars to report any financial risks that may come from climate change, such as the effects of a projected drought on agriculture output.

Supporters of this bill, the first of its magnitude in national history, hope it'll enhance transparency on corporate emissions to consumers and consequently encourage companies to adopt emissions reduction plans, according to PBS news.

However, with many companies against this policy, economists worry that companies will simply challenge the law in court, as many have successfully done in the past according to Financial Times.

Nevertheless, Newsom believes that this bill will be a game-changer for California and provide "full visibility" of the pollution created by Californian companies.

LGBTQ J-Pop star visits Queer Japan elective

Japanese singer Shinjiro Atae spoke with the class about his recent experience coming out as gay in the public eye

By Owen Yeh-Lee

On the edges of their seats, students erupted in cheers and formed heart shapes with their hands as Japanese pop star Shinjiro Atae stepped into frame on the projector screen.

On Oct. 2, Atae joined the Upper School Queer Japan elective via Zoom to discuss his experiences and challenges after coming out publicly as gay.

Atae debuted as a member of the wildly popular J-Pop group AAA in 2005, with eight of the band's songs reaching the Top 10 of the Billboard Japan charts. In 2016, he branched out as a solo artist and moved to Los Angeles.

During his conversation with the Queer Japan class, Atae described his shock upon seeing LGBTQ couples publicly display affection in the U.S., inspiring him to eventually come out as gay in July in front of 2,000 fans in Tokyo. On the same day, he released his song "Into the Light," an anthem of self-acceptance and perseverance, with a portion of the proceeds supporting LGBTQ organizations in Japan.

In a relatively conservative country like Japan, which is the only nation in the G7—a summit of seven industrialized, democratic countries—that has does not recognize same-sex marriage, such a public announcement is rare.

So, when Upper School Japanese teacher Chris Scott saw Atae's statement on Japanese news, he was "moved" to reach out to the singer via Atae's official website.

In his message, Scott described his personal connection to Atae's experience, as a gay man who grew up partially in Japan. He also recalled Atae's emphasis on youth empowerment in his speech and thought, "Why don't I ask if he'd be willing to speak to a bunch of high schoolers in the United States?"

To Scott's surprise, Atae's manager reached out a few weeks later and said that Atae would be happy to join the class for a brief virtual conversation. The entire encounter and process was "very serendipitous and lucky," Scott said.

The event took place on Oct. 2. Students

took turns asking questions, with Scott acting as an interpreter.

Brie Krikorian '24, who attended the talk, was pleasantly surprised at how "personable" and casual the conversation was.

"A lot of the time, you don't see public figures act outside of their little public bubble," she said, "so it was interesting to see that side of him. It gave me a wake-up call that celebrities are real people too."

Scott saw Atae's candid responses as a sign of relief after overcoming the difficult coming out process.

"He's not very guarded, unlike some other celebrities in Japan. I think he's more comfortable in his own skin, now that he's come out," Scott said. "This is something that I've felt in my own life and in my students' lives: when you come out, there's a huge load lifted off your shoulders and you're able to be your more true self."

One of Scott's favorite moments from the conversation was when Atae asked how many students in the class identified as LGBTQ. When nearly every student raised their hand, the singer responded, "Aw, you're my besties!", eliciting cheers and applause from the class.

"It was a really authentic moment. The fact that he felt so comfortable with us was special," Scott said. "He's new to the LGBTQ community, so for him to see that there were so many young

people in this class who also identify that way was, I think, very affirming."

Krikorian was also moved by the conversation; if she had not already been out, she said Atae's story "would have inspired [her] to come out."

"It was awesome to meet someone who had that much courage to come out so publicly," Krikorian said. "I know from personal experience how hard it can be to even come out to one single person."

Hana Jorgensen '27, who is half-Japanese, was especially inspired by Atae given the more conservative attitudes she has observed in Japan.

"I visit Japan every summer, so I see the little differences in culture. I definitely have to be more conscious of what I say and do there," Jorgensen said. "It was so brave for him to come out, because there's a cultural norm of not saying things like that in public."

For Scott, who has been with his husband for more than 20 years, hearing about the difficulties and emotions that Atae has been wrestling with after coming out brought back "painful but bittersweet memories."

"I look back on that time when I was in the closet, and part of me is still that boy, way back there," said Scott, who came out as gay after college. "Seeing [Atae] was almost seeing myself in a way."



Photo by Avex

TELLING HIS STORY

Shinjiro Atae (above) was one of the first major celebrities in Japan to come out publicly as LGBTQ.

At the conclusion of the session, Atae left the class with a final message of hope and resilience, translated through Scott: "You're just starting your lives. There may be hard times ahead, but don't give up. Surround yourself with people you trust. And, ultimately, love yourselves."

Scott hopes that students, whether part of the LGBTQ community or not, came away feeling "affirmed, supported, and celebrated" with those final words in mind.

"I think his messages are applicable to anybody. For my LGBTQ+ students in particular, I hope that they saw a role model who, at great risk to his own career, came out and did something very courageous," Scott said. "I hope that gives them a sense of courage that they, too, can overcome various obstacles in their lives."

I HEART YOU

Students in the Queer Japan class pose following the talk with Atae.



Photo by Chris Scott

Innovative Learning Conference unites educators

At the biennial event, world-renowned speakers discussed technology, education, and diversity

By Gabe Hawkins

At the Innovative Learning Conference (ILC), educators from across the country gathered on the Hillsborough and San Mateo campuses to reimagine the way schools facilitate learning. The first ILC since 2019, this year's conference boasted nearly 500 attendees and 34 outside presenters.

The conference spanned Oct. 26 and Oct. 27, with numerous workshops led by Nueva faculty and outside education professionals.

Sarah Koning, Nueva's Director of Environmental Citizenship and an ILC co-chair, worked with teachers and staff on the ILC committee to design the programming to hone in on themes of artificial intelligence, diversity, mental health, and belonging in classrooms.

"We focused on finding presenters that are on the cutting-edge of these fields and could offer [perspectives] on these ongoing conversations—be part of the zeitgeist," Koning said.

The format of ILC was reimaged by the committee this year to be less sprawling than it had been in years past, and aimed to provide attendees with practical ideas and teaching practices they could bring back home. The conference offered three "cornerstone conversations," a series of moderated conversations that delved into a timely theme.

The conference opened on Thursday with a panel featuring Instagram co-founder Kevin Systrom, co-director of Stanford's Human-Centered AI Institute Fei-Fei Li, and Disney and Procter & Gamble board member Amy Chang. They discussed the intersection of humans and technology called A New Age for Education: Where Human and Machine Learning Meet.

In another cornerstone lecture, several professionals from education nonprofits

and Stanford University—Deborah Cullinan, Cornelius Minor, Jenny Martinez, and Colin Seale—participated on a panel called Speak Up, Speak Now: Prioritizing Belonging in Our Schools.

In their talk, they emphasized mechanisms to increase support systems for students so that all feel a sense of inclusion.

In order to promote an interactive experience for attendees, the ILC team introduced randomly selected cohorts for presenters and faculty, encouraging educators from different institutions to gather and share insights from the workshops they visited.

"Sometimes you come to a conference and you're the only person from your institution there," noted Director of Alumni and Community Engagement Diana Chamorro, who served as a co-chair with Koning. "Our goal with the cohort model was to ensure all attendees experienced a welcoming and inclusive environment and had the opportunity to network with fellow participants in a structured opt-in format. Additionally, our goal with cohorts was for all attendees to be able to collaborate, brainstorm, and share ideas with one another," Chamorro said, observing that educators were engaging in intellectually stimulating conversations.

According to Meher Bhandari '24, who co-moderated the cornerstone conversation We're in this Together: Fostering Student Agency and Mental Health that featured Rob Evans,

Denise Pope, and Rosalind Wiseman, presenters fostered a collaborative atmosphere.

"It was clear that everyone really respected each other and had valuable ideas to contribute," Bhandari said. "Every presenter tried to amplify one another."

Similarly, Head of School Lee Fertig praised the conference for its depth of intellectualism and wide range of content covered.

"An event or conference like this brings out the best in the Nueva community. Someone told me that the level of intellectualism here is actually higher than what they're used to at most colleges," Fertig said.

Among the presenters themselves, a zest for learning was prevalent throughout.

"I'm having a hard time deciding what to go to. The quality of speakers and the kinds of topics offered are really great," said Denise Pope, a lecturer at the Stanford Graduate School of Education, in between sessions.



Photo by Simone Summers

READY TO LEARN

The conference welcomed nearly 500 attendees, ranging from educators to parents.

Pop Culture Report Card

By Gabe Hawkins

Our staff's celebrations and condemnations of the latest in pop culture



Photo by Getty Images

The Internet censure of Jada Pinkett Smith: **F**

The Smith saga was reignited last month when Jada Pinkett Smith announced that she and her husband Will Smith have been separated since 2016 in her new memoir *Worthy*. The book—which unsparingly sheds light on her raw and tumultuous marriage with Smith—has galvanized pop culture news. While I'm sick of seeing draconian indictments of her online, I'm equally sick of hearing about this controversy.



Photo by USWeekly

Sparks fly between Taylor and Travis: **A**

The biggest story in sports news is...you guessed it, Taylor Swift! Social media and gossip news outlets have been abuzz for the past two months, closing in on the intensely watched romance between Swift and football icon Travis Kelce. The fact that Taylor is able to achieve virality in football is a mere testament to her towering status in American pop culture.



Photo by Rolling Stone

The Sphere in Las Vegas...Why?: **C-**

On Sept. 29, the city of Las Vegas gained a new concert venue—or should I say a dome-shaped, virtual reality, vertigo-inducing hellscape? Think Imax but built for concerts and almost no reason at all. To really pack a punch, The Sphere hosted U2 as its inaugural residency—because nothing screams “dance like your life depends on it” like “With or Without You.”



Photo by CNN

Dwayne "The Wax" Johnson: **D-**

Madame Tussauds, the global wax museum empire, has come under fire for its Paris unveiling of Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson's new wax figure, which appears heavily whitewashed and harbors an unsettling yet striking resemblance to Mr. Clean. As resentment simmered on social media, Johnson himself hopped on the criticism train, commenting that he felt “low-key offended.” I could wax poetic for days about how bad this rendering is.

For Mitski, less is more

On *The Land is Inhospitable and So Are We*, a mature Mitski strips away synth pop for comforting loneliness and acceptance

By Milo Kofman

On the last night of her tour for her most popular album, *Be the Cowboy*, Japanese American indie pop singer Mitski announced she was quitting music indefinitely. In an interview with BBC, she said, “I got really scared because I could see myself caving in and being swept away by that current, and putting out music that I don't really care about.”

Despite claiming to quit, after a three year break, Mitski returned with *Laurel Hell*. The album received mostly positive reviews, but was criticized for its scattered nature and occasional overproduction. Released on Sept. 15, 2023, Mitski's most recent album, *The Land Is Inhospitable and So Are We*, remedies much of the issues with *Laurel Hell*. *The Land Is Inhospitable and So Are We* feels deeply personal, stripping down her music and lyrics to their fundamental core.

The synth-pop of some of her biggest hits like “First Love / Late Spring and Washing Machine Heart” is nowhere to be seen in her latest album. Mirroring her retreat from stardom, Mitski emphasizes a quieter type of maturity, reflecting on her more tender moments. The opening track and first single *Bug Like an Angel*, sets the tone for the album. The hauntingly sparse instrumental allows her lyricism to shine as she sings, “As I got older, I learned I'm a drinker / Sometimes a drink feels like family,” before a resonant and stark echo encompasses her as she repeats “family.” This juxtaposition of the hollow instrumental and the full echo paints Mitski as simultaneously alone and surrounded. She describes the addictive nature of this comfort, comparing it to alcohol. Yet she still indulges in it regardless, with recognition.

The following double header of singles, “Star” and “Heaven”, continues the album's theme of the complicated way Mitski loves, staring up into the unreachable and eulogizing a lost relationship. On “Star” she sings, “That love is like a star / It's gone, we just see it shinin' / 'Cause it's traveled very far.” While still carrying an underlying melancholy, there is a beauty to this lost love, and a simplicity in looking back on it and seeing the way relationships change.

Her final single of the album, “My Love Mine All Mine”, quickly became one of her biggest hits, becoming Mitski's first Billboard Top 100 entry, as well as becoming the number one song on the TikTok Billboard Top 50 for three weeks. This song emphasizes the quiet confidence seen throughout the album, repeating “Nothing in the world belongs to me / But my love, mine, all mine, all mine.”

As a whole, the album perfectly toes the line between being repetitive of past work and something completely foreign. Mitski maintains her metaphorical and spiritual lyricism, complicated relationships, and touching vocal performance, but with

MINE ALL MINE

Upon release, the album was critically acclaimed, receiving a five-star review from *The Guardian*, which described it as “straightforward melodic power.”

a maturity unseen in previous works. Juxtaposing her previous albums that were rife with desperation, sadness, and anger, *The Land Is Inhospitable* is a venture into acceptance. Despite the lonely nature of the vocal center and sparse backing, featured most prominently in *I Don't Like My Mind*, the album has a unique human warmth to it. Perhaps best emphasized in *My Love Mine All Mine*, she is reconciling with the convoluted act of loving, including the inevitable loss and emptiness that comes with it.



