

Blach Sports Teams Make School History

Jackson K.



The 2017-18 season 3 Blach sports teams made school history this year when all four teams, 7th and 8th grade boys volleyball & the girl's 7th and 8th grade soccer teams, all made the league finale. This is the first time in school history that we have achieved this feat.

For the 7th grade boys volleyball team, only 3 players have played competitively beforehand and most haven't touched a volleyball before this school year. This is the first year these athletes have collectively played volleyball together. They finished the regular season at 6-3, losing 2

of their first 3 games to Cupertino and Sunnyvale, last year's finalists.

The first game was against the reigning Champs, Cupertino, who they would eventually play in the finals. They got blown out 3 sets to none in

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Is the Electoral College Voting System the Wrong Way to Elect Presidents?

Eric M.

On November 9, 2016, Republican Donald Trump was elected as the 45th president of the United States of America, defeating Democrat Hillary Clinton by a margin of 77 electoral votes. However, Hillary Clinton won the popular vote, getting 2,868,691 more votes than Trump. So, even though Donald Trump got elected as the president, the majority of the U.S. did not vote for him. This begs the question: should we change the way that we elect presidents?

To start this debate, we have to realize that the reason the electoral college was established in the first place: to safeguard against uneducated or uninformed voters by giving the final power to electors, who had the knowledge to make the right decision. Thus, ensuring that the voices of the masses could not

drown out minority interests; and forming a compromise between the Congress and popular vote determining the next president.

However, the former and main reason this system was made for is no longer relevant in the modern society. Voters now have technology that enables them to get the necessary information to make the correct decisions.

Some people believe that this electoral college voting system is the right way to elect presidents because if the presidential race was just determined by the popular vote, then smaller and less

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NEW RELEASE: The Model 3, awaiting the garages of over 500,000 people (image from Tesla)

Making Cars and Waging Wars: Tesla's Recent Battles

Anthony P.

Employees working for the company at the stern of the electric car industry, Tesla Motors, already have enough to worry about with the rapidly increasing production of the Model 3, but that is not the extent of their worries.

Over the past year, Tesla has been fighting a war against

allegations made by workers and journalists who have accused the company of poor safety for workers at its factories and of "pervasive harassment" at the workplace.

Tesla has been refuting these claims, both with blogs on the company's website and with letters to its employees from its founder and CEO, Elon Musk. One letter from

the tech mogul sparked some controversy after it was sent on May 31st 2017.

The letter, called unsympathetic by many, told employees to be "thick-skinned" and accept people's apologies for conduct like harassment, and to not do anything that they would be ashamed to describe

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Arming teachers is not the solution



Allison T.

You can't solve a shooting crisis with more guns.

No matter where you are or what your beliefs are, it's a tragedy when yet another school shooting headline is plastered over front covers of newspapers and websites. It breaks the heart seeing these are ordinary, innocent people—students and teachers who were going about their days like the rest of us—dying.

No one gains from these acts of violence brought upon students. The shooters—what do they earn? They have some options: a sentence to death or a lifetime in jail, neither of which sound very appealing.

We honored the individuals who died in the Parkland shooting in the nationwide walkout, but several shootings have happened since then. According to CNN, there have already been 17 school shootings where someone

has been injured or killed in 2018 so far. That means an average of about 1.5 shootings every week.

What are we offered as a solution to our problem? Arming teachers, of course.

Off the top of my head, I can think of maybe a dozen or so reasons this is not the way to solve our problem. Imagine a world of teachers with guns strapped to themselves as they are teaching, walking around campus and doing all sorts of ordinary things—it's a bit unnerving.

All this means is there's more access to guns at a school. The teachers would have to keep it with them, seeing that leaving a deadly weapon in an unattended classroom would not be a great idea. Teachers keeping a gun would be for safety reasons, but it's still possible for someone to grab it from a teacher and start firing, which brings us back to

our problem in the first place.

I'm tired of “guns don't kill people, people do.” Yes, the shooter is the one pulling the trigger, but the thing is, people with bad intentions can't shoot a crowd of people in an instant if they don't have any guns. Innocent citizens wouldn't be slaughtered by the hundreds each year if people had no guns.

“We need to pay attention to the fact that this isn't just a mental health issue,” Emma Gonzalez, a survivor of the Parkland shooting, said passionately. “He wouldn't have gotten that many students with a knife!”

What good will giving more people guns do? More and more get access to killing machines. More and more school shootings. More and more lives are lost, all from senseless acts of destruction.

OPINIONS

School safety at Blach



Diya M.

The recent school shootings remind us that bad things can happen to anyone, at any time. From the devastating forest fire that ravaged the schools of California to the active school shooter in Florida.

So what can we do, here in California, to prepare? First off, take the drill seriously. We never know when something dangerous can happen. In the recent lock down, many students took the lockdown as a joke. . The drills are there to prepare you and help calm you down during an actual emergency.

Second, if you see something weird on campus, like a kid talking about bringing a weapon to school, or a ominous smoke cloud on the distance, alert an authority or a

trusted adult. By telling a trusted adult, authorities can get to the source of the problem faster.

Lastly, be invested. A school can only be safe when students, parents and teachers make it safe. Be updated on upcoming drills and practices. Talk to your teachers or a trusted adult about how you can improve your actions on certain drills. You could even make a mini first aid kit and keep it in your backpack.

The safety of students is paramount. Being able to have escape routes or hiding places in the case an emergency, can save many lives. Without practice, we wouldn't be able to exit safely or know where to hide if an intruder enters.

Without drills, students

would not immediately know where to take shelter during an earthquake, especially here in California. The students would be in chaos not knowing what to do, making it harder for the teachers to keep them quiet and organized. Thankfully, practice makes perfect. With Blach's monthly fire drills, occasional earthquake and lockdowns, the students are better prepared for an emergency.

—DISCLAIMER—

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1. “The Falcon's Quill” reserves the right to decide what will be published.

2. We reserve the right to edit any material with regard to length or content, or that we deem inappropriate or offensive.

3. We will strive to report news accurately and objectively, clearly distinguishing between fact and opinion.

4. We vow to cover stories without discrimination toward any group.

Hopeful Eyes: One extraordinary woman who takes her life into her own hands

Allison T.

There are many things in life we take for granted. Walking, breathing, speaking—no one gives much thought to these everyday things that are so important to us yet so overlooked. It makes you wonder... what if one of these or-

dinary but fundamental parts of our lives were to be taken away?

Fernanda Castelo is a sailor, design consultant, former dancer, student mentor, advocate for the disabled, and US naturalized citizen from the Philippines. Throughout her life, she has gone through more than her share of hard-

ships, yet she still looks to the future with hopeful eyes.

As a child, Fernanda loved dance. She did ballet, jazz, Hawaiian, Tahitian, tap; the sky was the limit for her. Fernanda lived in the Philippines up until the summer before grade five, when she and her family of ten moved to Southern California. There, she continued with her passion for dancing.

When Fernanda was about to graduate from high school, she auditioned as a performer for Disneyland and, thanks to her years of dance experience, was hired. For eight years, she danced at "The Happiest Place on Earth"'s parades, special shows and events, and performed with character costumes.

"The way you become a character is based on your height. So, I'm not very tall, and the characters I mostly played, based on my height, were like the Seven Dwarfs..." said Fernanda, grinning good-naturedly. "Not Snow White—not Cinderella."

Fernanda's life changed in an instant when she suffered from a severe fall, causing her to require a wheelchair for traveling from then on out.

Although this barred her from dancing, it didn't dampen her hopes for her life.

Always one to look on the brighter side, she found ways around her disability. "I know setbacks. But after a while I got bored with it... If I keep thinking about 'what am I going to do?' but not doing it, I'm not going anywhere." Fernanda pointed out.

Fernanda also commented that she tends to face challenges head-on by experimenting with smaller parts of the whole rather than worrying over how daunting the problem seems. She started out with getting more comfortable moving around with a wheelchair and, after three years following the accident, she returned to studying in Paris.

Now, Fernanda works as a design consultant for companies developing technologies that assist those with physical disabilities. She collaborates with these companies by giving them feedback and information from someone who has personal experience, someone who knows what it's like to live with a disability.

Among other technologies, Fernanda has helped

work on WHILL, an electric wheelchair (shown in the photo above). She helped the company by giving her insight on design based on her own experience. WHILL is now being sold worldwide, and it inspires Fernanda to think that so many users feel the same way about the wheelchair she helped design.

When she isn't pitching in to design disability-assisting technology, Fernanda mentors engineering students at Stanford University. She commented that she always loves seeing their intellectual curiosity and genuine enthusiasm for learning.

