



BREAKING BARRIERS THROUGH FASHION

BVH students explore the importance of accepting and acknowledging those who defy gender norms in fashion.

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"I MISS SCHOOL"

Special Education students navigate new challenges and priorities in distance learning.

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A FRESH COAT OF PAINT

These Barons have cured their quarantine blues by redecorating and rearranging their bedrooms.

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the Crusader

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Rough start for on-campus learning, students break safety protocol



2017-2018 Associated Student Body Senior Finance Commissioners Kelly Murphy and Milla Padilla file fundraising information onto the computer as tasked by ASB Financial Technician Leona Jazmin. In pre-pandemic years ASB members could conduct ASB finances during normal school hours in the ASB office, although the process has been complicated by the pandemic. PHOTO BY MARC YANOFSKY

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Amidst the sea of initialed tiles in a synchronous Google Meets class on Oct. 30, students were given a window into the Bonita Vista High (BVH) Associated Student Body (ASB) office. Three ASB officers, cameras on, were seen within six feet of distance from each other, two of whom shared a camera frame. At points during the class session, their masks hung from their necks, unused.

This violation of on-campus safety protocols occurred before the Nov. 5 start of small groups of struggling students, or cohorts, returning for on-campus instruction. Four individual sources reported to the Crusader that the ASB President, Vice President and Attorney General were seen breaking protocol on multiple occasions.

BVH principal Roman Del Rosario, Ed.D., reported being unaware of ASB

student presence on campus until the Crusader requested an interview on the subject on Nov. 15. On the next day, Nov. 16, Del Rosario had a conversation with Alvarez regarding student presence on campus.

"When I discover that [their actions] aren't based on my interpretation, I see it as my role to educate and then conform to what the expectations are. It's not too different than what I do every day, even without a pandemic," Del Rosario said.

Thus, on Nov. 16 Del Rosario established an official 14-person cohort of ASB students, approved first by Del Rosario's supervisor, that would be permitted to work on campus in groups of two or three each day. These students will be expected to follow the same safety procedures outlined for all SUHSD individuals on campus.

"I know that we have had mistakes where [students] are not socially distanced," Alvarez said. "We've corrected the problem. We're all human. We have to learn, but now they know [to properly wear a] face mask. Safety is the number one priority."

One of the students not observing social distancing, ASB Vice President and senior Sean Murphy was willing to speak to the Crusader. Prior to coming on campus, Murphy and his parents

signed consent forms provided by the BVH administration for all students returning to campus.

"[Breaking protocol] was a mistake that I made. It was definitely a learning experience for me. I take responsibility for my actions. It's not anyone else's fault. Mr. Alvarez can't be breathing down my neck all day to make sure I'm doing what's right," Murphy said. "Going forward, it's not going to happen again. It was a mistake; we all make them."

In addition to the instance of improper protocol among ASB students, Del Rosario also reported staff and students from other cohorts needing reminders to follow protocol while on campus.

"I think that I see it everywhere, and it's not okay," Del Rosario said. "I think that we're so close to the end of this pandemic, knock on wood, that what we have to do is just keep reminding ourselves [to follow protocol]. I need to keep reminding my staff, and the staff needs to keep reminding students and people need to keep reminding me. We get relaxed with these expectations and we just need to keep reminding ourselves."

To counter this issue, BVH administrators like Del Rosario and Alvarez use vocal reminders to

emphasize the importance of following COVID-19 guidelines.

"We're all in a learning environment. We're trying to practice our COVID-19 safety protocol. Any adolescent out there [has] to be reminded, and I'm just going to keep forcing those reminders," Alvarez said.

When asked what measures exist moving forward to ensure students adhere to safety guidelines while on campus, Alvarez described protocols being "just like rules of the school, [where] you have to make sure that [students] abide, they have to understand, they have to learn."

If a student were to refuse, Alvarez explained, they would be escorted off campus. However, neither Alvarez nor Del Rosario encountered that as of Nov. 24, despite the 40 BVH students officially participating in hybrid learning and 62 staff members working onsite as of Dec. 9, according to the SUHSD School Reopening Dashboard.