Photo by Ebru Yildiz

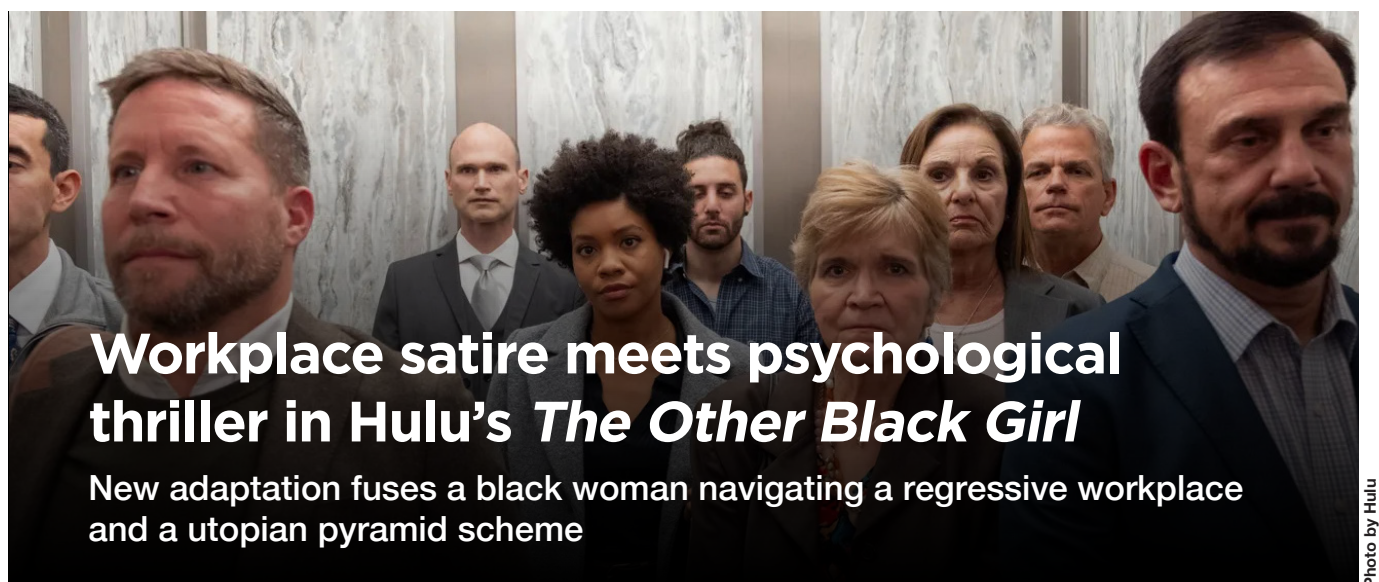


Photo by Hulu

Workplace satire meets psychological thriller in Hulu's *The Other Black Girl*

New adaptation fuses a black woman navigating a regressive workplace and a utopian pyramid scheme

By Gabe Hawkins

Warning: this article contains spoilers.

I'm beyond sick of cherished novels being adapted into high-budget television series. Nothing matches the cringe-inducing sensation of watching an immaculate narrative being butchered into a shell of its namesake. That is why I was shocked by how much I loved Hulu's adaptation of Zakiya Delilah Harris' 2021 novel *The Other Black Girl*.

The explosive narrative chronicles Nella (Sinclair Daniel), a black editor working at the Manhattan-based Wagner publishing company. Beleaguered by her demanding work schedule and micro-aggressive supervisor Vera (Bellamy Young), she is delighted when Wagner hires a black woman named Hazel (Ashleigh Murray) to occupy her neighboring cubicle.

An immaculate code-switcher, Hazel skyrockets up the corporate rankings at Wagner—bribing her way into the good graces of her white co-workers by radiating an agreeable aura and bringing pastries to work—but ultimately becomes an enigma to Nella. As the story progresses, Nella

is bombarded with notes imploring her to “leave Wagner now,” and is covertly informed by a stranger that Hazel may not be who she says she is. What she ultimately uncovers is Hazel's involvement in a cultic network that clones black people into agents of corporate success, compromising their psychological functioning through a mystical hair gel. With a decorated black novelist (Garcelle Beauvais) and the CEO of Wagner (Eric McCormack) serving as ringleaders, the cult incorporates a multi-tiered structure of affinities and offers the chance for its members to be liberated from racism and misogynoir. As a black woman suffering through the banality of corporate life, Nella is the perfect victim of their clandestine scheming.

Though the show dabbles in fantastical elements and errs on the side of melodrama, its kaleidoscopic breadth of socio-cultural themes is the perfect antidote to the plot's extravagance. Like the novel, the series unsparingly excoriates the culture of casual racism in publishing circles. It also calls into question the wider legitimacy of corporate commitments to diversity and inclusion, not just through the CEO's involvement with the cult but also in the apathy toward diverse stories within Wagner's clientele.

As an enthusiast for psychological thrillers, I admired how the series traversed themes of horror through a more intellectual lens. I found myself recalling Jordan Peele's canonical *Get Out*, which explores the complexities of interracial coupling through a sinister psychological premise.

The narrative storyline also closely parallels its source material, up until the very end, in which it carves out a more empowering ending for Nella. Rather than honoring Nella's fate in the book, where she succumbs to Hazel's coaxing and takes the hair gel, Hulu's Nella practices espionage on the cult to unravel it internally. In a world of content where showrunners sloppily rewrite the text, encapsulated perfectly by the ample liberties taken in series like Hulu's *Little Fires Everywhere* and Max's *Station Eleven*—*The Other Black Girl* presents the rare occasion in which the narrative is significantly improved by a slight change to the book.

To all viewers seeking a delightfully entertaining and refreshingly clever binge, I invite you to look no further than Hulu's *The Other Black Girl*. You can even prepare by drinking a hot cup of tea and curling up with Harris' novel.

Amateur A-lister?

The media's blurring of the line between influencer and celebrity is destroying our culture



Photo by Noam Galia

By Jordan Fong

At the Met Gala, numerous high-profile celebrities walked the red carpet, such as Timothee Chalamet, Billie Eilish, ... and *NikkieTutorials*?! This unexpected influencer appeared posing and smiling for cameras in between established A-listers.

In today's digital age, almost everyone is on social media and the lines between traditional celebrities and influencers have become increasingly confusing. This ongoing rise of fame and influence has generated controversy about whether or not influencers should be considered celebrities. Spoiler alert: they shouldn't. The rapid rise of influencers has had a huge impact on our culture, and it has been largely detrimental.

As we have historically thought, celebrities attained fame through years of dedication and hard work in fields such as acting, singing, or sports. They undergo strict training, continually honing their talents and skills, which are displayed for us to consume and critique. The work put out by celebrities is held to a certain standard. Most celebrities have songs that are ranked on the billboard chart and movies that move up and down the box office, with critics judging their talents.

This is just not the same for influencers. Famous TikTokers usually gain around one million or more followers and create content of beauty, dances, gaming, etc. They are held to a much lower standard

but still are getting the same treatment as celebrities and they shouldn't be getting this kind of treatment.

Many influencers have risen to fame quickly through social media platforms, going viral for dumb things like short dances, harmful prank videos, and other random cringy content, and only done for the sake of views. Most influencers tend not to uphold this fame for very long because the sole purpose of their videos is to gain clout and go viral.

Influencers are contributing to the destruction of our cultural values by weakening the prestige associated with events like the Met Gala. The Met Gala has long been considered a gathering of A-list celebrities from the worlds of fashion, music, and film. The sight of renowned figures like Rihanna, Zendaya, and Justin Bieber on the Met Gala's red carpet has, for many, become interchangeable with the highest level of the entertainment industry. However, it has made me so enraged to see influencers like Addison Rae, Charli D'Amelio, and James Charles walk the same red carpet as my favorite A-list celebrities because I think they are absolutely not in the same category.

Artists like Taylor Swift are famous and known for being musically talented. However, influencers like Addison Rae, Charli D'amelio, and Dixie D'amelio have also released music. And here's where their lack of talent is glaring: music released by influencers has failed

OUT OF PLACE

YouTuber Emma Chamberlain walks the red carpet at the 2021 Met Gala.

to chart due to poor lyrics and unskilled vocals. They've also started to break into movies—Rae, who performed in *He's All That*, was noticeably lacking emotion and depth which took away from the character and had a significant impact on the movie's overall experience.

Yet influencers like Paige Niemann, an irrelevant Ariana Grande look-alike, continue to be invited to appear at events like Paris Fashion Week. During the show, Niemann's walk down the runway was...alarmingly bad. The rise of social media influencers introduced a new dynamic in our cultural landscape, but influencers are expanding too far into industries they aren't qualified for. Influencers who went viral and are now "famous" diminish the standards that celebrities should be put up to. Influencers associated with high-profile fame are ruining our definition of celebrities.

I don't think influencers can ever fully replace celebrities. While they are a good marketing tool because they are currently trending, they still, aren't on the same level as traditional celebrities. Influencers are popular, but they aren't able to maintain this popularity and fall off at a certain point.

Fall Coffeehouse celebrates community talent

Students, faculty, families turned out to show their support for the arts at the biannual showcase

By Niam Kaul

The Upper School Dean of Students dancing to a K-pop song, an I-Lab teacher singing a song from the early 2000s, and students performing original pieces were all featured in this year's fall Coffeehouse.

For the first time in the event's history, it took place on the same night as a parent social and Grandparents and Special Friends Day.

"The grandparents and families being invited this year made the entire event feel more special," performer Ava Jalali '26 said. "It made me feel more connected to the Nueva community, especially beyond just the people I see at school every day."

Many of the students who attended the event were there to support their friends and classmates who took to the stage.

"I saw my friends practicing nonstop every day before the show and it was really nice to see their hard work pay off," Connor Huh '26 said.

The event is beloved by students as it is a way to connect and bond together as a community.

"Coffeehouse is such an important event for our community because it showcases how much we can come together to support each other," attendee Ayaan Masud '26 said.

The event provides community



Photo by Rachel Freeman

members with the unique opportunity to showcase their talents and approach performing in front of a live audience on a small scale.

"I really enjoyed how the audience felt involved in every performance—for some of the more well-known songs, everyone would sing along, and each act would end with tons of applause."

Coffeehouse is not only fun for the audience but the performers as well as they get to showcase their hard work and art to the rest of the community.

"It was super amazing to perform at Coffeehouse! As a member of the Nueva

SPOTLIGHTS ON

Aura Mukherjee '24 and I-Lab teacher Morgan Snyder teamed up on a performance of "Unwritten" by Natasha Bedingfield.

Notes, it felt special to be able to share what we had been working on for the first (almost) half of the semester," Jalali said when speaking on the experience as a performer.

This event has already left students wanting more, "I can't wait for the spring performance" Huh said. Be sure to attend the spring Coffeehouse on March!

A sense of team spirit and creative sensibilities

With a mere six weeks of rehearsal, the Upper School production of *Sense and Sensibility* delivered fun and camaraderie

By Ellie Lin

Empire waist dresses, tailed coats, and tan trousers—the costumes of *Sense and Sensibility* are a dramatic Regency-era dream. Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* is not as dramatic, favoring spartan dialogue and descriptions. The annual Nueva fall play, which utilizes the Kate Hamill version of the play, refuses to be so austere, far beyond the realm of costumes.

There is bare, emotional dialogue that lets the pure talents of Jay Cooper '24 and Mariana Marhefka '25 shine through, who play the titular Dashwood sisters, Elinor and Marianne, respectively. Yet, in the next scene, brilliantly ridiculous characters like the Gossips, the meddling aristocrats of England, appear with a flap of a feathered fan and a simpering glance. It has serious, stiff scenes, yet can be grand and silly in others.

Every year, the play is chosen through a group vote after a few weeks of a workshopping process. Actors can try the different characters and English accents that vary from frivolous to delicate. The process culminates in informal performances of whatever plays are the choices, and discussions, before the final vote.

"It's a very communal process," said Sophie Druskin '24, who played Sir John and is a part of the costume team. "Our director, Zoe, leaves it in our hands. [She says] it's your choice, let's do something fun!"

Sense and Sensibility is a fun and fast-moving play, covering the love affairs of the two Dashwood sisters. The show shifts between the fancy Sussex estate Norland Park, the comfortable Devonshire Barton Cottage, and the glorious London party scene. Though there are stage managers, there are only four members in the stage crew. Instead, the actors join different tech teams: costumes, sets, props, and more. Actors fluidly move chairs towards and beds behind purple curtains with a swish of their coat tails and billowing skirts—chosen from the costume vault across the street from school.

"We think a lot about the ambiance. For each scene, stock photos [were found], and we tried to imagine the set that would fit the vibe," said Livie Phan Fields '26, who played Lady Middleton, a Gossip, an Assistant Director, and is also on the set team.

As an Assistant Director, Phan Fields watches scenes and "makes notes for little things that could change."

These notes, among others, are discussed at the beginning of each rehearsal before the actors dive into rehearsing, however, whether they take these notes into account is always their choice. In the short period the actors had to put on the show—six weeks, due to Director Zoe Swenson-Graham's maternity leave—the actors played with different creative choices, sometimes soliciting and listening to these notes, and sometimes coming up with their own.

"It's been a really, really wonderful experience to see how they've banded together and worked through this challenging timeline," said Swenson-Graham.



Photo by Damien Marhefka

GOSSIP GIRLS

Sisters Elinor and Marianne, played by Jay Cooper '24 and Mari Marhefka '25, discuss romantic endeavors.

New street mural celebrates San Mateo's diversity

Spanning First to Third Avenue, the downtown installation, created by artist Rafael Blanco, aims to highlight the city's intertwining cultures

By Gabriel Bernstein

It was midday on a Saturday, and Rafael Blanco and his team were at work bringing a new mural to life. Outdoor seating areas, the Cinemark Theater entrance, and ambient music made up the background. Blanco knelt down to complete a yellow triangle with his paint roller, executing one detail of a much larger composition.

The colorful, interwoven patterns of a ground mural now enhance the South B Street Pedestrian Mall in the heart of downtown San Mateo.

In June, the City Council selected Blanco's proposal, entitled Cultural Pattern, for its Racial Equity Art Project, which was initiated three years prior in the summer of 2020. Blanco then worked with the Civic Arts Committee on finalizing the design, and completed the mural itself in October. The formal unveiling took place on Oct. 28.

The design by artist Blanco is meant to represent and celebrate many different cultures while unifying them all together.

"This is beautifying the place, meaning that it's giving some vibrancy and some color. It influences how we feel, how we are," Blanco said of the piece's impact.

His murals are usually very realistic and include human figures, but this one is abstract because he felt its meaning should be left more open. Blanco researched artistic patterns from cultures around the world and incorporated them into the mural, but he also wanted to include overlaps and allow for interpretation.

The patterns "may be tied with specific cultures, but at the same time, there is enough ambiguity for different kinds of people to feel represented with those designs," he said. "I was trying to celebrate our differences at the same time as unifying."

The artwork will also be treated as part of the street rather than a view-only exhibition. Blanco called it "interactive and immersive," as people can walk on it and essentially be in the artwork.

Blanco traveled from the Chicago area, where he currently lives, for this project. He did live in the Bay Area for seven years, and was familiar with San Mateo, but did not "live the street" like he has in the past few months. When working on a mural, he immerses himself in the setting.

"I'm really into site specific work, which means that I study the place, and I think: What can I do that is unique for that wall,



Photo by Kayla Ling

B STREET BLOOM

Rafael Blanco and crew make progress on the Third Avenue end of the mural.

for that street, for that ground, that is going to be a gift or something special for that community?" Blanco said.

The street mural, in Blanco's view, suits the surrounding environment. "Here in San Mateo, you hear many different languages, right? So it definitely goes with the place, trying to unify all those different cultures together," he said.

Blanco usually works by himself, but for this two-block-long installation, he brought a team along with him: his sister Ana, his father-in-law Faustino, and Victor Sanchez, a close friend he met at Saint Mary's College of California.