Another strong passion of hers is for sailing, which has become her own way of dancing, now that it isn't possible for her to really dance. "I'm a sailor. Why sailing is [a favorite of mine is] because when I'm out on the water, I'm like a dancer..." said Fernanda. "There's no restrictions, the whole bay is my dance floor, [and] the wind is my partner."

"It's good for me to go out and do something that scares me a little bit." Fernanda smiled. "It makes you respect it."



Nice no matter what: A woman with an unconditional love for her family

Celine P.

At 6:15 in the morning, Mithra Sadrzadeh heaves herself out of bed and gets breakfast ready for her seven year old daughter and infant twins. Later in the morning, she drives her daughter to school and comes back home to cook, do laundry, and clean. By the time 3:00 rolls around, Mithra makes sure she has a snack ready for Esther, her daughter.

Later in the afternoon and evening, she helps Esther do her homework and get her chores done.

When the hour hand hits nine o'clock, she herds her children to bed, including her-

self. She falls asleep and sleeps 'till the next day to repeat.

At 39, almost 40, Mithra finds herself with very little time. Her life is consumed by the helping of others.

When she was asked what she does in her free time, she laughed and said, "What do I do in my free time? If I have free time..."

But, in the fleeting hours of free time she can scavenge, she exercises and goes for coffee. "Sometimes I have coffee with my friends. We talk about life. I think it's really good to have time for yourself."

Previously, Mithra worked as a Human Resources Manager at the Bay Area Surgical Management.

"I'm a people person. I love to help people." she says.

She went from helping people at work, to helping all members of her family at home.

Currently, her husband suffers from a heart problem and her daughter suffers from another illness.

You might think she spends every waking moment thinking about such and such, but she says that she wants to keep her mind clear and hope for the best. She says it's not the biggest thing in her life, and she doesn't want it to be.

She said she's happy that when this happened, they were in the U.S.

A long while ago, Mithra

moved from Iran, her home country. She says she has no reason to go back, because all of her family's here.

She's really happy to live in the U.S.. "It's the land of opportunity for both of us."

And by "us", she means her husband, who she married a total of 16 years ago.

"It wasn't an arranged marriage, I would say." She had met him because both families knew each other.

They dated for exactly sixth months, and right on the sixth month mark, he proposed to her.

"Six months, its very short. Next time, I'll make sure its longer." She chuckled as she said this and quick-

ly followed up with a, 'but of course there won't be a next time!'

She focuses all of her attention on her life and not politics. "I don't really get involved in politics... I try to stay out of it."

"You always have to find a way to release your stress somehow."

So, she makes it her goal to live and let go.



That ‘2’ you got on your science test might be the result of the candy bar you ate: Nutrition’s Impact on Teens Academic Performance

 Ava K.

Nutrition is important for adults and children alike, however, a healthy diet is especially important for teens and good school performance. Studies have shown that students who eat an adequate amount of fruits, vegetables, protein, and fiber perform better on exams than those eating foods high in salt, refined sugars, and saturated fat. Of course gender, school, and previous education can cause results to differ, but the main idea is there. Eating the right food fuels teens with long lasting energy for sports, hours of homework, and a happy, healthy lifestyle.

To date, the majority of research on diet and school performance has been focused on the importance of eating a healthy breakfast. Starting off the day with a nutritious breakfast is crucial to teens’ academic performance in the morning and as the day progresses.

Every kid hears from their parents, “Breakfast is the most important meal of the day,” and it really is! Teens should look to include a balance of fresh fruit, whole grains, eggs or other lean protein, and low-fat dairy

products in their breakfast.

Too often, students skip breakfast and then arrive at school groggy and unprepared to learn. Having no food in your system makes it difficult to focus and remember new information you are taught.

During adolescence, a teen’s brain is undergoing serious and important changes. At this time of growth and development in a teen’s brain, the brain’s dendrites-which send signals to neurons- extend and grow more branch like. At the same time, the synapses most frequently used to process information grow stronger.

The brain’s remodeling phase in a teen’s life is known as “pruning.” Without proper nutrition, its ability to learn new tasks or skill decreases, which is certainly not good for students. What teens eat definitely impacts the performance of their brain.

While it is important to include essential food groups in their diets like fats, proteins, and complex carbohydrates, teens often forget the importance of consuming vitamins and minerals as well in their daily meals. This doesn’t mean teens should eat processed

gummy bears to supplement their bodies with vitamins and minerals though. They can find them in so many whole foods.

Specific vitamins and minerals that our body obtains from nutrient-rich foods play a critical role in brain growth, development, and especially learning for teens. For vitamins, key ones for teens to include in their diets are Vitamin A, Vitamin C, Vitamins B12 and B6, and Vitamin D.

Vitamin A is found in foods like carrots, sweet potatoes, and kale and promotes healthy skin. Vitamin C is found most commonly in oranges but is also found in strawberries, papaya, mango, and bell peppers! You need Vitamin C for the growth and repair of tissue when wounded, as well as helping your body make collagen, which is a protein used to make skin, tendons, and blood vessels.

Vitamin B12 is a vital vitamin for teens to eat because of its ability to make DNA in the body and keep blood cells healthy. It is in all meat, fish, poultry, and eggs. Vitamin B6 is found in starchy vegetables and beef. Vitamin D is in some dairy products and fatty fish like salmon and

helps to strengthen bones.

Minerals are not commonly included in a teen’s diet however, they are equally as important as vitamins. Minerals teens need are calcium, iron, potassium, zinc, phosphorus, and magnesium.

Other than in dairy products, calcium can also be found in almonds and broccoli. calcium is probably the most important mineral for teens because of its ability to form and keep bones strong and also release hormones in the body. iron, also very important, is in dark, leafy vegetables like spinach, beans, and tofu. Iron produces red blood cells and hemoglobin, which is the substance that carries oxygen from your lungs to the rest of your body.

Potassium, commonly found in bananas and dates, helps to maintain a balance of fluids in your body. Zinc and phosphorus are found in meat, seafood, and poultry and magnesium is in lentils and whole grains.

Vitamins and minerals are essential to a teen’s healthy diet, but there is no need to stress about how to get them in your daily meals. If teens just try to eat a healthy balance of fruits,

vegetables, lean proteins, whole grains, and healthy fats, they will be eating vitamins and minerals without even knowing it!

Consuming nutritious food helps teens not only do well academically, but also prevent issues such as eating disorders, obesity, and dental problems.

Teens just need to eat a balanced diet; it is okay to occasionally eat foods that may not be the healthiest. No single food harms your brain, but certain foods are more beneficial for brain health.

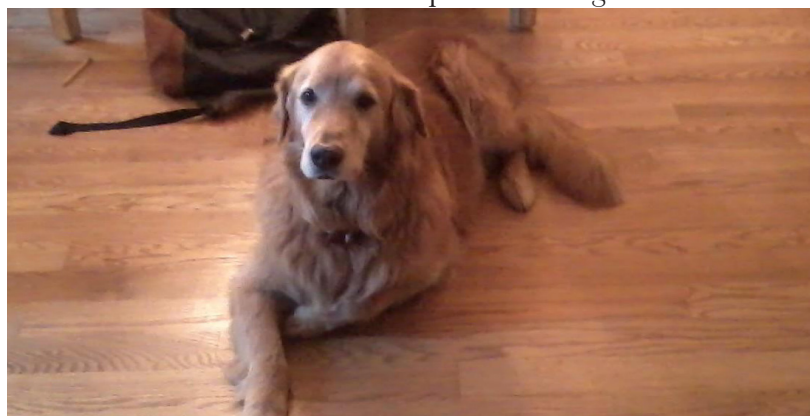
What foods teens eat, and the quantities affect their attention, memory, and ability to focus. This translates to how well teens do in school. No specific foods will make you do better on a test, but if you want to give yourself an advantage, you should start your day with a nutritious breakfast.

If teens stay active and incorporate healthy foods into their diets, they can be assured that their brain will be working to its full potential and help them with performing their best academically.

You should get a dog or a cat: Here’s why

 Saarang B.

It has been proven that a pet, such as a dog or cat, can increase good health and reduce other allergens. This can be especially useful when people are about to have a baby, because the pet can get rid of the allergens when the baby is most vulnerable, which is before birth and the first three months.



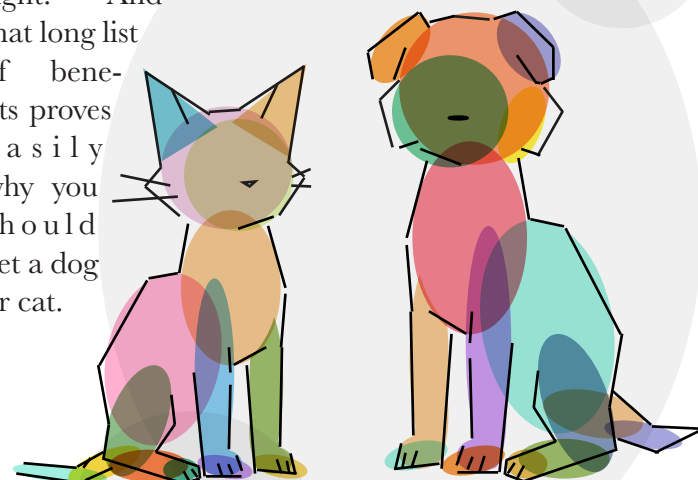
Therefore, children can live an allergy free life, thanks to their pet. As a person with allergies to pollen, dust, and cats- plus many other things- I can tell anyone the cost of a pet is nothing compared to the sleepless nights that children can and will experience, and the allergy medicines that they will consume. Also, the exposure to pets at early ages will prevent allergies to them later

on, so any child can enjoy all the benefits of cuddly cats and loyal dogs without having to worry about allergies.

I think pets are a necessity before and shortly after birth. According to the Microbiome Journal, a non-profit website for furthering scientific research, their “findings highlighted the differential impact of pet exposure on infant gut microbiota following variant birth scenarios; however, in common, the abundance of Ruminococcus and Oscillospira were found to be increased independent of other factors.”

Also, according to the CDC, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, the health benefits of a pet can be: decreased blood pressure, cholesterol levels, triglyceride (the

main component of natural fats and oils) levels, feelings of loneliness, increased exercise and outdoor activities- leaving one in better shape- and increased socialization. A long list, right? And that long list of benefits proves easily why you should get a dog or cat.



A Heart of Gold: Remembering Mrs. Honigman

 Haley F.

Energetic, supportive, dependable, passionate. Mrs. Honigman was a truly remarkable person who made an positive impact on everyone she met. Though most of the students at Blach have only known Mrs. Honigman for a year or two, we all can see the impact she has made in just the short amount of time she has been present in our school lives. Sr. Lopez, a good friend of Mrs. Honigman, said that she made everyone feel special, like they were amazing friends.

Not only did Mrs. Honig-

man have a fun personality at school, but outside of school too. During one of her many trips to Washington DC with the 8th graders at Blach, some of the teachers and students found the breakfast to be very bland. Mrs. Honigman made it her responsibility to spice up the breakfast by buying about nine bottles of what Mr. Maye claims to be “Some of the best hot sauce I have ever tasted.” This is an example of how much Mrs. Honigman cared about other people and their happiness.

All of the teachers at Blach can agree that Mrs. Honigman would do anything for a

student. Dr. Moerner made a point to say that, “She would go to the ends of the Earth for a student, even when everyone else would give up.” During her time as a math teacher at Blach, Mrs. Honigman always had her door open to students. She welcomed students, before and after school and during lunch. Mrs. Harris says that Mrs. Honigman’s room was always available when someone needed a quiet place to be alone, or if he or she wanted to play games with friends.

Mrs. Honigman was always very inclusive. Stanley, her husband said that, “She loved all her students especially those who were inclusive and doers.” One way she showed her love for her students was during the annual Blach trip to Washington DC. While many students at Blach assumed that the scholarships offered for this trip came from extra donations from the parents; they didn’t realize that Mrs. Honigman donated her own money. Not only was she

so generous to pay for other students to get the opportunity to experience Washington with their friends, she was also instrumental in the planning and organization behind the trip.

Another personality trait that stands out about Mrs. Honigman is her passion. As a track coach, she was always cheering on our teams and was definitely one of the most spirited teachers here at Blach. She was so competitive with her homerooms that when she tied with Sr. Lopez this past semester, she wanted to compete one on one with Sr. Lopez to declare the final winner. She changed her mind though, because she did not want to lose at the expense of her students.

Not only did she have a passion for helping other people, but animals too. This would include the time when she stopped her car in the middle of rush hour on highway 101, to rescue the kitten she then adopted as her own. Another time she risked her

safety for an animal was when she and Mrs. Mackenzie were staying at Mrs. Mackenzie’s brother’s house for a weekend. As Mrs. Mackenzie came back from watering the flowers in the yard, she was alarmed to see Mrs. Honigman standing on the roof of the two story house. Mrs. Honigman claimed that there was a animal on the roof and she needed to get it down. When Mrs. Mackenzie tried to reason with her to get down, she was ignored because Mrs. Honigman had to help the animal. When Mrs. Honigman finally could see the “animal,” she realized it was simply a piece of rope, but she was ready to save it had it been an creature in need.

Clearly Mrs. Honigman was a very special lady who will be greatly missed at Blach. Determined, loving, patient, Mrs. Honigman will be forever in our hearts.



Schools Almost Done, Time for Spring-Time Fun

 Haley F.

The beginning of spring is not only getting us closer to summer; spring also signifies the last few months at Blach for our 8th graders. Between graduation, the time capsules, and the grad dance, the next months will fly by for the soon to be graduates.

Graduation

Graduation is the very last day at Blach for the 8th graders and it will be very fun for everyone involved. For seventh graders the day will be a



half day. On June 7th, the seventh graders’ day will include going to all of their classes for about fifteen minutes, and a final farewell with a slideshow from their year at Blach.

The 8th graders will then arrive at 12:30 and graduation will begin at 1:00. Mr. Dewberry encourages students to speak because he says it is a really nice way to wrap up the year. Students interested in speaking at graduation will create their speech, and about four will be chosen by staff members to present on the big day. Mrs. Narula will speak, the band will play, and the chorus will sing, making it an amazing experience for the 8th graders.

Time Capsules

One of the 8th grade highlights, at the end of the year, is the time capsule we will create in English. Even though it doesn’t seem like



a big deal now, opening the time capsules towards the end of senior year is a memory that will never be forgotten. Mrs. Mackenzie was inspired to continue this tradition simply because of the excitement and energy the day the seniors opened their time capsules. They love remembering 8th grade before they head off to college.

Everyone will write letters to themselves, parents will write letters to their child, and anything else you would like to include will be stored in the

time capsule. The 8th grade time capsule shows how you have changed from who you were in 8th grade to who you are in highschool.

So, as we prepare to create our time capsule, begin to think about what is important to you now and make sure you include it in your time capsule.

Graduation Dance

One of the most exciting events at the end of the year for the 8th graders is the graduation dance. Though the theme remains a secret, dancing, casino tables, and delicious treats are guaranteed to be present at the dance. Event planner and chairmen of the dance, Juliet Wilson promises amazing snacks, a fabulous DJ, and is hoping for 100% attendance. Wilson loves working with the dance committee and says they were able to come up with an amazing theme with “creative thinking

and committee approval.”

Continuing the tradition, they have kept the theme a secret, making it an even bigger surprise for the 8th graders. Based on her experience planning the dance for her older son, Wilson claims that it is dressier than the normal dances. She said that girls tend to wears dresses and most boys wear button down shirts, but some people still dress casually. She made a point of mentioning that no matter what you wear, make sure it is comfortable to move around in.

If you chose to attend the dance, you are in for a big surprise and so much fun.



Gun Control: the question everyone is asking



Sina S.
Saarang B.
Atli A.
Grace C.

Overview

One of the fundamental problems with American crime versus the rest of the developed world is that American crime is more lethal. This is due to the abundance of guns in America, compared to other developed countries.

Guns make killing a person considerably easier than it would be to do than a melee weapon. A scenario such as the Las Vegas shooting would not be possible without the firearms carried by the perpetrator, Stephen Paddock.

Paddock acquired twenty-four guns. Those guns were fourteen AR-15s, eight AR-10s, a Ruger American Rifle, and a Smith & Wesson Centennial Revolver. Ten of the AR-15s had magazines that could hold a hundred bullets.

In the Las Vegas shooting, four Canadians died. Four Canadians lost their lives due to broken, American gun regulations. The same broken regulations that lead to 13,286 deaths by gun violence in 2015.

The NRA often claims that the only thing that can stop an armed person with bad intentions, is an armed person with good intentions. According to the FBI's numbers, an unarmed person with good intentions, do more good than armed persons with good intentions. Out of 158 shootings, 3.125% were stopped by armed people while 13.125% were stopped by unarmed civilians.

This data proves that the 'good guy' with a gun argument isn't valid.