The community has given Blanco's art a warm reception.

"It looks like a tapestry," pedestrian Kevin Cheng said during a Sunday afternoon visit to downtown. "My kid obviously likes it,"

he added, as his son danced around on the mural. It seems to be a source of fascination for many kids, who can be found absorbed in the patterns or making their own versions of hopscotch using the different shapes.

Restaurants on South B Street have also treated Blanco and his team to lunch, and employees wave hello to them as they work on the mural.

Blanco began his career as a classical studio artist, but transitioned to public art after his experience at the 24-Hour Reno Mural Marathon in 2014. Since then, his artwork has been commissioned around the country. The theme of diversity is a common thread in all his murals.

Earlier this year, after finishing a mural in Elmhurst, just outside Chicago, he gave a TEDx Talk about his career path and love for public art. He highlighted how murals

transform a site's appearance and are freely visible to anyone, as well as how creating them allows him to attach a meaningful social purpose to his passion for painting.

"I understand public art as a public service, a gift to the community," Blanco said in his speech.

He tied that sentiment to his newest mural. "This is not mine. Once it's done, this is left for the people of San Mateo to enjoy," Blanco said. "It's owned by anyone here in the city."

On your next trip to downtown San Mateo, consider accepting Blanco's invitation.

"It's fun to walk on. The art is very vibrant," said passerby Sally Rong. "I've seen it before the art piece was here and thought it looked kind of boring. I think this will encourage more pedestrians to go on it."

A Visit to Bowl-ingame Avenue

Modern health-food mania meets the ultimate customization experience at Palmetto Superfoods

By Josie Belfer

San Mateo County used to be packed with frozen yogurt (Froyo) establishments. There was Yogurtland, Yogurtouille, Yumi Yogurt, Happy Yogurt, Snowee Yogurt, and Blush Organic Frozen Yogurt, to name a few.



In recent years, however, all of the stores above have closed their doors as the frozen yogurt trendiness (and accessibility once Covid limited self-serve business models) tanked. Now, a fresh frozen delight is poised to seize the empty spotlight: superfood bowls.

Among the growing population of superfood bowl—also known as acai bowl—stores in the Bay Area, one star shines the brightest. That superstar is none other than Palmetto Superfoods, whose most

recent location replaced the popular frozen yogurt store, Yogurtland, (RIP) just one block away from Burlingame Avenue.

Step into Palmetto's Burlingame location, and one will discover beanbags and beanbag-inspired tables scattered over the floor, boosting the shop's laid-back, yet stylish ambiance. These modern touches, however, are quickly offset by a massive accent wall depicting a rainforest—a nod to the store's Brazilian roots.

The store's decor mimics much of what the original founders set out to create when Palmetto started, in terms of combining traditional acai flavors with modern customization mania.

Palmetto's story began in 2015, when San Francisco native Charles Lee discovered a Brazilian restaurant called Café de Casa. He fell in love with the restaurant, and his favorite dish of all was the traditional Brazilian açai bowl. After becoming a regular customer and close friend of the owners, he began brainstorming a restaurant concept that combined traditional açai and other Brazilian-inspired superfoods, and thus

Palmetto was born.

Simply glance behind Palmetto's counter, and one will discover customization heaven. Every kind of fresh fruit, oat, nut, seed, flake, or natural sweetener imaginable lies behind the glass. No need to worry about navigating the intricacies of bowl customization in front of another person, as you will never interact with a cashier at all; the entire process of ordering and personalizing a bowl is managed via an iPad.

So, before ordering, what exactly is a superfood bowl? The most famous type of superfood bowl is obviously the acai bowl. But Palmetto's claim to fame is its options: the store offers over five kinds of other superfood bases for the bowls, including matchacado, blue chia seed, tropical spirulina, cafezinho, and warm oat.

Will Palmetto's blend of modern and traditional flavors outlive the trend cycle and emerge as a permanent staple of dessert fame? Only time will tell.



Photo by Josie Belfer

DAILY BOWLING

Palmetto Burlingame sits about one block away from Burlingame Ave.



Photo by Joy Feng

From the classroom to the field

Teachers who coach sports teams reflect on their parallel roles

By Jackson Hayward

Nueva teachers are usually found at their desks, clustered together in pods at the Upper School campus. But, sometimes, they may be found at fields, courts, or pools. Some sports teams at Nueva are run by a teacher, who is sometimes the only full-time coach for the team. As a result, teacher coaches hold a unique position, contributing both to students' athletic and academic experiences.

I-Lab teacher Morgan Snyder started coaching swim last year. As the swimmers didn't have a full-time coach, she agreed to head the team. Their spring season that year was a successful one: the girls team placed seventh in the league and the boys team came fourth.

Teacher-coaches usually have backgrounds in the sports they are coaching: Snyder has been swimming since she was five years old and is currently a competitive open-water swimmer. Assistant cross country coach David Eik has been running since high school. While other coaches had been approached to take on a coaching role, Eik, who is new this year as an associate biology teacher, actively sought it out.

"One of the things that drew me to

education was the holistic way you can be involved with students and their learning, both academically and athletically," said Eik.

Teacher-coaches often bring an approach to coaching a team similar to the way they'd teach a class.

"When I teach in a classroom, I introduce you to a concept, have you explore that concept, and then I ask you to apply it," explained computer science teacher Wes Chao. Chao has coached Ultimate Frisbee at Nueva since 2020, but it only became an official school sport this year. "It's the same way in frisbee: we talk about how a drill works, we run it in practice, and then we apply it to our games."

At the same time, the competitive and team-based nature of athletics can require coaches to take a more direct approach. Snyder described herself as being "more tough" as a coach than as a teacher.

"I expect you to show up for the workouts and put in the time because it is a team sport, not just your own intellectual journey. In the classroom, if you let me down, you're just letting yourself down; but in the pool, you're letting the team down," Snyder explained.

Some teacher coaches will have students both in their class and on their team. It

provides a unique opportunity to build a strong bond with that student. Snyder notes the way she can connect with her swimmers is valuable at a "relational school" like Nueva.

"With the amount of time I get to spend with my swimmers, getting to know them as people, [the relationship is] so much deeper than what you get in the classroom," Snyder said. "When I know a student as an athlete also, I'm a double advocate for them—I'm interested not only in helping them learn computer science, but also in helping them invest in this lifelong sport which I also love."

For Chao, seeing students in different contexts is very valuable to building a working relationship with a student that allows them to grow.

"Our relationships as humans are defined by what we know about each other. The more I get to see you in different contexts, times, and situations, the more our relationship will be changed," Chao said.

Beyond the relationship with individual students, Snyder has observed a broader impact on her relationship with the school community.

"I never could have predicted how much I loved it and how much it enhanced my teaching by giving me a stronger sense of community at the school," said Snyder.

After taking on the swim team, Snyder started spending five to eight hours a week at the pool, with practice often going until 8 p.m. She reached out to former coaches of hers for advice and needed a lot of time to design workout sets. Some of her swimmers were already swimming competitively, while others had "never dove off a block." This added workload made it a challenge to also prepare for her classes.

Snyder said team parents—in particular her parent co-coach—were key in making it easier to balance the team with her classes. For Eik, who is only a couple months into his job, that balance has yet to emerge.

"There are definitely days when I wish I had more time and energy to devote to classroom preparation and other days I wish I had more energy to show up to cross country practice with," said Eik.

Chao noted that while opportunity costs are inevitable, coaching a sport and teaching a class deliver the same impact for the school: creating more possibilities for students.

"Both with coding and with ultimate, I'm offering a student an opportunity to do something that they otherwise might not be able to do, something that I think is valuable," Chao said.

"We the Seniors..."

The Class of 2024's "Senior Bill of Rights" sets guidelines for discourse around the college process

By Gabe Hawkins

Since the Upper School's inception, seniors have been proactive about framing discussions about college with teachers and families. In 2018, twelfth graders hosted a roundtable discussion to create guidelines around wearing college-braced caps and gowns. In 2021, seniors created a mosaic of rejection letters adjacent to the Writing and Research Center, colloquially termed the "Wall of Rejection."

This year, seniors penned a list of guidelines called the Senior College Bill of Rights, continuing a longstanding tradition of honoring their own autonomy when discussing their academic futures.

12th-grade StuCo representative Kelly Poon '24 was part of a smaller cohort of seniors who took on the project of organizing the list, collating responses from each advisory into cohesive sections. Creating a grade-wide pact allowed students to take a collective stance on how families should broach the topic of college.

"It's hard to go up to your parents and give them a list of things you want. So let's make it a little bit easier," Poon said.

Poon also emphasized the need for "more forward guidelines" for how families interact with seniors regarding the college process, and particularly, less invasive input.

One pithy rule directed toward parents outlines this priority in the plainest form: "We (students and families) are not applying to college (even though we thank you very much for paying for it)."

While parent-facing guidelines are essential, School I-Lab teacher and 12th-grade dean Morgan Snyder hopes that the scope of the Bill of Rights will extend beyond student-adult interactions.

"It's just one piece of the work that needs to be done around framing conversations about college," Snyder said. Noting "asymmetry between friend groups" in students' general bandwidth to confront those discussions, Snyder added that a respective document for interactions between students may be helpful in the future.

Noor Zarrinagar '24, who also participated in the creation of the Bill of Rights, emphasized that this sensitivity should also extend to peers.

"It's important to be mindful that your friends may not want to talk about it or don't feel comfortable," she said.

From the faculty-facing side, the college counseling team has long been proactive about championing learning over college outcomes. In order to parlay these values into the college track, the counseling team employs a holistic approach.

Instead of prescribing courses curated to quixotic college pipelines, counseling gives students the agency to take charge of their learning.

"We try to let students prescribe and then we go 'Now with what you've given us these are the schools that might be a good fit for you,'" said College Counseling Operations Manager Erika Rojas.

Director of College Counseling Gavin Bradley echoed the notion that college should not overshadow students' high school academics.

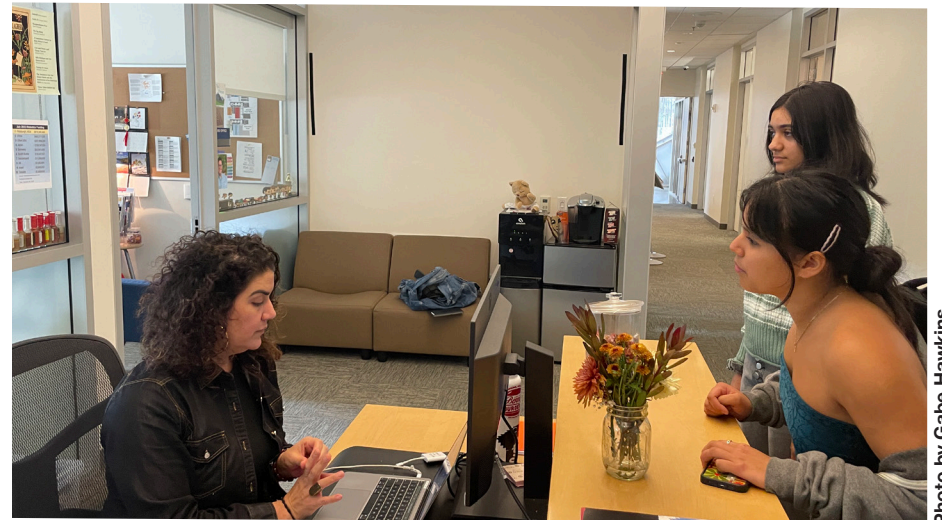


Photo by Gabe Hawkins

"I don't want to live in a world where a ninth grader needs to know what they want to do for the rest of their life," he said.

Instead, Bradley stressed that Nueva's academic flexibility allows students to "be plastic and evolve and develop."

Nonetheless, Zarrinagar reflected that intense academic pressure is pervasive within the wider school community, and identified that this pressure may start as early as freshman year.

"Seeing where people go [to college], you feel like you have to live up to that," she said.

This idea was broadly reflected in the Bill itself, with certain guidelines urging adults to remove the binaries of "good" and "bad" colleges, and others demanding that they don't "feed into the stigma of the Ivys."

Associate Dean of College Counseling Paul Gallagher added that due to Nueva's impressive roster of graduate admissions, the school can become a breeding ground for comparison, which he dubbed as the "thief of joy." Moreover, since "previous generations of Nueva students have attended great colleges," he stressed that "falling hard on the heels" of those graduates can become burdensome.

ON THE GRIND

Seniors chat with Rojas at her desk outside the college counseling offices.

For that reason, Gallagher praised the efforts of the senior class in upholding boundaries around this process: "It seems reasonable and essential and humane for the school to create some space for each class to talk to each other about how they want to handle that."

Ultimately, Samara Bainton '24, another collaborator in the student cohort, acknowledged Nueva's widespread academic pressure but emphasized the abundant support systems available at the Upper School.

"It can often feel at this school like everyone is amazing at something, and it's hard not to measure yourself up against that. At the end of the day though, despite these unique pressures we also have an incredible support network of people that want to see us all succeed," she said.

When free speech carries a

As free speech on college campuses becomes a contentious subject, community members examine civil discourse at Nueva

By Ellie Kearns & Aaron Huang

[CONTINUED FROM P 1]

In fact, for Isabel Chambers '20, a junior at Boston University, "cancel culture" is the biggest barrier to speaking on controversial topics. When asked in late October by a Boston Globe reporter to comment on a viral video of a Boston University student tearing down pro-Israel posters on campus, Chambers and her friend declined.

"It seems like no matter what you say, you're always going to have someone angry with your response," Chambers said.

Moreover, Chambers expressed concern for future employment should she share her views on the controversy.

"We've seen so many people that have been shunned from certain job opportunities," said Chambers. "While we have our own opinions, it wouldn't be the best decision to outwardly join in protest."

With the threat of violence, ostracism, and public censure, free speech on college campuses (not the sole locations for this phenomenon, but major recipients of media attention) is losing its freeing qualities.

With the majority of Nueva students transitioning to college after their graduation, how does the upper school prepare its students to interact with foreign opinions once they graduate?

For Willow Yang '21, the shift from Nueva to the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, where she is currently a junior, was "jarring."

"In terms of political stances, Nueva is extremely homogeneous," she said. "I wasn't exposed to opinions that were vastly different from my own."

In college, encountering perspectives she had not formerly been exposed to compelled her to provide justifications for previously unexamined beliefs.

"[This experience] put me on this path of

questioning previously held positions and coming to more justifiable, and more robust reasonings for them," she said. "At the end of the day, not many of my positions have changed, but I think that they've developed nuances that are really important when having productive discussions."