High capacity magazines (magazines hold the bullets

and are attached to, or inside of the gun) make mass shootings much easier to do and more damage in less time. More bullets mean more time to fire a weapon without reloading, meaning more casualties. Thirty round magazines were made illegal in 1994 but the law expired in 2004.

The gunman in the Sandy Hook school shooting in 2012 shot 150 rounds in five minutes because of these large magazines.

In America, any 19-year-old can buy a .50 caliber anti-material rifle legally, but can't buy a handgun, smoke a cigarette, or drink a bottle of beer.

Gun are rarely used in self-defense. Studies show that for every gun used for self-defense, six more are used to commit a crime.

Problems with legally owned guns

Legally owned guns are often stolen and used by criminals or family members that should not be handling a gun. In 2015, Saint Louis, Missouri saw a trend of guns being stolen by criminals. Most of the firearms were stolen from automobiles.

Many Missourians take their guns with them to crime-prone areas. When they go somewhere where guns aren't allowed, they leave the firearms in their cars. Criminals know this, so they break into people's cars and steal their guns.

Professor Remy Cross of Webster University said, "If you have a gun, and don't intend to use it yourself, because of the loopholes in laws around gun shows and resale, it's relatively easy to get these guns into criminals' hands." Chicago seized around 4,700 guns in 2015, from its res-

idents. Most of these guns were stolen.

In 19 states, firearms may be kept in a locked car in a school parking lot. But that can still cause problems.

Arguments can escalate like in Carbondale, Illinois. On January 27, 2014, a student was shot in the Rebound High school parking lot. This was just an argument which ended in a death just imagine how bad it would be if people brought guns to every argument.

The Bump Stock Controversy

A bump stock is a stock that uses the gun's recoil to increase its rate of fire. Bump stocks should not be legal because they make it easier to kill more people. Only California, New Jersey, Massachusetts, and New York have made bump stocks illegal.

In 46 states, bump stocks, that increase rate of fire, are legal. "Why on earth," says an anonymous student at Blach, "would you need a bump stock for anything?" This student is on the right track. You don't need a bump stock for hunting because you don't need a faster rate of fire, so what do you need it for?

President Trump has recently said that he will ban bump stocks through executive order. If, and only if, this will become a reality, then this calls for some celebrating. We are taking action, and that is delightful.

Along with bump stocks, the AR-15 should be banned from civilian use. The AR-15 military-style rifle has been used against civilians frequently. It ended the lives of seventeen people at Stoneman Douglas high school on February 14th, 2018.

It has been used in other mass shootings in Las Vegas,

Newtown, Aurora, and San Bernardino. According to the New York Times, "Since 2007, at least 173 people have been killed in mass shootings in the United States involving AR-15s." It also was used in the Port Arthur Shooting.

Some news outlets describe the AR-15 as the "weapon of choice" of the perpetrators of mass shootings.

Shooter's Camouflage

Suppressors are a lethal accessory that can be attached to a gun's barrel. The suppressor reduces the noise signature, so it is easier to shoot someone without them tracking you. This makes it surprising to find out that these are only illegal in ten states and Washington D.C.

This means in forty states, you can shoot your gun with little to no noise!

There are limited benefits of suppressors. They can reduce hearing loss and noise pollution during hunting. But, this doesn't explain why some states legalize suppressors but make them illegal for hunting!

This brings us to flash hiders. Flash hiders were made illegal in 1994, but the law expired in 2004. Flash hiders block the flash from a gun when fired. When a gun is fired normally, without a flash hider, the gun emits a small yellow flash.

With the flash hiders, the gun emits zero flashes, and it is significantly harder to trace a gun to where it was shot from. Flash hiders do not belong in the hands of civilians.

A Mental Health Issue

Another massive issue in which guns are concerned is mental health. People suffering from mental illness people are currently allowed to own and purchase guns. This, in most cases, is fine, but in some

"...out of 185 perpetrators between 1900 and 2017 either had a mental illness or showed signs of having mental illness."

situations, this can be a detrimental decision.

According to the LA times, out of 185 perpetrators between 1900 and 2017 either had a mental illness or showed signs of having a mental illness.

President Donald Trump recently, "urged people to report anyone whose behavior seemed disturbed, although that there is no law on the books in Florida that would let the authorities take people's guns in that situation." The fact is that there is no law allowing this is disagreeable.

Yet another example of the flaws of gun control is the story of Adam Lanza and the tragic shooting of Sandy Hook. According to the New York Times, "a man said he had been privy to a conversation in which Mr. Lanza said he had an assault weapon and was planning to kill children at Sandy Hook Elementary School." In addition, the NYPD told this man that, "There was nothing the [NYPD] could do about it."

There is no law allowing law enforcement to take away those guns because they legally belonged to Nancy Lanza, Adam Lanza's mother. That was in 2012. On December 14, 2016, Mr. Lanza sadly carried out his earlier plans.

He shot and killed his mother, who owned the guns he used, before heading to

school and taking the lives of twenty students and six staff members. After that, Mr. Lanza, at age 20, took his own life.

Although Mr. Lanza, and many others, probably commit this crime due to their mental illness, that doesn't resurrect the people lost in this manner. The fact of the matter is, we have to solve these problems.

Australia's National Firearms Agreement

Australia once banned guns which made a large difference. In the aftermath of the Port Arthur massacre, Australia introduced very strict gun control legislation known as the National Firearms Agreement. Before the Agreement, Australia averaged about 562.1 gun deaths per year. But after the Agreement, they averaged about 272.125 gun deaths a year. Australia has not had a single mass shooting since the Port Arthur massacre.

The NRA

It would be great if legislation like this was enforced. But that is difficult because of the NRA. I asked Stacey Helley about this issue. I asked her about why has the NRA been so effective at pushing their agenda. "I think the NRA has been effective with their message because they reach a great deal of people with videos and magazines. Most people are untouched by violent crime so they just don't get around the crazy angry people..." Stacey responded.

What Stacey is saying is that most people have never

been affected by violent crime that utilizes guns so they don't understand how awful these firearms can be. Stacey also said that "they've been effective using very cunning rhetoric ... then they think that any form of control is somebody coming for all of their guns, which is the slippery slope fallacy." Stacey means that the NRA has been able to trick its base that any form of control on their guns whether it be ban bump stocks or suppressors be a ban for all of their guns, which is not true.

If the right person has the right gun, that is fine for something like self-defense or hunting. A gun such as a DoubleTap, Liberator, Pepper Spray Gun, Glock 19, or a Sig Sauer P226 would be fine for defending your home. A person with a mental disability should not own a weapon such as an AR-15. Attachments such as bump stocks, suppressors, flash hiders, and extended magazines do not belong to civilians.

We need to reform our gun laws to make our fellow Americans feel safe and not feel like they will be shot by someone who should not own a firearm.

Arming Teachers

Imagine that your safety is jeopardized as a shooter rambles your school. You are running for your life in fear, thinking of the last words you said to your parents. This, unfortunately, is a problem that more and more students face as homicidal shooters target schools more often.

What if your teacher was armed with a gun and could

just fend off the attacker to keep you safe. You would probably be terrified of ever attending school again, knowing that such a weapon is in your teacher's hands, but you would still be safe and secure and the shooter may not have attacked your school in the first place.

Our current president, Donald J. Trump, and the Republicans have recently proposed to arm our educators with guns after the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida on February 14, 2018. 17 students and staff were killed and many others injured. If the staff had guns, would they have survived?

Florida's State Senate are already supporting the idea of arming teachers, but Florida's governor, Rick Scott, is opposed to the notion. The State Senate later changed the bill to read that up to 10 school personnel would be trained to carry weapons each school instead of arming most teachers in order for Governor Scott to sign the bill. He then signed the bill.

If teachers had guns, they might make the school safer, but on the other hand, they could cause more issues.

Many teachers wouldn't be comfortable with using a gun, especially if they need to fire it in the event of an attack where they are in panic and lack tactical knowledge. Kiana Z., a seventh grade student at Blach who has used a gun, mentioned that "Shooting a gun and aiming correctly is a really hard thing to do, and especially in the situation where lives are at risk, there

would be almost a 0% chance of shooting it correctly."

Blach's assistant principal and history teacher, Mr. Dewberry, stated, "I would not be comfortable because of the dangers of having a gun on campus." Guns are fatal weapons and they would not only frighten the teachers, but also the students.

Mrs. Narula, Blach's principal expressed that "I think that it would take the focus off of learning." School should be a place where students come to learn and have fun, not a place that would terrify them from attending, knowing that there are deadly weapons in the room. Mrs. Hickman, a seventh-grade English teacher at Blach, commented, "Weapons and schools don't mix."

Chances are, students who have seen or used a gun would not react strongly about arming teachers and feel would feel secure knowing that if there was a shooter, their teachers would be able to defend them. On the contrary, students who haven't ever seen let alone use a gun might be scared to death, being aware that such a dangerous weapon is in their classroom.

A teacher's job is to educate, not to fire a gun at someone. Mrs. Narula said, "In order to protect [our] students, [the staff] should be trained in emergency procedures and you should be active and cooperative in any drill."

Mr. Dewberry also indicated, "If you are going to arm teachers, they would be trained teachers, not military professionals." Trained teachers would only have a few

years, or less, of experience whereas military professionals train with guns for most of their lives. Shooting a gun is not part of a teacher's job.

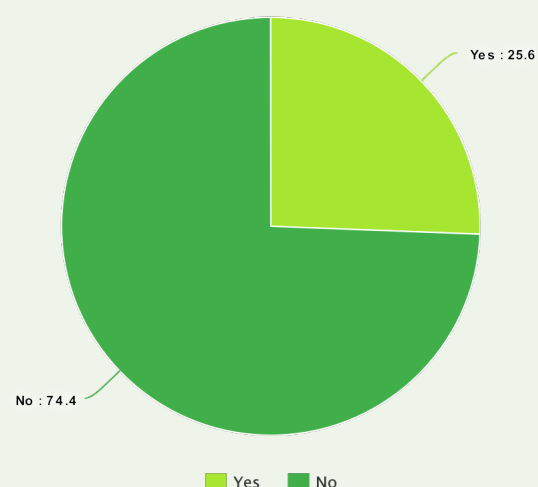
When asked if she would risk her life for her students, Mrs. Hickman answered, "Yes, I would, but not by using a gun. Using a gun doesn't seem like a good solution." Many teachers would definitely put themselves in danger in order to protect their students, but a gun isn't the answer.

If a shooter knew that there were guns at a school, they probably wouldn't dare to attack that school. The gun would be a threat to shooters, so it wouldn't be used anyway. However, if the shooter didn't know that the school was armed, they would still attack that school, so there is no sure method to protect a school involving guns.

Mr. Dewberry acknowledged that "After school, someone might break in and steal it but not during school hours. That is the biggest reason for teachers to not have guns, it might end up in someone's hands for the wrong reason." Anyone, even students, could steal the gun and use it against the school, even if it was carried in concealment.

Arming teachers with guns could be an answer to preventing school shootings but they would also lead to many more complications. Mrs. Hickman believes that "In the light of school shootings, people are desperate for a solution." Is arming teachers the solution to school shootings or a problem maker?

Should all guns be banned?



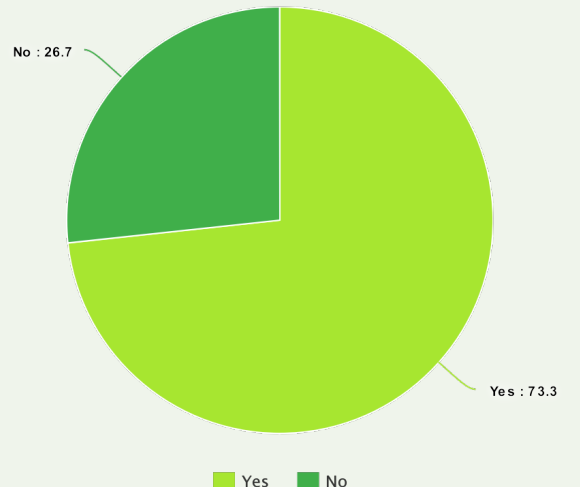
Why should(n't) guns be banned?

I do think guns should be banned. People use them for bad things. Use a bow and arrow hunny.

From the second amendment of the Bill of Rights, we receive the right to bear arms (carry weapons - guns). From the birth of our nation, this has been a undeniable right under the constitution. Many people also use guns and they don't need to be only used for violence. Banning guns could also have an opposite effect where people are enraged and use guns illegally. To ban guns, there would need to be a majority of votes to alter or nullify this amendment.

We don't need guns - they only pose a threat to our society. They hurt much more than help.

Would putting restrictions on guns decrease gun violence?



Black Panther: Is Marvel getting political?



Natalie M.

On February 16, 2018, the film *Black Panther* premiered in theatres. *Black Panther* was a film directed by Ryan Coogler and was produced by Kevin Feige along with David J. Grant. The casting stars Chadwick Boseman as Black Panther/T'challa and Michael B. Jordan as Erik Killmonger.

Black Panther is about the “rightful heir,” T'challa becoming the king of Wakanda— and of course, the Black Panther. He faces conflicts of a dangerous enemy wanting the throne, which could put the whole world at risk. *Black Panther* is a more political Marvel movie than the past ones, because of some of their actions.

Although *Black Panther* is more controversial, it is still

a thrilling Marvel movie (as usual)— even with some political statements the director imbedded. There are many exciting scenes that make your heart beat fast. Coogler does a good job mixing in real-world problems, humorous, and action packed ideas in to the film.

Some reviews talk about how the storyline was weak, and made the movie “boring”. Others didn't like having an African American superhero, because they thought it was unnecessary, and was too political. These two complaints seemed to appear in a lot of people's reviews on Imdb.

A fellow Black student, Sawyer Gaviria, said it was very political, but did a great job including the comedy. Gaviria enjoyed the strong female power, for example, the strongest guards and the

smart scientist/engineer were all women. Instead of just feminist views on the movie, Sawyer said they did a great job representing genders, color, and an empowering movie of its time.

Other reviewers thought the visual effects, and costuming was great. People found different views on humor, some thought it was funny while others thought it was just “old”.

The cast is almost all African American and shows a lot of feminine power. It sends good messages to people which leads to compelling stances.

Even with these negative comments in mind, it still has good movie elements. So, if you like a movie with a lot of action, humor, and inspiring messages, this is definitely a movie worth watching.

Peet's Coffee: Coffee for those who enjoy quality



Souf R.

What makes Peet's Coffee different from other coffee shops? How does Peet's Coffee compare to other popular and growing coffee shops, like Starbucks? They both sell coffee, but what makes Peet's Coffee different from Starbucks?

One thing many people don't understand, is that Peet's Coffee isn't underrated by everyone, it depends strictly on the perspective. For instance, an adult would most likely enjoy a drink from Peet's Coffee more than a drink from Starbucks, because Peet's Coffee is considered to be more focused on the quality of their coffee.

According to Quora.com, “Peet's Coffee stores sell beans from open containers rather than in sealed bags, making the Peet's stores smell more strongly of coffee.” Even this can make a difference of how an adult views the store, especially if they really value the coffee, rather than the milk.

Adding on to that, Starbucks is known to be more focused on the milk, rather than the coffee. Most children and

teenagers enjoy this and do not have any issues with milk but, adults who need their coffee as a necessity will find this fact extremely important.

The focus on coffee in Peet's Coffee makes it more satisfying to adults rather than children.

“I think, in general, children and teenagers see a drink from Peet's as a treat, so they are very excited each time they get a drink from us. Whereas, adults order drinks from Peet's more as a necessity/habit. So, adults might be satisfied, but probably not as satisfied as children and teenagers, because they need the drink just to function,” states Whitney J, a barista who works at Peet's Coffee. She was also a former classroom aid at Blach Intermediate School.

Peet's Coffee reminds a customer of rustic country side (according to Langston J.). This proves to show that Peet's is able to grasp that warm and welcoming feeling along with amazing coffee and customer service.

“I think it is less hectic [in Peet's] and people are not in a rush and are enjoying their

drinks more. In Starbucks, everything is associated with being fast,” says Michael R, an adult who drinks coffee daily.

Somehow, Peet's Coffee is able to carefully keep the warm and comforting environments of their shops. But, Starbucks on the other hand shows a more hip and modern vibe, according to Thewildcatttribune.com.

Above being all about the coffee, they care about their customers. “We have very high standards for customer service— we get randomly surveyed often to make sure we are meeting our customer satisfaction goals. So, each customer is receiving very good customer service. We also get a lot of regular loyal customers visiting our store,” Whitney J. states.

Peet's Coffee goes out of their way to make sure customers to have a wonderful experience at their coffee shops.

“And if a customer is friendly, I am more willing to go out of my way to make sure they have a great experience at Peet's,” says Whitney J. Another example of their

customer service quality, is a story Whitney J. generously shared with me.

“Fortunately, most of my customers are very friendly. I did have one very challenging customer. She wanted me to give her samples of several drinks before she decided on her final drink. I am happy to do a little sampling, if there is time,” Whitney J. explains.