Yang is an Agora Fellow for the UNC's Program for Public Discourse, a space designed for students to engage in collaborative discourse. During regular meetings, undergraduate students dissect current issues using several discursive models such as dialogue, debate, and critical reflection. Yang attends conferences with the program, organizes events on campus, and has spent time reflecting on political or ideological divisions and the role of civil discourse.

"I think that we get mired in these false dichotomies of political and ideological leanings: Republican or Democrat; Israel or Palestine; pro-diversity or anti-diversity," she said. "In order to understand people who disagree with us, we have to get rid of those dichotomies, because the reality of the situation is that everything is multi-dimensional. Everything's an intersection of infinite axes of considerations."

As students graduate and matriculate to colleges across the country, they are exposed to a broad array of lived experiences and opinions. But what happens on Nueva's campus?

II. CIVIL DISCOURSE AT NUEVA

In characteristic Nueva fashion, the mascot of the Maverick was created by then-freshman Audrey Wong '17 for her Quest project, allowing the school to mature from the original "wave" mascot

as it opened its doors to upper school students.

The new mascot paid

homage to the original "wave" with the horse's mane modeling an ocean's current. "Maverick" can be found in striking letters across the upper school gym floor, written in bold across sweatpants, and defined on students' shirts: "mav-er-ick / mav(ə)rik/ (n): a lone dissenter, such as an intellectual, an artist, or leader, who takes an independent stance."

As conversations about civil

"We've heard anecdotally from parents that sometimes kids can't feel like they're exactly who they want to be in the context of that intellectual discussion."

LEE FERTIG

discourse reach an all-time high across college campuses, considering the students to be mavericks is contributing to this wider discussion.

Last year, students, teachers, and parents completed a survey that was later used to analyze the status of Nueva and inform future goals for the school. Approximately 85% of current students and 78% of current employees were represented. Of that group, 62% of students reported feeling a sense of belonging within the community and claimed that they can be "their authentic selves at Nueva."

However, the most concerning statistic to the administration was that 65% of students do not feel comfortable expressing their views at Nueva and do not see Nueva as a cohesive community.

"This particular challenge somewhat reflects larger trends in society in general, including at most other schools and universities," Head of School Lee Fertig shared in the survey results presentation with parents and faculty members on Oct. 23. "We've heard anecdotally from parents that sometimes kids can't feel like they're exactly who they want to be in the context of that intellectual discussion."

Alex Wagonfeld '24, who joined Nueva in pre-kindergarten, feels that Nueva's culture occasionally causes obstacles in discourse.

"If you don't express what we view as the 'commonly accepted' views, I feel like there's an environment that is pushing back on those ideas [that deviate from the established belief system]," he said.

Upper School Division Head Liza Raynal echoed his sentiment, highlighting an established belief system unconsciously accepted by the community.

"I think we are all fish swimming in a very particular water right now," she said. "I think the very particular water that we swim in politically and culturally says that there are a set of beliefs that are okay to have and a set of beliefs that are not okay to have."

To History teacher Tom Dorrance, this cultural and ideological orthodoxy of the Bay Area hinders emotional discussions where students feel like they can take risks in the viewpoints they discuss. He points to it as one of the reasons that beneficial but "uncomfortable conflict"

is infrequent at Nueva.

"It's almost like discovering gold," Dorrance said, regarding robust student discussion. "You can try and create opportunities to discover it, but there is a little bit of chance. And then you have the opportunity to seize that chance."

Beyond needing to accommodate one's opinions into a specific belief system, Raynal and Wagonfeld additionally described Nueva's expectation for thoughts to be shared cleanly and packaged nicely for easy absorption and conflict avoidance.

"I feel comfortable expressing ideas, but I have to be very articulate with what I'm saying and use precise wording," Wagonfeld said. "You need to think through things before you say [them], and you can't just let free-flowing ideas come because you're worried about what people say."

Wagonfeld, along with Raynal, believes this process of discussion is not ideal and often less fruitful. One misspoken word and the conversation shifts from examining ideology to questioning someone's belief system. Without the "messiness" of wondering, Raynal said, learning can be less productive.

"Nueva privileges the ability to sound smart, clean, and articulate in the first thought," Raynal. "We will not be able to be our full versions of ourselves if people can't say what they think or what they wonder."

Olivia Chiang '24, who co-founded the Political Science, Economics, and Philosophy Club (PEPC), attributes this fear of speaking out to concern about having one's thoughts misrepresent who they are and causing others to view them differently.

"You want to be perceived well by the communities that you inhabit, including the academic space," Chiang said. "If you feel like if you were to express even a fiscally conservative perspective, and someone would look at you differently—whether it be consciously or unconsciously—that, of course, is going to restrict the things you say."

Raynal agrees, stating that due to the nature of the collaborative Nueva environment, there are concerns about properly presenting oneself to other community members.

"There's a way in which the stakes are high when you think you are around really smart people who you care about," Raynal said.

Additionally, to Raynal, discourse often proves difficult since differences in viewpoints have come to be attached to personal identities—thus, to challenge a belief is to challenge an identity.

"When people feel like their own identity is at stake, it's really hard to have those conversations," Raynal said. "Sometimes I think we end up having academic conversations, where for one person in that room, this is not an academic conversation—this is their lived experience."

In these types of discussions, Raynal worries students may struggle in speaking across that difference.

For Dorrance, this is why history class is so important.

"We get to encounter foreign opinions that are not part of our orthodox in a sandbox kind of way," he said. "By looking at past figures who are articulating beliefs that we feel abhorrent, it allows us to understand those views in a way where we're not encountering it with members of our community."

Similar to Dorrance, Chiang believes to have healthy discourse is to have diversity of thought. So, Chiang began an organization in 2022 named Let's Talk Unite, a non-profit designed to

foster collaborative efforts to transform "the way

political discourse is conducted." "I believe Nueva's efforts to promote diversity," she said, "require the same effort taken to foster ideological pluralism."

Chiang fears that people to antagonize hold opposing beliefs and characterizing them as delusional, and even prepare people to move beyond cultures and ideologies.

"If we don't come from diverse backgrounds and don't shape people's beliefs, we're going to further create echo chambers. That's not good for political discourse."

Chiang questions the life or the experience of people, who are young people, philosophy or their core values of them? That underpins what comes when we open up to constructive bipolarity."

Yang echoed Chiang's sentiment, adding that she wants to engage with the lived experiences of

"The isolated nature of our community makes it difficult to interact with other people in within California, a loss for ideological diversity."

III. A SAFE SPACE FOR DISCOURSE

While Nueva does not every identity and classroom, Wagonfeld's curriculum and the community ensure for participating in

"Even though we have a diverse set of backgrounds, Nueva students are often engaged in diverse sets of backgrounds. The students are empathetic—qualified to engage in hearing."

He attributes the efforts of teachers in scenes, manipulation to practice this type

"Nueva should be proud itself in the way they engage in discourse. They facilitate collaboration and hope to draw

"SOME HEAVY COMMUNITY EMOTIONS COMFORTABLY VULNERABILITY THAT PREPARE COMPLEX

OLIVIA CHIANG

perspectives." One of the ways students to support of thought is through Emotional Learning

"As much as people hate classes like [Science of Mind (



a cost

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ANG '24

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(SOM)] and SEL, I

do think that Nueva did have an ethos of being pretty respectful and kind and empathetic to others," Bodnick said.

Chiang and Dorrance concur with this perspective.

"SOM helps us communicate our emotions and be comfortable with vulnerability in a way that prepares us for complex discourse," Chiang said.

To Dorrance, teaching a student to civilly engage in uncomfortable conversation is SEL work.

"You have to assume good intentions and engage with curiosity," he said. "If you're confronted with an idea or a view that you don't agree with, you need to assume that the other person is operating with good intentions."

Next semester, Psychology and SOM teacher Amy Hunt plans to pilot a SOM course that marries SEL with epistemology, offering juniors opportunities to introspect, question what they know, and practice speaking up.

"If we build a large enough container—that is, increase our capacity for discomfort, disagreement, and cognitive dissonance—then we can safely enter into discussions where there is likely to be a lot of tension, emotion, defensiveness, uncertainty, and the possibility of personal attack, or what feels like it," Hunt explained.

Hunt, crafting this course alongside Lee Holtzman, hopes to guide students in developing skills in cognitive perspective-taking and affective empathy—honing students' ability to understand how another person thinks and feels.

"When our nervous system detects threat, our perspectives narrow and our emotion gets attached to that narrow perspective," Hunt said. "Authentic discussion is not likely to happen in that environment unless the activated person has a lot of self-awareness and communicates their feelings of activation."

The course will encourage students to examine their knowledge and emotional relationship with that knowledge. When they encounter controversial conversations or contentious subjects, Hunt hopes the skills developed in this course will provide a proper toolkit or "template" to calmly respond and connect with the other person's perspective.

Instead of viewing conversations as "battles to be won"—Hunt jocosely referenced the success of Nueva's debate team—or avoiding conversations for fear of saying something harmful, seeming unintelligent, or being attacked, students can enter discussions with an intent to contemplate and investigate alternative viewpoints.

"The only way an unfamiliar idea is going to be heard and considered is if people are in a space where they can say, 'I've never heard that point of view

before. It makes me uncomfortable to hear it but I would like to hear more so that I can consider it," Hunt said.

Yang agrees, emphasizing the necessity for practicing civil discourse instead of just learning about it.

"[Nueva] gave us a lot of theory of practicing civil discourse, but not a lot of the actual practice of doing so," she said, "because there's just no opportunity for that—different perspectives and different opinions are not really there at Nueva."

Hunt's and Dorrance's efforts exemplify some of the initiatives taking place to improve that 65% statistic. The ultimate goal: securing Nueva's status as the "home of the mavericks."

"I want us to be able to embrace that ability to be a maverick, where you can actually say what you're thinking, because I don't believe that all kids feel that right now," Raynal shared.

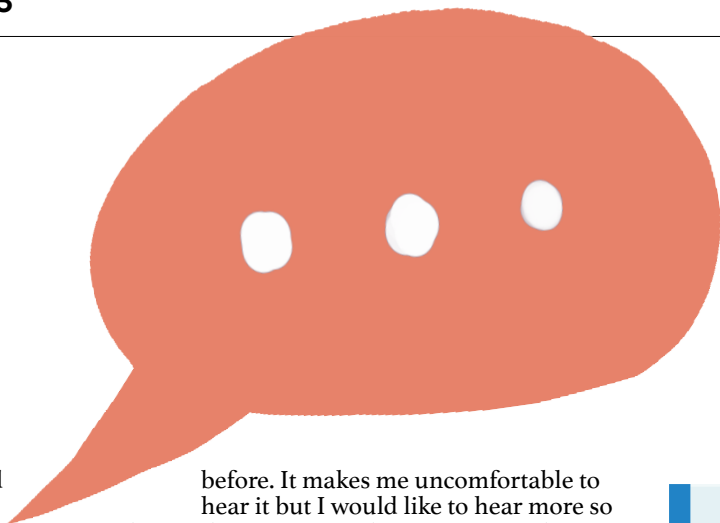
In addition to improving the embodiment of mavericks, Chiang hopes to utilize civil discourse to strengthen the Beloved Community.

"We need to be more vulnerable and more tolerant of other perspectives and look introspectively because we need to remember that we aren't just inhabitants of communities, we are the ones that create the community,"

"I want us to be able to embrace that ability to be a maverick, where you can actually say what you're thinking, because I don't believe that all kids feel that right now."

LIZA RAYNAL

she said. "If you make changes within yourself, it will spread to the community, and we can't expect systemic change to happen if we don't first make change."



Putting numbers to it

35% of students feel comfortable expressing their views at Nueva

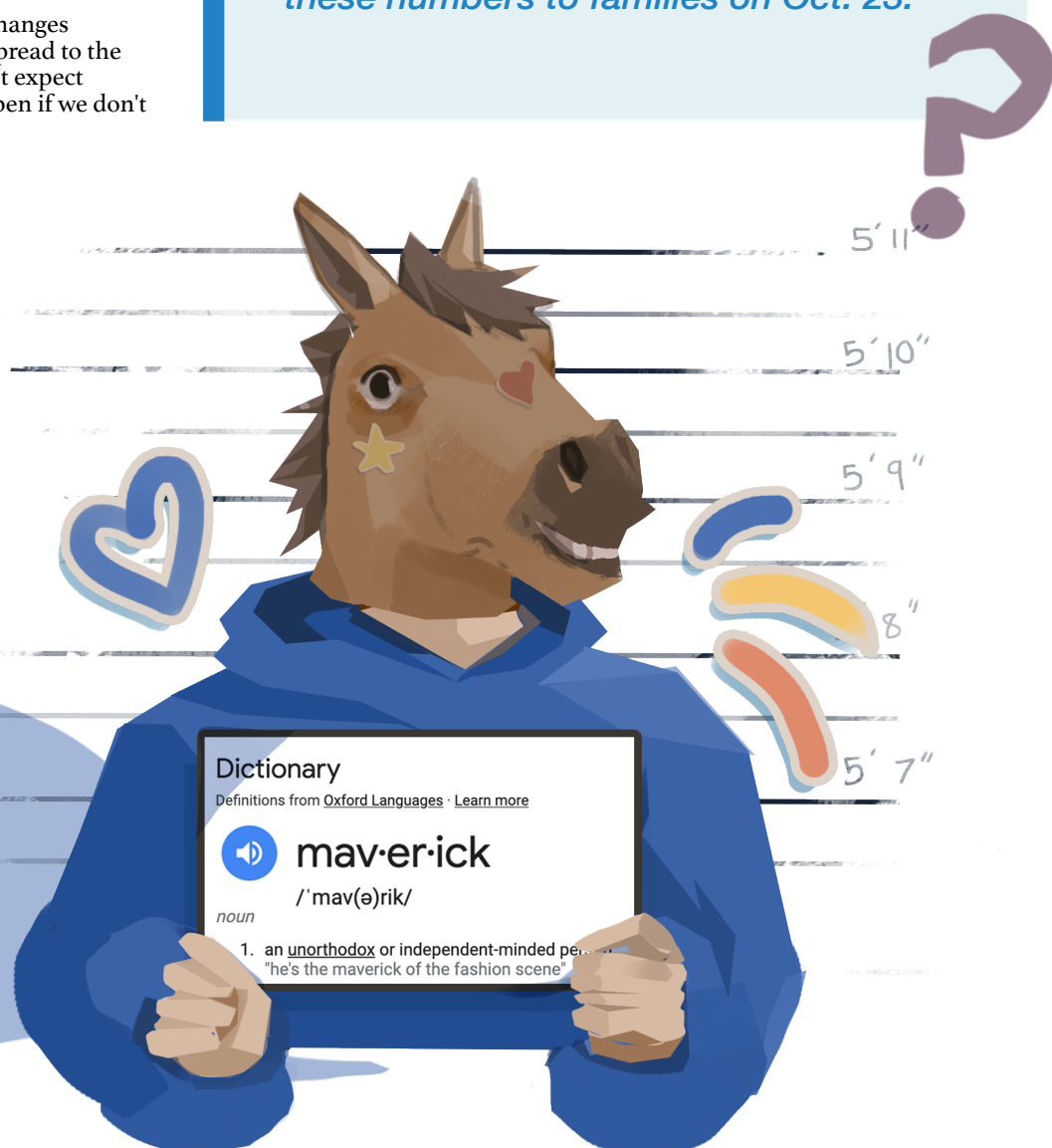
62% of students feel a sense of belonging and claim they can be their authentic selves at Nueva

53% of students agree that there is a strong sense of school spirit at Nueva

The above statistics come from an April/May 2023 survey last school year.

Grades eighth through 12 took the survey. 85% of current students are represented in the results.

Head of School Lee Fertig presented these numbers to families on Oct. 23.



Dictionary
Definitions from Oxford Languages · Learn more

mav·er·ick
/'mav(ə)rik/
noun

1. an **unorthodox** or independent-minded person; "he's the maverick of the fashion scene"



Photo by Dejavu Group

DREAM COME TRUE

Koo at work in the recording studio (right).
A still from the "Fairytale" music video featuring two professional actors (left).



Photo by Brian Koo

Artist, changemaker, "DreamR"

Debuting as an official Korean music artist, Joshua Koo '24 reflects on his musical journey

By Owen Yeh-Lee

Soft-spoken and introspective, Joshua Koo '24 isn't one to steal the spotlight often. Yet he is filled with a bursting ambition and fervor for music that has led him across oceans, into recording studios, and ultimately landed him a record deal. On Sept. 25, he released his debut single, "Fairytale," under the stage name "DreamR."

Koo traces his musical roots back to kindergarten, when he began taking classical piano lessons. The fundamental skills he learned from piano would later prove useful in his contemporary musical pursuits.

"It provided me with a strong foundation in music theory and composition, especially when understanding harmony, melody, and rhythm," Koo said. "Many people don't realize the versatility and benefits of knowing how to play an instrument—there are so many more possibilities you can do in production."

In fifth grade, he fell in love with hip-hop music after watching *Show Me the Money*, a South Korean rap competition TV show. Having never ventured beyond the classical realm, he found the genre simply more fun.

"I want my music to be a source of comfort and inspiration, something listeners can turn to. I aim to address important issues and share stories that resonate with people."

Armed with a newfound appreciation for rap, Koo set out to create his own. Typically, he begins by searching for rap beats on YouTube that match the styles of his favorite artists—he cites Mac Miller, Aminé, and Kota the Friend as his biggest musical inspirations. Then, Koo freestyles over the beat—in "complete gibberish," he added—until he finds a flow or lyric that inspires him. From there, he writes the rest of the song's lyrics.

With self-described "Korean roots and a global perspective," Koo writes many of his songs with a combination of Korean and English lyrics, reflecting his multicultural identity.

"I try to bridge the gap between the two languages. Music, as a universal language, allows me to connect with a broader audience," Koo said. "I also want to share my native language with other parts of the world and show how beautiful of a language it is."

Koo found his first major spark of inspiration during the pandemic. Struck by the spike in anti-Asian sentiment and racial scapegoating, Koo turned to music to express his thoughts. He released his first song, "All the Same" in April 2020 under the pseudonym "DreamR," which was derived from the title of his favorite book in sixth grade, *The Dreamer* by Pam Muñoz Ryan. His main goal was to encourage unity and spread awareness through a familiar medium.

"I was hearing a lot of stories from the Korean community about anti-Asian hate crimes," Koo said. "So I thought, 'hey, I can use rap, something I'm decent at, to put out a message that people can listen to.'"

The song has since garnered over 12,000 views on YouTube. With the goal of contributing on a broader level, Koo also attached a GoFundMe fundraiser to the song, ultimately raising nearly \$5,000 to donate essential supplies to impacted frontline workers. For him, it was "incredibly heartwarming" to see the real-world change his song achieved.

"It demonstrated the power of music to raise awareness and leave an impact," Koo said. "[The listeners'] generosity and support left me feeling grateful and motivated to continue using my music as a tool for positive change."

Spurred by that momentum, he began to hone his craft, quitting classical piano in ninth grade to focus on hip-hop and upgrading his production setup. With his sights set on a more serious musical presence, Koo began to network, hoping to be eventually discovered by an agency or record label. After meeting rapper BewhY, the Season Five winner of *Show Me the Money*, in eighth grade, Koo obtained his manager's contact information. Over the next two years, he forwarded every song he created to BewhY's manager.

His persistence paid off. On his 16th birthday, Koo's parents surprised him with

the good news: BewhY's label, Dejavu Group, was on the search for a new member and had offered to train Koo in South Korea until he was ready to debut as an official artist.

"I was elated. I was like, 'this can't be real,'" Koo recalled. He couldn't believe that he would be working alongside artists he had idolized for years—"they were like celebrities to me," he said.

That summer, Koo spent hours in the studio each week preparing in South Korea. His training assignments included learning and performing existing songs or writing his own, then receiving feedback from his producers. Finally, a year later, Koo signed an official artist contract with the label and began working on his debut single.

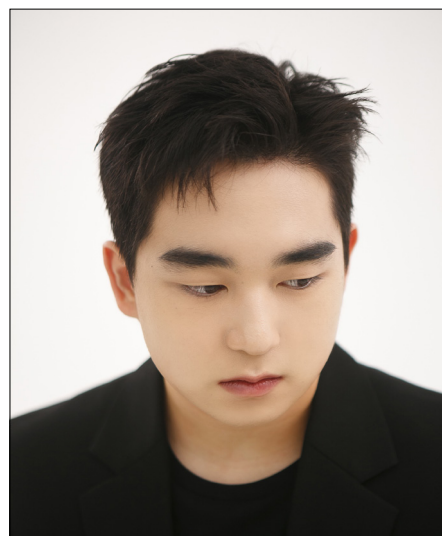


Photo by Dejavu Group

RED CARPET READY

For his first photoshoot, Koo spent an hour getting his hair and makeup done. "It was such a new experience for me," he said.

For his first formal foray into the Korean music scene, Koo settled on "Fairytale," a "soft R&B"-style track inspired by Mac Miller's early work. Koo created the beat alongside producer DSEL, incorporating a guitar arpeggio motif, synth organ chords, and a laid-back drum groove.

"I wanted to make a song with a focus on making people calm and positive, something they can listen to when they need something lighthearted and uplifting to listen to," Koo said. "The lyrics came quite naturally as I just wrote about how I feel when I love someone, which I was sure many people could relate to."

After completing the lyrics and melody, the lengthy recording process began. Koo first recorded a rough "demo" vocal, then a week later spent 10 hours in the studio in a single day completing the final vocals—"my voice was completely dead that night," he recalled.

The song's release was also accompanied by a music video. While Koo initially wanted to appear in the video, he had to return to the U.S. to start the school year. Instead, the label hired actors and a professional team to create the video, which featured elaborate sets, choreography, and a whimsical storyline. Due to timezone complications, the only time when he was able to communicate with his team in Korea and provide feedback was at night. When he first saw the final product, he was surprised and "super excited."

"I didn't know the scale would be this big. It looked so cool and professional," Koo said. "I thought, 'My friends are gonna love this.'"

His predictions were correct. After the song's release on Sept. 25, Koo described the response as "amazing." The music video, released on Oct. 12, accumulated over 13,000 views in just two weeks.

"Many people came up to me and told me how cool it is that I have a professional music video under my name," Koo said. "It felt great when friends, teachers, or family told me they were streaming my song on all platforms."

While streams and views are exciting, for Koo, the most important part of sharing music is the connection, awareness, and joy it can foster.

"I want my music to be a source of comfort and inspiration, something listeners can turn to," Koo said. "With my songs, I aim to address important issues and share stories that resonate with people."

In the short term, Koo wants to "create as much music as possible" and release a full album or EP. Yet, music isn't the only thing on his long-term horizons. Koo, who also leads Nueva's Human Technology Interaction Club, eventually hopes to pursue a career in business or technology. No matter where he ends up, he knows that music will remain an important facet of his life.

"It's a channel for me to express myself in ways I can't otherwise," Koo said. "I'm a pretty quiet person, so music allows me to be more myself."

The Temu takeover: A troubling twist on fast fashion

The rapidly growing online retailer violates human and environmental rights, promoting unethical consumerism

By Neel Gupta

As I scrolled through TikTok and browsed the Internet, *Temu* popped up everywhere—promising items, from notebooks to enticing sweatpants, sold for shockingly low prices. In other words, a hip Amazon 2.0. But before giving in and losing myself to a world full of great deals and a multitude of trinkets, I felt some *deja vu* mixed with suspicion... *haven't I heard this story before?*

As I became more familiar with Temu, I found its popularity and too-good-to-be-true offers incredibly alarming, with its gain of more than 100 million active users in less than a year from its launch—and it continues to rapidly grow. Temu's background is darker than our familiar fast fashion villains Shein or Forever 21; it accesses a wider market beyond just clothing and accessories, offering immensely cheaper products, and spreading the fast fashion manufacturing process to all corners of retail, using an expansive technological platform. Temu capitalizes on social-media-based overconsumption habits while utilizing systemic industry abuse, masking their impacts under the guise of "core values."

Temu's mission statement claims to hold values of "empowerment, diversity and inclusion, integrity, and social responsibility," aiming to connect customers with sellers from across the world. The hypocrisy is appalling; in what way is their technological fast fashion machine, which is a tool of systemic profiteering, "socially responsible?" Rooted in the depths of corrupt e-commerce development, Temu's advancements bring unethical propaganda swept under its deceiving image of an affordable

app selling an abundant, appealing variety of products that prosper in our shopping-dependent society. Government investigations have shown that Temu lacks compliance with the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act, a U.S. law prohibiting selling products sourced from the Xinjiang region. These imports have been banned because of severe abuse and exploitation, strengthening the Uyghur genocide and potentially violating the law.

Their extreme low costs signal exploitation for convenience—but not just of people. Temu praises their sustainability, claiming to show commitment to the environment. "Social responsibility is one of Temu's core values. One of the ways that we show our commitment is through environmental sustainability," their policies say. "For example, for every delivery made on Temu, we offset carbon emissions so that we compensate for our carbon footprint and do our part to protect the planet"—without further validation and details on *how* their action plan works. Yet fast fashion doesn't have the ability to be 'eco-friendly,' due to the nature of its business model. It is responsible for 8-10% of carbon emissions, with abundant plastic disposability (which Temu guarantingly incorporates in products and packaging).

Many buyers validate Temu because of its incomparable deals, heightening affordability and accessibility. Although, with constant customer criticism of Temu's poor packaging and product quality, Temu requires frequent replacements, costing more money (and waste!) in the end—like all fast fashion. Smacking on a 'green tag' and 'core values' to conceal the complexities of their unjust system: it is infiltrating society's functionality and forcing us, as next generations, to depend

on an agenda that deteriorates the environment. If our generation continues to support Temu, we not only strengthen the grasp of fast fashion but increase its use of unjust systems, detaching the public from shopping systems that protect morality and human rights.

However, I cannot completely blame Temu customers. Their marketing is highly aggressive, with Super Bowl commercials, celebrity endorsements from singer Jason Derulo and NFL player JuJu Smith-Schuster, campaigns and trending hashtags across social media platforms, deals up to 90% off, and their boasting motto, "Shop like a billionaire." I have found internet promotion everywhere I look, whether that be through viral YouTube videos of creators flaunting their aesthetic hauls or Temu's Instagram influencer programs, boosting their image of a cheaper, trendier Amazon. Although, this over consumption and advertisement promising idealistic deals is a prime example of a flawed industry manipulation. Through their utilization of social media and current trends, Temu targets teens, a demographic naturally attracted to Temu's marketing strategies but possibly unaware of the risks of entrusting their personal details to a retail website.

It is imperative that we object to Temu and withdraw from the toxic commerce addiction it serves, which violates environmental and human rights. It is a necessity for youth to make a real commitment to sustainability by thrifting or supporting sustainable companies. We have the ability to slowly subside fast fashion's power, and an urgent way to start is detaching ourselves from Temu.



Illustration by Freepik

Photos by Temu

SHOPPING SPREE

Temu offers a large variety of products, encouraging mass consumerism

Money spent on protecting civilians

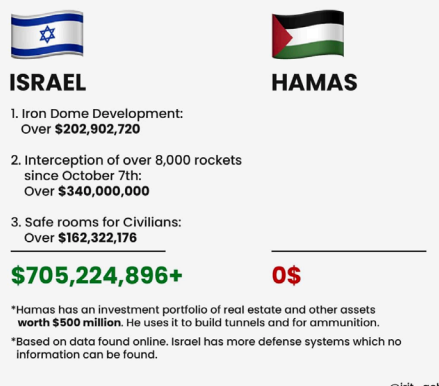


Photo by @irit_ach

Instagram infographics blur the line between informational and misleading rhetoric

Political Instagram infographics, despite intentions to educate, promote rhetoric in a format that deters a nuanced understanding of global affairs among teenagers

By Natalie Lai

As the conflict between Hamas and Israel in Gaza escalates and dominates news headlines, there has been a sharp rise in advocacy-related infographics on Instagram Stories—some to my disdain.

Having no familial or ethnic ties to the Middle East, I, like many teenagers, did not think about, nor know extensively about the tensions between Hamas and Israel before these past few weeks. I was first made aware of the initial Hamas attack on Israel on Oct. 7 by a push notification from The New York Times. But before I was even able to make the time to read the article, I found myself swiping and tapping through dozens of infographics reposted on Instagram Stories by my classmates and mutual friends.

Many of the most viral infographics, gaining thousands of reposts in a matter of days, consist of slideshows summarizing aspects of the conflict or strongly-worded condemnations.

Upon first glance, I was skeptical of the credibility of many of these "informational" Instagram posts. So,

as someone interested in politics and journalism, I took it upon myself to take a closer look at the sources of these rapidly-shared posts.