“However, there was a long line and the customer was the opposite of friendly. She complained about several of the samples I gave her, the quality etc. etc. Basically, nothing I did made her happy,” she concluded.

From this, it is visible that Whitney J. tried her best to accommodate a difficult custom-

er, reinforcing an outstanding customer service.

Another reason why Peet's Coffee differs from other coffee shops, is because their customer service is impeccable. With the routine checks and the way that they try exceptionally hard to make sure you have the best experience, makes them stand out.

Peet's Coffee is a warm and welcoming shop that is different from other coffee shops because of its vital qualities of keeping a calm and rustic vibe, and having a better customer service than what we are used to seeing in other coffee chains. So, give Peet's Coffee a try before deciding which coffee shop to stick to for your daily coffee.



ShoTime, all the time!

✍ Jackson K. & Wyatt B.

The count is 2-2 with two outs in the bottom of the first inning, runners on second and third. “Japan’s Babe Ruth” readies for the pitch. Cleveland’s pitcher, Josh Tomlin, throws the deuce at 74 miles per hour. Ohtani eyes the pitch and hacks at it with his Ichiro-like swing. The ball sails towards the right-center gap as Tomlin prays that the ball stays in the park. But Tomlin’s prayers were not answered. The Japanese rookie’s first at bat was a huge success. In his new home stadium, he found the bleachers on a three run home run.

Ever since the announcement came that Shohei was heading from the Hokkaido Nippon-Ham Fighters to the MLB, he has been the talk of the league. This two-way stud is an elite pitcher and

hitter, the better being the latter. In his pitching debut, he struck out 6 batters in 6 innings while allowing 3 runs and picking up the win. That game did not live up to his hype. People were skeptical whether Ohtani could be the real deal.

But in his first start at Angel Stadium, he flirted with perfection. Ohtani was perfect through 6 ⅓ innings with 11 strikeouts, until he allowed a hit to Marcus Semien, the shortstop for the Oakland Athletics. He ended up finishing with 12 strikeouts in 7 innings allowing only 1 hit. The win brought up the thought again that Ohtani could be the next Babe Ruth.

Through April 17, Ohtani has hit .367 with 3 home runs, a triple, and 11 RBI’s. Not only that, but he boasts a 2.08 ERA with 2 wins and 12.46 K/9 in 2 starts. Although Anaheim’s bright star is off to

a rocket-fast start, there is a possibility of a fluke. In 2015, the Los Angeles Dodgers’ rookie center fielder, Joc Pederson, had an All-Star first half of the season. He hit 20 round-trippers before the mid-season break, but after, he only hit 6. Pederson has never returned to his original rookie flair since.

These Angel’s fans were worried if the rookie would even perform mediocrely because his Spring Training performance was subpar. Ohtani could not hit during the Spring, and his pitching was at the worst level of his career. Baseball fans, mainly Angels’ fans, worried if the Japanese legend would be an

American bust, but he has proved everyone wrong.

There is a whole season ahead and a bright future for Shohei. If he can keep a consistent pace and stay evenly keeled for the whole 162 games to stay above water. Since he has a lot of hype, critics will jump at any chance to burn him down.



Where’s Lebron? 2019 edition

✍ Jackson K., Kabir C., Wyatt B.

With the 2018 season coming to an end, the greatest basketball player ever will have the option to leave his hometown in Cleveland to try and find light somewhere else.

The first obvious option would be the Lakers. Even though they finished at 35-47, they have a lot of potential and flashy play style. LeBron would be able to take over, control the Lakers and be surrounded with young talent that will reach its prime in the next couple of years. Also, LeBron owns a \$23 million mansion in Hollywood. The King will go to L.A. and possibly win a title if the Lakers’ youth starts to hit their prime.

Another very possible choice for Lebron is Houston. The combo of Harden, who is an MVP candidate, Capela, who has been playing like an All-Star, and Paul, who may not resign, are favored to win it all this year. Then add Lebron the the equation and you get a Championship team more powerful that the Warriors have been for the last 4 years.

We strongly believe that

the King of Basketball will definitely join the Sixers. Lebron is looking for a team with young, talented players that score 20+ points a night, but are still not better than him. The Sixers are that team. Joel Embiid, the center for Philadelphia, was an all star this year, and is in the conversation for best center in the league. They also have Ben Simmons, the point guard for the 76ers. Ben Simmons is in the conversation for Rookie of the Year. Both Embiid and Simmons average more than 20 points a game and will be able to support the scoring of Lebron James. We see no better pick in the entire NBA for Mr. James, except for this young Philly team.

The Pelicans are another alternative for Lebron. They have two all star players that are unstoppable in the post, Demarcus Cousins and Anthony Davis. The Pelicans are Lebron’s backup decision, because he will not shine as much when he is on the court with Anthony and Demarcus. The only reason why we believe that Lebron will join New Orleans is if he is desperate

to win a championship. Joining the Pelicans will guarantee him a championship.

One of the most slept-on teams this year is the Milwaukee Bucks. The Bucks underperformed their predicted record but still made the playoffs. Riddled with injuries, the Buck’s superstar Giannis Antetokounmpo received major criticism.

Giannis has claimed love the city of Milwaukee but he seems unhappy with is roster. Some need a little time to develop and some want to get out of there. The best player in the world needs scoring and a superstar to take the pressure of leading a team off of him. Giannis Antetokounmpo at the age of 22, has potential to be the best ever. Milwaukee is waiting for the King to claim his crown.

LeBron’s friend Dwyane Wade came back to Miami, so why can’t the King? Lebron also has a coach in Miami that doesn’t need a player to be in charge. Lebron will be a great addition to this talented Miami squad. They will have enough firepower to take down the empire of Golden State.

blach sports cont.

-none in their first game. They won their next game against Columbia but then lost to Sunnyvale in 5 sets.

The Falcons would then be off to the playoffs. In their first two games, they didn’t lose a set and were ready to face off against the Cupertino Bears in the finals. The Falcons would then loose 0-3, finishing an unexpectedly great season nevertheless.

The 8th grade Boys volleyball team cruised through the season, only losing one game to Lawson. The Falcons won 3-0 in their first playoff game against Hyde and faced off Miller in the finals, trying for their second championship in a row. They won an intense match and would steal their second finals victory.

The 7th grade Girls soccer team didn’t lose a game the entire season and only allowed only one goal total. The soccer studs scored 37 goals in 9 games before the championship, but couldn’t find the net against Sunnyvale in crunch time and lost 0-1. This team has got a lot of potential for next year.

The 8th grade Girls soccer team, just like the 7th graders, were dominating all season, losing only one game to Graham. They won the semifinals by a score of 2-0 against our rivals, Egan. The championship ended in a draw after overtime, leaving the Falcons and Cupertino as the 2018 co-champions.

Even though all four of our season three Blach sports teams made it to the season’s most important game, only one team finished out on top, one tied, and the 7th grade teams couldn’t pull off a first season victory. The 7th graders will be back next year and hopeful for a second chance while the 8th graders will walk away with a trophy.

(Side note: This article was written on 4/5, before season 4 ended. This information is not up to date.)

This season the sports teams were successful, but not as great as the season 3 teams. The 7th grade boys soccer team made it to the finals, smashing Sunnyvale in the semis. They will face our rivals, Egan, in the finals in hopes to edge them out for the trophy.

The 7th grade girls basketball team lost a heartbreaker against Egan in the semifinals 28-30, coming down the the last possession. The 8th grade soccer team couldn’t make it past the first round in the playoffs, losing to Egan 0-3. The 8th grade girls basketball team will hope to outlast Cupertino in the finals after beating Kennedy in a defensive battle 16-13.

Next season sport will be track and field. The Blach meets are on May 1 and May 3 at home and May 8 and May 10 away. Try to catch one meet and support our Falcons. Go Blach!

Do gender-based toys affect today's society?

Naina S.

Every time you look in a store, you see gender-based toys, but do these toys have an impact on today's society? Although major retailers are de-emphasizing gender labeling on toys, the toys inside the package are still very gender-biased. These toys portray gender stereotypes, and are poor influences on younger kids.

A girl's favorite color is pink, right? Actually, younger girls tend to prefer pink because they are exposed to it a lot more than other colors. A lot of toys and clothes for young girls are pink, exposing girls to pink the most out of any other color. A research project asked adults their favorite color, and found that overall, most adults' favorite color was blue, for both men and women, which proves

that when little girls stop being constantly exposed to pink, they don't tend to like it as much.

The way that kids play affects how their brains develop, and most toys directed to girls are pink. These toys are also less directed towards learning and building, and are usually focused towards dolls and beauty. Toys for girls usually don't include building or learning. A study in 2015 found that boys are more likely to play with toys that develop spatial intelligence, such as Legos.