Many accounts with posts that had thousands of likes and reposts were made by anonymous sources or deliberately excluded context that contradicted their perspectives. Some others either had no sources or were sourced from highly biased publications.

Even disregarding that some of these Instagram accounts may be questionably researched, a lack of clarity on the intent and context of information masks opinionated posts as comprehensive of the moral ground and events.

In reality, with a conflict this multilayered and complex, Instagram posts that oversimplify or provide one-sided information on the conflict deter nuanced inspection and conversation of the conflict.

While newspaper articles mirroring these would've been flagged for being biased and editorialized or labeled as opinion pieces, the lack of clarity around the agenda behind posts can be

misleading for viewers trying to formulate an opinion on the conflict.

Moreover, impressionable viewers, namely teenagers, may see the information posted by an account and believe they have a "correct" perspective on the conflict, creating less willingness towards further education and conversations with others who have opposing views.

I'm not encouraging neutrality or arguing that you should stay silent, and public sharing of your opinions is not a bad thing—far from it. However, many of these Instagram posts are only effective in strengthening or challenging the political views of viewers who have a preexisting understanding of the conflict from credible sources. Opting for reposting external links to articles by professional news outlets alongside your political opinion may be a better way to go about educating your peers.

So, the next time you see a post and click "Add to story," recognize your responsibility to be mindful and intentional about the information you repost when engaging in online political advocacy.

Israel is the **only country** that needs to provide an hour of unedited footage for the world to believe a **massacre occurred.**

Photo by World Jewish Congress

RAPID REPOSTS

In a single scroll through Instagram stories, these were the front page of some of the infographics reposted.

STUDENT STANDOFF

Should schools release statements in response to major crises?

Illustration by Anwen Chen



School statements pave the path forward after tragedy

By acknowledging the events, the school sets a positive example for inevitable discourse among students

By Josie Belfer

First let me say, I was nervous to write this. But, I think the fact that I was apprehensive to write it is all the more reason why speaking out about our opinions is so important. There is ongoing pressure in our community, online, and in many other spaces to always put out the “correct” statement when it comes to the violence happening in Palestine and Israel. People who say something imprecise or worded ungracefully on the topic are publicly shamed or even blackmailed. However, while perhaps well-meaning, this approach does nothing to create change and promote positive discourse about the ongoing conflict.

Instead, it leads to further division and fear, pushing the idea that conversation should be saved for only the “educated” and “expert” voices among us. This restriction may appear beneficial for some reasons, such as stopping the spread of misinformation and meaningless performative activism. However, overall, limiting who can participate in discourse limits any chance we have at fostering healthy conversations that can inspire action. It limits the one thing that allows us to actually understand each other.

Saying nothing is a statement in itself, and when conversations about our response to the conflict are happening all over the internet and the world, discussions will be happening at school. They are going to happen in the classroom, at lunch, and in the halls. The question is if schools are willing to set a precedent for these discussions to help students protect and trust each other while sharing their views.

As a Jewish student myself, I hold deep empathy for what my community is going through right now. The recent rise in antisemitism is horrifying and should be addressed. Even so, by ignoring the violence that is happening in both Israel and Palestine and refusing to talk about it, schools perpetuate the idea that all discussions around the topic have to be controversial and combative or even some that it is sort of taboo. Why bother saying anything if you don't have a PhD in international relations?

As distant as the war may seem, it is still highly relevant to our community and many others. It is a privilege to be able to say nothing and not be affected or connected to what's happening, and thus, by speaking about it publicly, schools support those who don't have the privilege of staying silent.

Schools have an obligation to make statements not just because of the support it offers students with direct connections to the conflict but also because it is a way to get healthy conversations started, to remind students of all identities and prior experiences that their school is a safe place to speak up.

This being said, I don't think celebrities need to comment on global tragedies. Stop asking Dwayne Johnson, Taylor Swift, or Justin Bieber to make a stand. Their comments tend to be hollow, surface-level virtue signaling rather than nuanced thought. Instagram stories about standing up during protests and wars feel similarly empty. However, a school is not a celebrity. It is a community composed of people of all different identities who deserve confirmation that even the most horrifying events are ones that students should be able and comfortable to discuss.

School crisis statements are a catch-22

The decision to speak up and which groups to support appeals to majority voices, setting a regressive precedent

By Isabella Xu

Three years ago, schoolwide commentary on political issues seemed clear-cut: all administrators had to do was craft a carefully phrased email condemning violence, racism, and everything else that stands against the values of our community. With the escalation of the Israel-Palestine war and the vast spectrum of community perspectives, however, the limitations of these statements have become clear.

To let my more cynical side take control for a second, this is what most of the school's statements have sounded like: “We acknowledge that both sides feel hurt and empathize with you. Please remember that even in divisive times, we must continue embracing the Beloved Community. Will we be doing anything? No! But here's a processing space!”

These kinds of vague supportive statements are problematic for a couple of reasons. First, on a more macro level, they set a precedent where administrators are forced to pick and choose which conflicts are important enough for them to comment on. Dozens of world issues, many of which may directly affect members of the community, occur unmentioned on every week. To Nueva's credit, the process of choosing is not arbitrary, and instead follows a decision tree made by members of the communications team

in partnership with Alegria Barclay, the previous Social Justice & Equity Coordinator. Yet there's still plenty of room for subjectivity. For example, one step of the decision-making process calls for administrators to evaluate whether the incident goes “against our core values as a school.” But loosely-defined and opaque “core values” create an unavoidable lack of consistency when we have to choose when to speak up.

Objective ways to quantify crises aren't much better. Another section of the

decision-making tree asks the following: “Are there multiple members of our Nueva community whose extended families are impacted by this international crisis?” For students who already feel unrepresented at the school, the school's systemic reaffirmation of majority voices only exacerbates feelings of isolation.

It's only human to want to speak up during humanitarian crises. I get it. But the issue is, speaking up once means administrators are expected to do the same all the time. And when they don't, that silence, however unintentional, speaks volumes to those affected.

Unfortunately, we've already set that precedent. So what can we do now?

The first is facilitating the creation of restorative spaces for all groups involved—not just those who make up the majority. The current affinity groups system calls for affinity group advisors to individually organize, publicize, and run special “processing spaces,” but again, in a school so demographically skewed, larger affinity groups simply have more bandwidth. If an affinity group so desires, extra support from the administration could make creating such processing spaces much more achievable. It's an imperfect solution, but it's a step in the right direction.

Another potential option to make these public statements more effective is to use the school's platform to provide resources for the uninformed to educate themselves. In the wake

of crises, it's easy to default to un-nuanced, sound-bite opinions, and I believe if the school truly wants to make good on our goals of developing critical thinking within the classroom, we need to reflect

that in how we address real-world issues. Every news outlet is inevitably going to hold some bias, but it's only through facilitating the consumption of multiple perspectives that I believe these statements can be beneficial.

It's our responsibility as an educational institution to train politically-literate individuals, but our current apprehension towards engaging with the actual issues at hand undermines this goal.

CORRECTIONS: The Nueva Current welcomes comments and suggestions. We seek to publish corrections and clarifications in the subsequent issue. Please email any corrections to thenueva-current@nuevaschool.org.

Corrections: Issue 1, published Sep. 29, 2023: On page 2, 36 teams participated in a spikeball tournament, not a pickleball tournament. On page 3, the construction project cost closer to eight million dollars instead of nine million. Additionally, the cardio equipment is upstairs rather than being located downstairs in the weight room. On page 6, the University of Malaya was misspelled as the University of Malay. On the same page, Jayant Ghosh's last name was misspelled on the fourth line of his introduction.

We say, “Learn by doing. Learn by caring.”
Now, let’s walk the talk for CSL

Nueva’s community service learning program needs urgent reconstruction



Illustrations by Jodie Chan

By Kayla Ling

On Tuesday and Thursday afternoons, 120 Peninsula Bridge middle school students arrive on campus. For two hours, they spend time in academic enrichment that spans humanities, STEM, and SEL subjects. These students are part of the Peninsula Bridge Middle School Academy, an afterschool program for motivated and historically marginalized students.

It turns out, while a few Nueva students have volunteered with the program, most know little to nothing about Peninsula Bridge. This strikes me, because it’s an organization I think the student body would care deeply about.

To me, this lack of awareness indicates a much larger issue at our school. Our current community service learning (CSL) program lacks coordination and management. In turn, Nueva students don’t access volunteer opportunities right in our backyard—whether it’s Nueva’s or San Mateo County’s. In turn, we often miss critical chances to serve our neighbors in need.

Further, our CSL program, which is currently composed of two student-organized CSL Days and the occasional food drive each year, is limited by its dependency on student leaders. Every year, there is turnover in CSL leadership with no continuity—to no fault of the students but the system itself—making it an annual “startup” that’s very difficult to grow. I wonder constantly, couldn’t we be doing more? Shouldn’t we be doing better?

We should be regularly engaging with CSL. When we do CSL, we learn to care and be aware of people beyond our Nueva bubble. And by caring, we became motivated to serve our community more often and on a larger scale. Sound familiar? It’s our school motto: “Learn by doing. Learn by caring.”

If we truly care, we must do more to serve our community: I believe that Nueva, a privileged institution, must make CSL a pillar of our community by integrating it into the student experience. If not, we don’t just severely fail our local neighbors—but also ourselves and what Nueva stands for.

According to a community study conducted by a parent and teacher-led CSL Task Force in 2019, 90% of MS and US students believe in the importance of CSL. Further, almost all students are aware that other schools have more robust CSL programs with dedicated staff and resources. As one of these students, I carry this awareness with frustration and disappointment.

Nueva has the pedagogical foundation, funds, and reach to build a thriving CSL program that creates positive change. We must do this with focus and care—so, let’s brainstorm what’s possible.

First, we must have an administrative position created that focuses on defining, organizing, and steering the K–12 CSL program.

A dedicated coordinator is imperative to strengthen our CSL program. In the Lower and Middle School, the program is largely parent-maintained, while the Upper School’s is almost entirely student-run. Leadership on both campuses shifts every year, limiting any long-term goals or sustained projects. A coordinator would help bridge this gap.

The coordinator could also

support teachers in integrating CSL into curriculum, shape a school-wide CSL program that builds with each preK–12 grade level, and create special opportunities for cross-division partnerships. My peers and I already love opportunities to connect with Middle and Lower Schoolers, so why not combine that with creating a positive impact in our larger community?

Second, I envision a CSL program with a variety of sustained community partnerships that empower and educate students to make positive impact. At Nueva, we have a vast network of families with connections across the Bay Area. Let’s use it to connect students with organizations they’ll care about.

I believe that Nueva, a privileged institution, must make CSL a pillar of our community by integrating it into the student experience. If not, we don’t just severely fail our local neighbors—but also ourselves and what Nueva stands for.

Composed of these partners, an accessible database and calendar could be created for students to have more context for the organizations they may work with.

I believe the database could help students be more informed and impactful when volunteering. And, the calendar could help students access timely volunteer opportunities, or help them continue contributing to the cause outside of Nueva-organized CSL programming, if they so pleased.

The database will also help teachers form connections to their class curriculum, which I believe could be an important pathway towards institutionalizing CSL in the academic realm of Nueva. Imagine an elective where art was leveraged to help impoverished communities. Or, a course where computer science research connected to supporting isolated seniors in our community.

Finally, I hope the future of CSL at Nueva looks beyond what benefits our own students may receive, and focuses instead on orienting us towards the responsibilities we carry.

Brandon Reynante, a director at the Stanford Haas Center for Public Service cautioned, “Historically, the focus has been on

the benefits to the students. But sometimes that’s come at the harm of the community partners.”

In our conversation, he referenced a personal experience: “We might have done all this work to address their problem, but eventually they were no better off than before we had started. There can even be cases where it’s exploiting or harming the communities. Service work should make sure that it’s beneficial for not only students, but also the community partners.”

From my personal experience organizing community partnerships, I’ve realized that what seems like “free labor” we donate as a school is not without cost for the partners.

They have to dedicate time and energy towards organizing an abnormally large group of student volunteers, train us before we begin, and even clean up any messes we may make.

When expanding our CSL program, I urge us to first consider how our service impacts others, approach with humility, and work to be the most helpful we can.

None of these steps are easy, though—students, teachers, and administrators will have to put in effort to research, connect with, and better understand what our community needs from us.

Yet, I believe that putting in effort to volunteer with awareness and care is a necessity. Having a full-time administrator dedicated to CSL is a necessity. Building sustained partnerships with the community around us is a necessity. If we don’t fully acknowledge this, I truly believe we are committing a grave failure as an institution.

To those skeptical, I’d point them towards our school’s motto, our ideological foundation: how can we say that we “care,” when our actions don’t?

EDITORIAL

Combatting self-censorship within the newsroom and our Upper School community

By The Nueva Current Editorial Board

Every now and then, there’s a sentiment that arises in our newsroom: “I don’t think we should publish that.”

Sometimes it sounds like, “I’m too scared to write about that,” “I don’t think this will be a good look,” or “I don’t think anyone will want to publicly comment on that,” but it always carries the same meaning: fear of backlash.

So we asked ourselves: if self-censorship manifests in our newsroom, how does it play out in the world? This was the question that prompted our centerfold article—an investigation into whether Nueva students are truly independent thinkers who are able to and want to voice their opinions. How truly “Maverick”—as our mascot implores—are we when it comes to discussing complex topics in our classrooms and hallways?

One of the most contentious subjects recently has been the Israel-Hamas conflict, which has had ripple effects both globally and within our school community.

When looking to address it in our paper, we ran into several hurdles, as we feared sparking more contention in our community due to the complex nature of the topic.

Ultimately, we chose to examine the discourse around the conflict, with an Op-Ed on the potential harms of political dialogue on social media and our Student Standoff on whether schools should release statements in response to major crises.

We believe that our discomfort around directly expressing our views on this sensitive topic is indicative of a wider experience in our community: a cultural suppression of and hostility toward constructive discourse.

In order for us to be a more informed, connected school, we must foster an environment that embraces messy and foreign perspectives as an opportunity to educate, rather than jumping to overly critical snap judgments. We should approach ideological dissonance with grace, an assumption of good intent, and curiosity. Only then can we proudly call ourselves Mavericks.

Sincerely,
The Nueva Current



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- Alvin Yao '26

THE NUEVA CURRENT

strives to provide informative and impactful articles for our community. Our issues cover stories related to our school, the Bay Area, California, and other relevant spheres. We are dedicated to helping readers understand the ways in which we can all make a difference in the world around us.

The opinions expressed in *The Nueva Current* belong solely to the writers and are not a reflection or representation of the opinions of the school or administrators.

The Nueva Current is distributed to current and alumni members of The Nueva School community. Press run is 600 copies.

The Nueva Current is a member of the NSPA and CSPA. NSPA Pacemaker Finalist 2020, 2022, 2023. Pacemaker Winner 2022.

QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, SUBMISSIONS

We welcome your voices. We accept photographs, letters to the editors, articles, illustrations, and other pieces of work. Please email us at thenuevacurrent@nuevaschool.org.

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Connections

For each puzzle, find groups of four words that share a common link! Watch out for words that could belong in multiple categories.

Ex: "Pixar movies" (Brave, Cars, Coco, Up) or "___ button" (Belly, Hot, Panic, Snooze)

By Marcus Hirschman

ARMY	BROOK	AID	STRAW
RASP	STREAM	BLUE	POND
SEA	ELDER	OLIVE	RIVER
SAGE	WIRE	TRIBUTARY	A LIE
CHER	PAWN	USHER	SECURE
COZY	HELIX	INDUSTRIAL	KNIGHT
KING	LORDE	SNUG	PRINCE
WARM	ROOK	RESTFUL	QUEEN

Halloween hits

A few of *The Nueva Current* staff's favorite moments from the day of haunts

By Ellie Kearns

Decked out in spooky, scary, or stylish costumes, community members came prepared to transform the upper school into a world of fictional characters, food items, celebrities, and more. On Oct. 31, students participated in a

pumpkin-throwing contest and walked—or screamed—through a haunted Rosenberg wing set up by StuCo. Here are a couple of the best moments from the day of frightening festivities.



FLAWLESS REPLICAS

Sava Illiev '24 and Syon Patel '24 pose as the rapper Yeat, sporting Tonka trucks on their necklaces—a unique symbol of the rapper's affinity for large SUVs.



A WONDERFUL COSTUME

The English department fell down the rabbit hole and came to school dressed as characters from *Alice in Wonderland*. Close reading this photo, do they look a little mad here?



SNACK TIME

Pearl Yeh-Lee '26 and Grace Bishara '26 transform into a tasty costume as Kraft mac and cheese and an ICEE: the meal of champions.



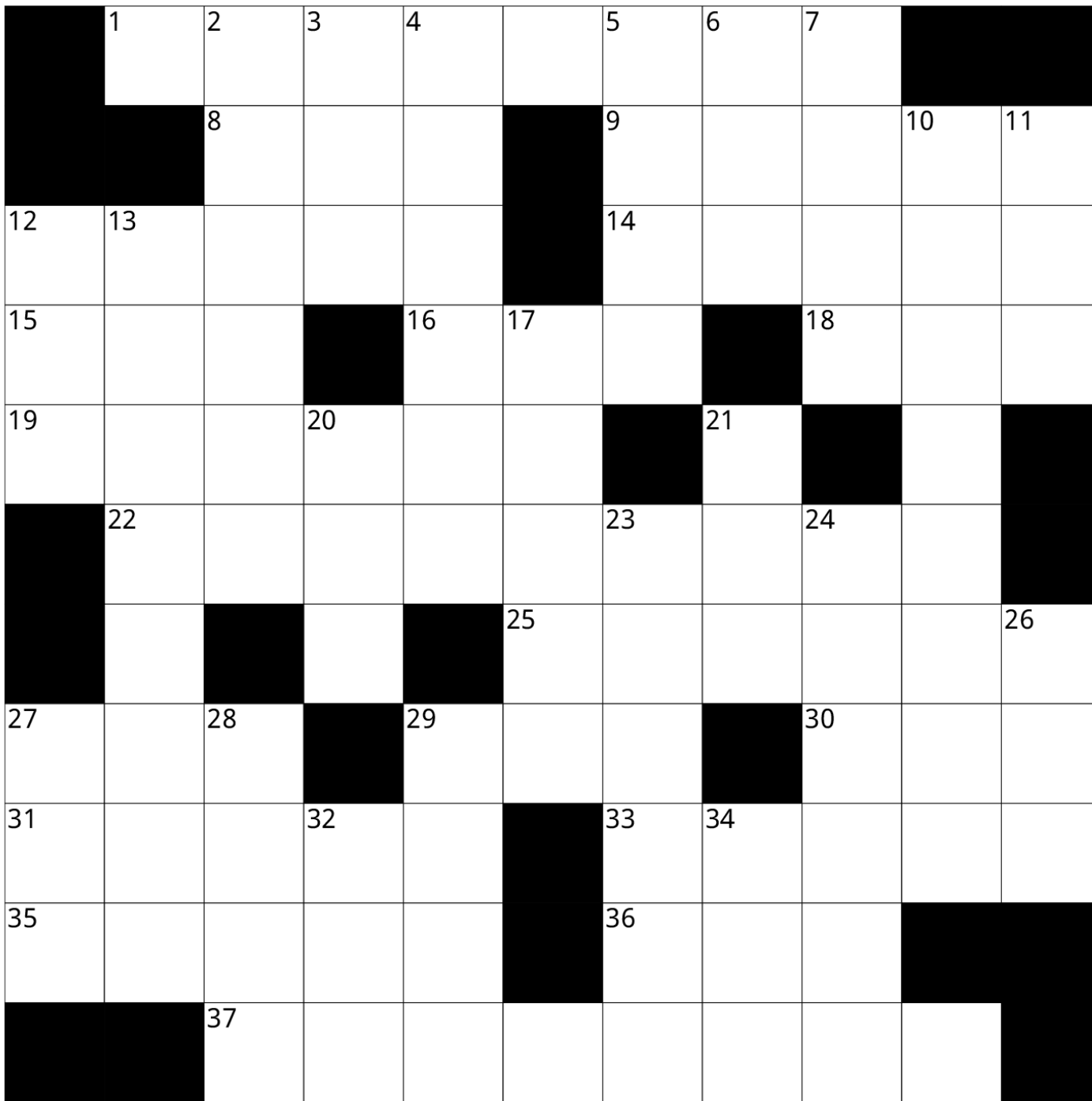
ARCH ENEMIES

Irene Vail '26 and Rowan Brown '26 went from friends to rivals in their rendition of Vector and Gru from the movie *Despicable Me*. School today, stealing the moon tomorrow.

Photos by LiAnn Yim

Crossword

By Marcus Hirschman



ACROSS

- 1. Put forward
- 8. Nonverbal greeting
- 9. Sheetful of cookies
- 12. Redwood City high school Nueva often competes against
- 14. Continental currency
- 15. Trauma ctrs.
- 16. Mo. before this publication
- 18. Inventor Whitney
- 19. House of cards?
- 22. Award for scholastic journalism excellence
- 25. When all hands point up
- 27. Luau dish
- 29. Card game for two
- 30. Chemical suffix
- 31. Finnish phone brand
- 32. Relay stick
- 33. Powerful engine
- 35. Terrific
- 36. Teléfono greeting
- 37. "Way to go, sister!"

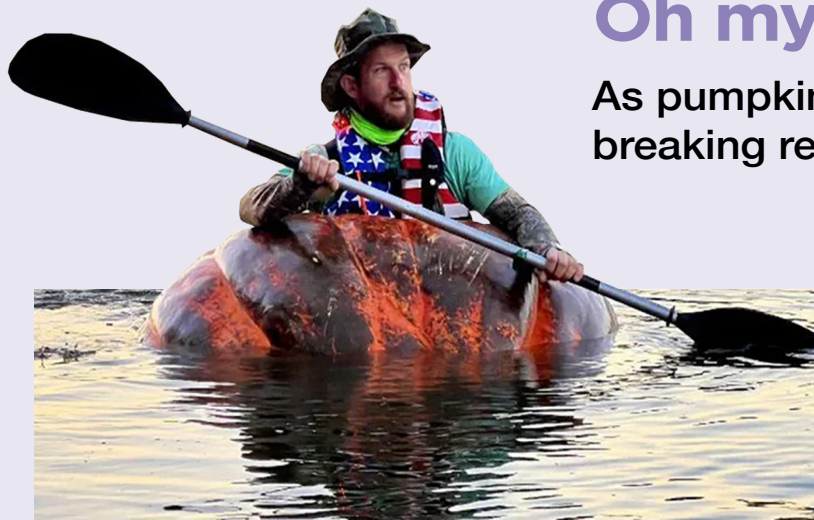
DOWN

- 2. Black Sea port
- 3. PC alternative
- 4. FaceTime device
- 5. Aid and ___
- 6. Sigma follower
- 7. To be, in Paris
- 10. State bordering seven others
- 11. Fu-___ (legendary Chinese sage)
- 12. Mo. after this publication
- 13. Magician's secret exit
- 17. Cause for a pause
- 20. Rink surface
- 21. Approved
- 23. Car safety device
- 24. Film cutter
- 26. Japanese currency
- 27. JPG alternative
- 28. Swedish furniture giant
- 29. Power unit
- 32. "Am ___ risk?"
- 34. "Aladdin" prince

Oh my gourd!

By Owen Yeh-Lee

As pumpkin season winds to a close, here's a record-breaking recap of the iconic orange squash



The world's heaviest pumpkin (below), crowned on Oct. 9, 2023, in Half Moon Bay, weighed in at a whopping

2,749
POUNDS

which is more than the combined weight of all

19
NUEVA CURRENT
STAFF MEMBERS

Steve Kueny (above) set a record for "longest journey by pumpkin boat" on Oct. 9, 2023, after paddling down the Missouri River in a 1,208-pound squash for

38
MILES

which is equivalent to the distance of approximately

141,628
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laid out vertically



Photos by Associated Press (pumpkin), LiAnn Yim (Nueva Current staff), Freepik (scale), Warson Media (Kueny)

Dominant girls tennis team prepares for playoffs

Girls Tennis team wins through teamwork and works on consistency before CCS and WBAL

By Alvin Yao

With wins pouring in after every week, the girls tennis team has maintained their status at the top of the league and won the WBAL division before coming up short in the CCS qualifying match.

The tennis team fought through easy and hard games before the season ended on Nov. 1. Even during exhausting games going much further than expected, the team cheered each other on and helped each other prepare for the next match.

Their chemistry and teamwork were shown in all the matches, most notably their intense 4-3 win against King's Academy.

"We came together and we were super spirited and a lot of people stayed until 6:30 to watch the last match," recalled Sophie Druskin '24, who is the doubles three player on the team. "We were all crowded around this part of the fence and going crazy. Even though they didn't win that specific match, it felt pretty good to know that even though we have rough matches, we support each other and we're going to make it work."

Although the team has proven their strength with their winning record, the players have continued to improve from the start of the season.

"I think we've all grown a lot," said doubles two player Ela Kaul '27. "For me specifically, by playing matches, you gain a lot of strategy and understanding, especially with targeting the opponent's weakest shot."

Captain Sofia Torelli '24 also noticed an improvement in communication during matches, both playing with a partner or playing individually.

"One of our mottos has been 'If you're playing doubles, talk to your partner; if you're playing singles, talk to yourself,'" Torelli said.

Even with an undefeated record, the team still had to face the second-best team in the league above to qualify for the playoffs where they "have always lost," according to Druskin. This year, the team faced Sacred Heart.

"We just have to stick it out and make sure we aren't errors," Druskin says. "I think it's mostly going to be working on our technique and consistency."

Kaul also believes the team plans to practice consistency before the big match.

"Our coach always tells us that consistency is letting the opponent make the mistake," Kaul remarked. "We're all just going to try and work on consistent shots and keeping the ball in to minimize errors."



Photo by Emma Zwaanstra

FLICKED UP AT FRANKLIN

The team poses for a photo with coach Daria Dieva

Future of Girls Volleyball shines bright at Stockton Classic

Even with missing coaches and players, the team finds success upon return to the tournament

By Ethan Huynh

From the early morning all the way to the evening on Oct. 7, anyone walking past Franklin High School in Stockton would have heard the piercing shrieks of whistles blowing and shoes squeaking against the floor. It was the day of the Stockton Classic volleyball tournament.

The day marked the second year that Nueva girls volleyball competed in the tournament. In the 12 hours they were there, the team went 2-2, beginning the day by obliterating the BHCPC Zebbras 25-8 and 25-15. They then lost two consecutive games to Sierra High School and Madera High School before bouncing back and ending the day with a two-set win against Lincoln High School.

Team captain Kaila Ehrlich '24 was unable to attend the tournament, so Emma Zwaanstra '25 stepped up to take the title in her absence. She says that the tournament was a highlight of the season and a great bonding experience that brought everyone on the team closer together.

"We didn't have our full team there, and some of us had to play different

positions, so it was important for us to pick each other up," said Zwaanstra. "It was awesome to see people take on a larger role or leadership position on the team, and I think everyone adapted to the circumstances really well since we had to play against some tough teams."

Zwaanstra says that the tournament had hours of downtime and allowed the team to make some fun memories off the court as well.

"We had to save a lost dog in the road from getting hit by a car. We also had some crises with mud puddles and had to clean each other's jerseys off," she said.

The team is young, as over half the roster is made up of underclassmen. June Lee '27 is looking forward to future seasons.

"We'll be losing some of our main rotation players next year when the seniors leave," she said. "I think it was a good kind of preview of what our team is going to look like next year."

Since the tournament, the team went 3-1 in their following regular season games and won one playoff game before falling to Castilleja in the CCS Quarterfinal round.

READY TO GO

Sophie Druskin '24 runs down the line with energy ahead of their game against Notre Dame



Photo by Diane Mazzoni

Bringing new meaning to the "Nueva waves"

As Nueva's first sailing club team, members hope to increase excitement for the sport

By Ellie Kearns

These mavericks take to the waves. Sasha Gordon '24, Adam Kan '24, Max Kaufman '26, and Taryn Hwang '27 are members of Nueva's sailing club, a team that competes in high school regattas (the term for sailing competitions, which consist of six races through a course) under Nueva's name.

Currently, sailing is not an official Nueva sport: the school does not provide boats, a coach, or host practices. Team members practice off-campus at Peninsula Youth Sailing Foundation (PYSF) in Redwood City. Several other schools are represented at PYSF, including Design Tech High School, Menlo, and Crystal Springs Uplands School.

Team co-founder Gordon has been advocating for the team for two years, initially collaborating with former Athletics Director Chris Wade to make strides in bringing sailing to Nueva. When

Wade left, the project lost momentum as faculty members lacked clarity on whether they could approve new school sports. As of now, the team functions as a club, training off campus but competing for Nueva.

Despite setbacks, Gordon is grateful to compete under Nueva's name and increase student participation in competitive sailing.

"The thing that I love about sailing is it's so different from academic pursuits: the people, the types of things you do, the way your brain works, all of that is super different," she said.