When Legos released a product, Lego Friends, a toy that is supposed to be more oriented to girls, the focus of the toy was more on playing with the characters like dolls, rather than the building perspective. In 2017 a study found that only about 25 percent of people in science, technology,

engineering, or math professions are women, although this number is starting to grow. This may be the reason why there aren't very many women work in these professions.

Barbies are another popular toy for girls in our society, but the doll can cause many eating disorders such as anorexia and bulimia, due to it's unrealistic body proportions. Many people strive to look like Barbie, but Barbie's proportions can only be achieved by having an eating disorder. Children look up to Barbie as a role model, and can become obsessed with them, sometimes even going as far as to make themselves



photo by: Williams, Mary Elizabeth. "Dolls for Girls, Science and Legos for Boys: The Toy Aisle Is Still Sexist." Salon, Salon.com, 3 May 2013,

look like the popular doll.

One example of this is the living barbie doll, Valeria Lukyanova, who started playing with barbies at a young age, and became obsessed over them, going as far as to make herself look like the doll. Valeria is an ukrainian model who has achieved a very close resemblance to to Barbie. She uses makeup and contacts for her transformation, and denies having plastic surgery or

altering herself, despite much controversy.

Despite the harm that gender-based toys do, companies still continue to bias their toys toward a certain gender. These toys continue have a big impact on today's society and can be very harmful to young kids in many ways. These are only a few of the ways that gender-based toys leave a negative impact on our world.

Making cars and waging wars: Tesla's recent affairs cont.

-to "someone you respect."

A blog written by Tesla's team dated November 14 of the same year, published on Tesla's website, defended the letter and tried to reassure customers that the company is against any form of harassment and takes complaints "very seriously."

Furthermore, two blogs have been published on the company's website defending Tesla against the allegations of an unsafe work environment for factory workers at Tesla. One of these blogs, also written by Tesla's team, says that the allegations are "a misleading narrative based on anecdotes, not facts," while the other one, written by Tesla's VP of Environmental, Health, and Safety, Laurie Shelby, takes a more passive approach.

She argues that factory safety at Tesla, measured by the Total Recordable Incident Rate (TRIR), is on par with the industry average, and that the electric car company is constantly working on improving the safety of its employees.

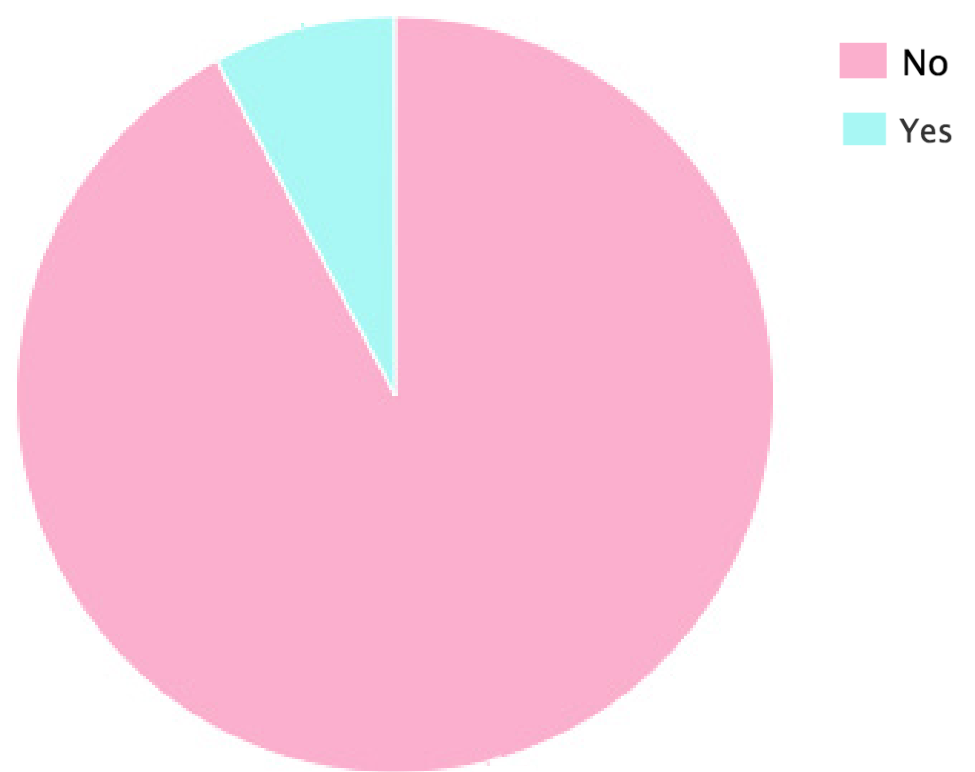
Shelby also adds in the blog that the company's newest release, the Model 3, was designed with ergonomics in mind, meaning that they made the car as easy for workers to produce as possible.

The TRIR number Laurie Shelby references is from the 2017 data. However, in years prior, safety has been worse, notably in 2016, when the incident rate at Tesla's Fremont factory was 31% higher than the industry average.

Tesla is already a busy company in terms of business, but with 33,000 employees and growing, more and more personal and public issues are at the center of attention for the company as well.

How long Tesla will stay at the top of the electric car industry is unknown, but this amount of time is lengthening because of how well the company manages to stay on top of everything from fighting allegations to making groundbreaking new vehicles.

Do you support gender-based toys?



Best responses

- No, because I'm a girl and I can play minecraft and a lot of other stuff and you can't tell me what to do i'm an independent woman fite me
- No, there are two genders, but anyone can have any toy they want.
- No, its sexist. girls and boys can play whatever they want, and no one should be able to chose for them.
- No, because I play Overwatch with a girl.
- Yes because different Genders need different toys to help expand their personal and gender horizons. Girls generally like dolls more and this helps expand their horizons. Boys generally like action figures. If the opposite gender played with the other genders toys they would change radically. Not necessarily bad or good.

Equality for All or Equality for Some?

Langston J. & Souf R.

Injustice towards LGBTQ+ folk has decreased here in Silicon Valley, California, but what about everywhere else? Does the amount of acceptance in a location affect the lifestyle of those attracted to the same sex?

How we've evolved throughout the past ten years has really impacted the community. In 2018, it is significantly less likely to see anti-gay discrimination and rallies. But places around the world still hold these rallies year after year.

According to nbcnews.com, a Mississippi law which "[allowed] county clerks to avoid issuing marriage licenses to gay couples and protects businesses from lawsuits if they refuse to serve LGBT customers," was enacted and removed in 2016, but the remnant of the damage still stands in place.

According to a map created by the Human Rights Campaign, Minnesota was the first state in the USA to create a law which "addresses hate or bias crimes based on sexual orientation and gender identity." This law was

passed in 1993, along with a smaller Washington State law which "addresses hate or biased laws based on sexual orientation only." After seven years, other states slowly started following in their footsteps to equality.

As of April 1, 2018, Costa Rica chose a new president, Carlos Alvarado Quesada, who won the election by running his campaign on gay rights. This is a big step, but it proves there are still places around the world that haven't learned to accept these new ideas yet.

To this day, not all states have established recognition to the hate crimes directed towards the LGBTQ+ community. D.C. and an additional 14 states including California, Nevada, and more have strong policies on LGBTQ+ hate and assaults directly targeted on a person's sexual orientation or gender identity.

"I don't know who is in [the community] at this school but I occasionally hear bad things about it and that is sad. [But] as a whole, I think this school has kids who look out for each other, and that is nice," says Ms. Samadani. In addition, she thinks that

although bad things are heard about LGBTQ+ folk occasionally, it is likely that at such a young age, they may not understand the details of how the community are treated in today's society.

Interestingly, many states approve of sexual orientation compared to gender identity. 20 U.S. states have negative views on how one identifies on the gender spectrum. This topic can be confusing and uncomfortable for people but should definitely be respected in our free country.

One of the reasons why people disapprove of the LGBTQ+ community is because it might be complicated. There is an endless list of identifications.

LGBTQ+ sexualities include homosexual, bisexual, pansexual, asexual, skoliosexual, polysexual, and more.

However, the gender spectrum may confuse people more. You can really identify as anything you want without limits, and many citizens of the USA do not believe this is an okay way to change yourself.

The gender spectrum includes male, female, third gender, non-binary genders, gender

non-conforming, bi-gender, gender neutral, and more.

There are also many ways to express your gender. A very popular way is to label yourself as "gender-creative" which isn't a specific gender, but you can make it into a mix of genders or something new.

Many parents may not accept a child coming out as LGBTQ+. Some might even send them to so-called "gay conversion therapy."

Sam Brinton is one of the former victims of "gay conversion therapy." "The therapist ordered me bound to a table to have ice, heat and electricity applied to my

body. I was forced to watch clips on a television of gay men holding hands, hugging and having sex. I was supposed to associate those images with the pain I was feeling to once and for all turn into a straight boy." This therapy is a hoax. (Quote and info from NY Times).

Even our country's leaders are encouraging minors and adults to enroll in these sessions and dangerously "convert" themselves.

As our society takes further steps forward towards human equality, we evolve as a diverse population. Who knows? Maybe we'll have full equality some day.



DIVERSITY: Two teens showing diversity.

March for Our Lives: The Revolution Against School Shooters

Kiana Z.

On any other Saturday, teenagers would be spending time with their family, friends, or simply just enjoying a day off of school. But on March 24, these teens who only ask for their safety while they learn, are taking a stand against the government to make sure that this tragic chain of school shootings never happens again.

Organized by the survivors of the tragic Parkland Shooting in Florida, a number of teenagers who have dealt with shootings organized events throughout the world to end gun violence and make the lives of students a priority.

While the main protest is set to happen in Washington DC in front of the White House, there are 819 others in major cities like Los Angeles, Detroit, Boston, New York, and one in San Jose that anyone who would like to participate

can go to. Apart from the US, there are also events happening in places like Canada, South America, Europe, and Asia.

Aside from thousands of kids participating in the #neveragain movement, celebrities are also donating, getting the word out, and some are even walking in the protests.

George and Amal Clooney, Steven Spielberg, Oprah Winfrey, Kate Capshaw, and Jeffrey Katzenberg will all be donating \$500,000 each to the movement.

Kim Kardashian, Justin Bieber, Bette Midler, Debra Messing, and countless others have gotten the word out, while Ariana Grande, Jennifer Hudson, Miley Cyrus, and Demi Lovato will be walking in the movements.

The night before the March for our Lives, a concert called Stay Amped will take place, with its main purpose to amplify stories of gun violence-

school shootings. Singers like Bebe Rexha, Fall Out Boy, Lizzo, and G-Eazy will be performing for this concert, and it will take place in Washington DC.

Even though this is an event to reach out to the government and protest for kids' safety, the President will not attend, or even be in the vicinity of the protests, as he will be residing in his Mar-A-Lago House in Florida. Even though Trump has stayed silent on the March for our Lives, following the Parkland shooting, he suggested arming teachers and abolishing bump stocks.

Revolutions are happening, and things are changing. Kids are starting to stand up for what they believe in, taking control of their future.

But will the government listen to hundreds of thousands of kids, or will they ignore it for things they believe are more important?

Electoral College cont.

the presidential race was just determined by the popular vote, then smaller and less populous states' citizens will not really have an impact on the election while larger and more populous states will have a huge impact on the election.

Still, this system can actually grant those less populous states' residents more power than the more populous states. For example, a voter in Wyoming has more than 3.6 times more power than a voter in New York. The three electors in Wyoming represent, on average, about 143,000 voters each, while the thirty-one electors in New York represent, on average, about 519,000 voters each. So, voters in less populous states have more power than voters in more populous states.

Several people disagree with this system of electing the commander-in-chief of our nation. "We're built on how everyone has a voice, everyone's voice should be heard. So, for example, people host campaigns in

swing states like Ohio or Pennsylvania, but they should focus on large places of population that aren't yet for then and should be for them. They should focus not on swing states, but on the people," said Sina S. when asked about this issue, touching back upon the previous issue.

"...When they created the electoral college not many people had access to the information they needed to decide which candidate was best, so they need to come up with a more modern system to elect presidents," said Saarang B. on the topic.

On the other hand, a few people do agree with this system. An anonymous person commented on how it was created for a very reasonable cause and gave all people equal power, so "it is really well-made for that purpose and so...it's good."

Should we change the way that we elect presidents of this country? The debate continues for whether or not the electoral college voting system is the right way to elect presidents.

Why is playing a musical instrument important?

 Naina S.

Have you ever wanted to play a musical instrument? Well, then you should know that playing an instrument is extremely beneficial in many ways. It enhances your coordination, improves your team skills, and teaches you discipline.

Whether you play in orchestra, band, or in your free time, playing a musical instrument is intensely rewarding. There are many ways playing an instrument is helpful. If you want to get better at

playing a musical instrument, you are required to practice often, and plan time to practice, which teaches you discipline. When you're playing an instrument, you tend to cooperate and work with people, which significantly improves your team skills.

However, all the work that goes into playing a musical instrument is worth it. Playing a musical instrument is an enjoyable activity that can affect you in a positive way. "When ou play an instrument, you exercise the creative and the scientific parts of the brain. Both

parts are equally important, and need to be developed," says Vincent Lewis, our music teacher at Blach."I try to teach my students good habits, such as focus, attentiveness, and collaboration skills, because these habits will help them throughout their music experience."

Mr. Lewis began playing piano when he was about three or four years old. His dad was a music teacher, and both of his parents were music enthusiasts, who encouraged him to play an instrument.

At some point, Mr. Lew-

is asked his dad if he would teach him how to play the piano. "I think kids should start playing instruments as soon as they're ready to listen. In order to learn an instrument, students have to be open and most importantly, good listeners."

Most students at Blach can argue that playing a musical instrument is important. Gareth C, a seventh grader that plays first chair clarinet in band started playing the clarinet in fifth grade. "I think you should learn an instrument early, at about third grade, but you can really play an instrument at any age, as long as you try hard, even when you fail." says Gareth.

"I wanted to join band because I heard great things about Mr. Lewis, and you get to go to Disneyland. I chose the clarinet because it didn't lull me to sleep, and it sounded cool." explains Gareth. "You should play and instrument because it improves your hand-eye coordination, it's fun, and because it teaches you about music, which will help you [through] life."

Carolyn S. is an eighth grade violinist that started

playing the violin when she was six years old. "Learning an instrument has benefited me by improving my time management skills, my public performance skills, and improving my study skills. I think that people should start playing an instrument around first to third grade if they want to play competitively, but if you realize you enjoy playing an instrument later, you should start whenever you want."

"I have been playing the violin since I was six, and so when I was in seventh grade, I figured that since I spent so much time with music outside of school, I should continue in school, by joining orchestra." Carolyn explains. "I think that people should play an instrument, because it is different from everything else you learn in school, because playing an instrument trains your brain logically. When you play an instrument, you join the musical community, and you are exposed to new ideas."

As we can see, playing an instrument is extremely helpful in life, is a fun activity, and everyone should give it a try. Remember, it's never too late to try something new.



TUNING IN Seventh grade orchestra tuning their instruments during a Monday morning.

Blach's Festival of Gold Orchestra: Prepared and definitely scared

 Diya M. & Sydney R.

It is 10:02 on a Sunday morning, and students begin to wander into classroom H1.

The students take little notice to the multiple shrimps drawn on the whiteboard and move on to unpacking their instruments and setting up their stands. The room is lined in trophies, awards, instrument cases, and posters, decorating the spacious room.

This group of orchestra students, the Festival of Gold Orchestra, went to the Davies Symphony Hall for a competition. Now, they arrive to practice the band room to prepare for the upcoming competition in Anaheim.

Mr. Lewis walks out from

this cave to set up the harpsichord while the students start their tuning. The students will have three tunings that usually take between eight to twelve minutes total.

After the tuning, Mr. Lewis dictates the speed of the scales the students start to play for their warm up. The pitched tick of the metronome plays consistently over the speaker system. The scales will continue for over half the class, much to the student's dismay.

When the students do finally start to play, Mr. Lewis starts to evaluate the sections that need to be revised:

"Oh my goodness no, no, no. That first part was sharp."

"You're not counting, you are praying. Your prayers have not been answered."

"When you play your sixteenth, you can't abandon listening!"

"None of this mushy slur business"

"We don't slur here! There is no slur marks here. Don't do that- that's awful."

"No, no, no I'm not hearing any difference."

"Play your 'A' like apple; play your 'E' like elephant." This came specifically as a surprise to the reporter. They would've expected 'A' like shrimp.

These quotes were taken from a single session, in which this reporter was very amused. This style of teaching, however, is appreciated by his students.

Upcoming events presents



a new challenge for our beloved protagonists: The annual Anaheim music festival.

The students are extremely excited for Anaheim. When asked what they want to do

upon arrival were a wide range of answers. Student's responses ranged from, "the concert" to "eating a giant turkey leg with friends," as true, musical friends do.