Kan, the team's other co-founder, similarly finds the sport exciting, appreciating its distinctiveness compared to other extracurriculars.

"Sailing is a very Nueva sport because you have to learn a lot about tactics and the wind, and read the course," he said. "I think it's a sport that a lot of students find intellectually stimulating and fun."

PYSF offers an accessible way for students to experience the sport with no commitment



Photo by Sasha Gordon

SET THE SAILS

Sasha Gordon '24 and Max Kaufman '26 work collaboratively to steer their boat.

or cost at "Try-out" days. Despite the naming, these days involve no evaluation of capabilities, and anyone interested in joining the team can do so. The most recent "Try-out" dates were on Sept. 6 and 7, and more will be available in the spring before the competition season begins.

In the future, the team hopes to add more team members and potentially receive administrative support, such as receiving a club sized budget to cover yearly fees for the sailing league, entry fees for regattas, and team jerseys. The team is also hoping to organize a Wednesday of Wonder workshop, where students can test the waters of sailing.

"I would really like to build up enough momentum in the team that it keeps itself going," Kaufman said.

The team has already proven successful as they earned third place across two divisions at a recent regatta in Monterey Bay on Oct. 7 to 8.

"It's different to win when you're representing your school as opposed to just doing club because when you're representing your school, you feel like part of a community," Kan said.

To Sasha, at the heart of sailing is connection.

"You really feel connected when you're sailing: to the things around you, to the boat, to your partner in the boat, to the kids on the other boats," she said. "Being able to stand on that podium, and think, 'We got ourselves to this point, and we've invested time because we love this,' is special."

Making waves without a splash

Former Nuevan pursues Olympic diving goals

By Ellie Kearns

Anna Lemkin stands on the platform overlooking the placid blue water awaiting her 10 meters below. Remembering the corrections from her coach and the cues of her dive, she approaches the ledge. *You've got this. Confidence. Trust yourself.* And then she jumps.

In a mere two seconds, she flips and twists with immense speed and dexterity, she becomes a blur. With a cracking sound, she breaks the water's surface, and the crowd erupts in cheers.

Lemkin, who attended Nueva from pre-kindergarten to tenth grade, is an elite diver and National Team member. After her sophomore year at the Upper School, she moved to Southern California to pursue her diving career at Mission Viejo Nadadores (MVN) Diving in Mission Viejo, CA. She is currently a senior at Mission Viejo High School.

"It wasn't the easiest, but I knew it was the right decision," she said, referring to the transition.

Lemkin had previously trained at Stanford Diving Club, where she had been practicing since 8 years old and competing since 2018. One of the main difficulties in moving clubs was having to rebuild a relationship with a new coach who she had not grown up with. Because the sport of diving can be so mental, she said, it was a challenge having her new coach get to know her as an athlete and understand her mentally.

In addition to coaching, part of the reason

she decided to move was her teammates.

"I knew my teammates would push me more at my new club," she said, adding that this eventually became a "double-edged sword." "With us all being really good and edging each other out constantly at practice, it makes for practice to be really competitive."

Six of her teammates at MVN are also National Team members, who regularly travel alongside Lemkin to international meets, such as the Junior Pan American

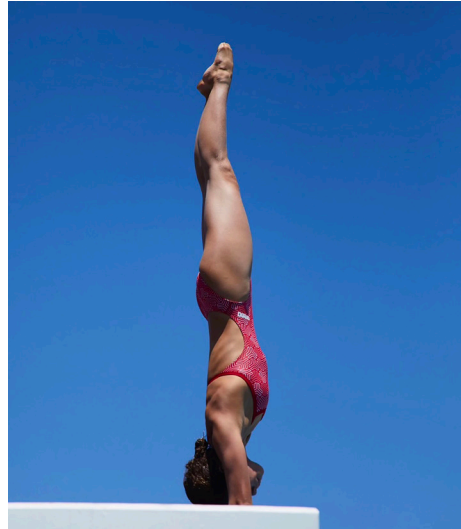


Photo by Jake Randazzo

HIGH DIVE

Lemkin competes in several diving events, including the 10 meter platform. She often starts dives from a handstand position (above).

Championships which took place on Aug. 23 to 26 in Lima Peru, or the Junior World Championships which were in Montreal, Canada from Nov. 27 to Dec. 4 in 2022.

Even facing international and club competition, Lemkin has blown it out of the water. She is a five-time Junior National Champion, Junior World's Champion on three-meter, and Junior World's bronze medalist on platform. She has earned a spot on the junior national team for three years and one as a senior national team member. She is also committed to Stanford University on a full athletic scholarship. Plus, she's avoided injuries thus far ("knock on wood").

"I love at those meets knowing that it's this international community brought together by a shared love for their sport. Meeting everyone there and being in the atmosphere is a really cool experience," she said. "When you go to those international competitions, you're representing your country, not your club, so it's an honor."

In June 2024, Lemkin will compete at the USA Olympic Trials, a meet she has had her eyes on for years.

"I'm not going in there with expectations," she said. "It's kind of anyone's game, based on consistency and how they do on that given day."

To prepare, Lemkin plans to refine her current list of dives and improve rip entry (entering the water without a splash). While



MASTERING TECHNIQUE

Laser-focused, Lemkin prepares to enter the water at Regionals in 2022.

she plans to spend many hours poolside prepping for the competition, she emphasizes the value of "compartmentalizing" her life to be able to give her all in everything she does.

She gained this perspective after her junior year at Stanford Online School: intending to have a more flexible schedule, online school ultimately dissolved the boundary between her sport and academics and centered her life around diving. At that time, she began to equate her athletic performance to her self-worth which, after a particularly difficult diving period, became taxing.

"I know my goals, and I know where I want to be, but [online school] made me realize that you need balance in your life," she said. "Just focusing on one thing isn't necessarily going to make you instantly better."

Lemkin now takes half of her classes in person at her local high school and half online. Throughout it all, she aims to maintain balance and love for her sport as her career progresses, and of course, to remember to trust herself before she jumps.



Photo by Jerry Yang



Photo by Damian Marhefka

Finding their balance

Mari Marhefka '25 and Emi Yang '26 discuss the hidden art of equestrian vaulting

By Roan Wanek

Ask any equestrian vaulter what their sport is all about, and most would say the same thing:

"Normally I tend to describe it as a mixture of gymnastics and dance on a moving horse," said Mari Marhefka '25.

Equestrian vaulting developed as a means to introduce children into equestrian sports after World War I, and still functions as originally intended.

"My mom is a rider. When I was five, she wanted me to get into riding. I started vaulting to get balance for riding, and ended up liking it better," said Marhefka.

Emi Yang '26 cited a similar experience when she began vaulting at 3 years old. Coming from a family of riders, her parents chose vaulting as the safest horseback sport.

"A lot of people think about vaulting as unsafe," Marhefka explained, "but whenever you've been doing it for a while it becomes clear there's a lot of safety measures in place."

Firstly and most importantly, the vaulter does not control the horse, which allows them to place all their focus on their routine. Instead, this responsibility falls to a dedicated lunger who directs the horse's movement. The routine lasts anywhere from one to four minutes. A vaulting routine is separated into two segments, the compulsory and the freestyle segments.

Each compulsory movement is graded on a ten point scale, similarly to other performance-based sports. Compulsories range from vaulting onto horseback from a standing jump to flag, balancing on one's knee and the opposite hand.

IN SYNC

Yang competes with her team at the 2021 Vaulting World Championships (top). Marhefka handstands tall on horse Diva, during the personal freestyle round (bottom).

Furthermore, a vaulting routine can consist of either a single or team of vaulters.

"Individually, you have a stronger bond with your horse. But on a team, of course, you still have to have that, but you also have to have a stronger connection within the five other people that you're sharing the horse with," said Yang, who is her team's flyer, meaning she is lifted and thrown into the air.

With vaulting being such a niche sport, participants often get to know one another well on and off the field due to frequent interactions with one another. "It's a very small community, but the people who are in it care about it so much," said Marhefka, "They love the horses, and they love the other people."

Yang further expressed the closeness of the community, "It's so tight knit that sometimes people will just let you borrow their horse."

Since the sport originated in Germany, the majority of participants still come from Europe. In fact, both Nueva vaulters have participated in international competitions. Yang competed in Sweden and won bronze in the 2023 Junior Vaulting World Championships, and Marhefka competed in Belgium at CVI Grote-Brogel this summer.

"I want to strive towards another Junior World Championship," said Yang "They happen every two years, and you can participate if you're under 18, so I still have one more in 2025."

With how obscure the sport can be, both Nueva vaulters wanted to emphasize the horse's comfort and safety. When asked what one thing they would want to communicate to the community, Marhefka said, "A lot of people have a lot of misconceptions that it would be really hard on the horse, or that it's super dangerous for the vaulter, but there's tons of precautions that go into both protecting the horse and the humans involved."

"When vaulting, all vaulters are trained to specifically be soft on the horse, and be conscious and aware of the horse's rhythm," Yang echoed. To her point, rough landings and uncontrolled movements result in a penalized score in competitions.

"When you're on top of the horse, you feel completely in sync."

Student section

Students share their predictions and hot takes for the 2023-24 NBA season



“The Sacramento Kings will miss the playoffs” - Rohan Tummala '25



“The Chris Paul trade is going to have a bigger effect than any other trade this year” - Max Roche '25



“With James Harden, the Clippers will make a deep run in the playoffs, potentially to the finals” - Dylan Szeto '27



“The Warriors need a second option. Andrew Wiggins and Klay Thompson are not cutting it” - Emi Yang '26



“Mikal Bridges will win MVP” - Michael Yang '26



Photo by ESPN

NBA recap: trades, deals, and superteams

The 2023 NBA offseason was filled with big moves, making this season one to watch

By Niam Kaul

With the NBA season kicking off on Oct. 24, it's time to look back at blockbuster offseason shakeups, preseason odds, and more.

The 2023 offseason was filled with mayhem as teams went from fringe playoff contenders to championship favorites, leaned into the rebuild, or questionably didn't make any major changes. For context, a rebuild is when a team transitions from focusing on winning during the current season to winning in the future which typically means they will lose for one or more seasons.

Two years after winning their first championship in 50 years, the number one seed Milwaukee Bucks crashed out of the 2023 playoffs to a high-flying Miami Heat team led by established veteran Jimmy Butler. As a result, superstar Giannis Antetokounmpo considered leaving the Bucks.

To appease Antetokounmpo, the Bucks traded away several players including veteran point guard Jrue Holiday and multiple draft picks for disgruntled star point guard Damian Lillard from the Portland Trail Blazers. The

new Bucks currently have the fourth-best championship odds, according to Basketball Reference, but fans are still skeptical.

“As much as Lillard might help the Bucks, I don't think that this will impact their title chances as they will still have many obstacles in the east,” Dylan Szeto '27 said. “Even if they make the finals, they are not going to get past whatever team is coming from the west.”

The offseason was similarly crucial for the San Francisco's Warriors; coming off a disappointing second round playoff loss to longtime rival LeBron James and his Los Angeles Lakers, the Warriors looked to rebound healthier and stronger.

The Warriors addressed their depth issues, lack of big men, and rapidly declining team chemistry.

In an attempt to recreate the star-studded Warriors teams of the past, Golden State traded for 12-time all-star Chris Paul in a deal that sent young guard Jordan Poole to the Washington Wizards.

“I think the Warriors trading for Chris Paul was crucial in giving them a reliable second unit that is able to operate while Curry can get some rest. I think this has

given him more confidence in that he can trust the second unit holding ground without him on the court. A good example of this was their 102-101 win over the Kings on Nov. 1.” Brooks Wagonfeld '26 said.

The win against the Kings that he referenced was a good example of how Chris Paul can help the Warriors this season as the Warriors players were able to play fewer minutes than the Kings players due to the stronger bench rotation allowing for the players to have more energy which was crucial in getting the win.

Amongst these deals for superstars, there were other noteworthy offseason actions such as Latvian power forward Kristaps Porzingis being shipped to the Boston Celtics. Along with the Rockets speeding up their rebuild by signing former Grizzlies forward Dillon Brooks and NBA Finals Champion Fred VanVleet. While longtime Wizards guard Bradley Beal joined Washington D.C. native Kevin Durant in Phoenix after being traded to the Suns.

With many offseason shake-ups, new in-season tournaments, and more the 2023-24 NBA season will surely be one to remember.

Bang bang Niner Gang!

Even amidst up-and-down performances this season, the 49ers still break records

By Ethan Huynh

Following a heartbreaking loss to the eventual Super Bowl runner-up Philadelphia Eagles in last year's NFC championship game, the San Francisco 49ers are back and are 6-3 halfway through the season.

The 49ers' explosive offense is led by quarterback Brock Purdy and running back Christian McCaffrey, both of whom broke franchise records just four weeks into the season.

Drafted in 2022, Purdy was taken with the very last pick, also known as the “Mr. Irrelevant” pick. Since then, he has risen from a third-string option to an elite starter in just one season, donning and embracing the nickname of the pick.

On Oct. 1 during a matchup against the Arizona Cardinals, Purdy added another feat

to his already remarkable NFL resume: he broke the 49ers' franchise record for the highest completion rate in a game with 95.2%, meaning he completed 95.2% of passes he threw. Purdy significantly surpassed the former record of 90%, held by the all-time great Steve Young.

Besides Purdy, the 49ers offense has been firing on all cylinders. The team acquired star running back Christian McCaffrey in a trade last season, and he has become a monumental asset to the team.

In the same game against the Cardinals, McCaffrey also broke the franchise's record for consecutive games with a touchdown with 13. The record was formerly held by NFL legend Jerry Rice. As the season progressed, McCaffrey continued his touchdown streak to 17 games, tying the NFL all-time record.

Late in a matchup on Nov. 12 against the Jacksonville Jaguars, McCaffrey was yet to score. Despite holding a dominant 34-3 lead with five minutes left, the Niners opted to play McCaffrey in hopes that he could break the record. Unfortunately, things didn't go his way and he failed to reach the end zone on four attempts from within the ten-yard line. The Niners went on to win the game, and McCaffrey is now one of two holders for the all-time touchdown streak record.



“All those features in one QB? It doesn't seem possible. Unless you've watched Purdy play for these past two seasons, and especially the last few weeks.” - Tim Kawakami from *The Athletic* on Purdy's bold and daring throw choices, highlighted by the 66-yard touchdown to tight end George Kittle.



Photo by Ezra Shaw

RUN - C.M.C

McCaffrey runs with the ball during a game against the Kansas City Chiefs last year.