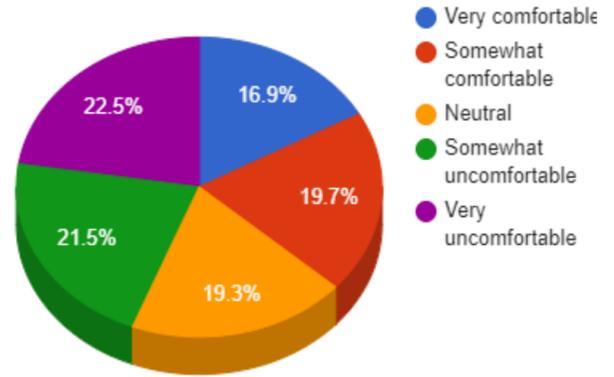
BVH did, however, report its first non-sports related COVID-19 case on Dec. 3, a few days after SUHSD announced the second semester will begin virtually. Despite this, and San Diego County's recently increased restrictions, cohorts resumed on-campus activity on Dec. 7. The ASB is the only student organization with a current cohort, although other students reported their organizations would benefit from access to campus.

BVH students such as senior Dillan Busk, who witnessed the break in protocol by ASB members would also "love to go to school and have a small group of people in person" but is "not sure it's the best decision to open that option" to all students. As a peer tutor for BVH's Tutor Educate and Motivate (T.E.A.M.) Tutoring program that has been paused since March, Busk also recognized how other student organizations besides the ASB could benefit from being on campus. Despite this, he echoed Del Rosario's sentiment regarding further return to campus.

"I think in their heart, students are ready to come back and see their teachers face to face and hang out with their friends at lunch and at the sporting events and other activities," Del Rosario said. "Right now it's not the time. It's not safe to come back, but I definitely believe that the vast majority of students are ready."

This piece was updated on Dec. 9, 2020.

To what extent do you feel comfortable returning to on-campus learning at the moment?



The Crusader conducted a poll to survey the student body. 497 responses were recorded, and showed that opinions are divided on the subject of an eventual return to school. INFOGRAPHIC BY ALEXA VAZQUEZ

First on-campus COVID-19 case reported

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As of Dec. 3, the Bonita Vista High (BVH) staff was notified by Assistant Principal Esther Wise that an individual within the BVH community tested positive for COVID-19. This individual had been present on campus the day prior and the administration has been taking charge in ensuring the safety of students and staff cohorts allowed on campus. Due to privacy procedures, the administration is respecting the anonymity of the individual and is limited to what they can say about the person's current status. BVH students have yet to receive a formal message from administration on this issue.

"It is essential that we share what we can to ensure anyone that may have been in contact with the individual is aware of their potential exposure and can self-quarantine and monitor any illness," Wise said in the message to BVH staff.

BVH nurse Paola Garcia initially reached out to the individual to ensure all proper precautions and protocols were followed after the individual's case was reported. According to Garcia, some of the notable symptoms that the individual reported were body aches and loss of taste. Now, Garcia reports, they're recuperating and resting from home.

"We have a nurse who is very proactive and that other nurses throughout the district go to for advice and help on matters. We're very fortunate here at Bonita to have such a highly qualified and professional person like nurse Garcia," BVH principal Roman Del Rosario, Ed.D., said.

As of the initial COVID-19 case on campus reported to staff, BVH administration, as well as public health officials, have decided that there is no immediate necessity to close down the school and its on-campus operations. Since receiving information about the initial positive case, the campus has been "cleaned and disinfected as appropriate" and "has been deemed safe for occupancy."

According to Associated Student Body (ASB) President and senior Nicole Hill, she was alerted about the initial COVID-19 case through ASB Advisor Christopher Alvarez. She had been on campus the week prior to the Thanksgiving holiday to show a new student around the ASB as well as complete work for the ASB with Alvarez.

"Knowing that someone around me had COVID-19 does kind of scare me, but I also recollect the fact that I was wearing a mask and most of the time I was only with the other student and Mr. [Alvarez] in the ASB office," Hill

said. "I'm not too worried about the fact that I could have contracted the virus through [the individual]."

Hill expresses that while this initial individual does not concern her, she plans on continuing to ensure she is remaining safe through various protocols.

"If this kind of [situation] occurs again with someone on campus having COVID-19, [I believe] we would have to stop ASB [students] from coming on campus so that we're all cautious and making sure that our health is a priority," Hill said.

Aside from the initial case reported by BVH administration, in November, two other COVID-19 cases related to BVH were reported when student athletes involved in the afterschool athletics program contracted the virus. According to Del Rosario, the two athletes showed symptoms of the virus, which a COVID-19 test proved positive. Not long after the two athletes contracted the virus, another athlete, who was a part of the same program, contracted COVID-19 as well. No information was provided on how the athletes contracted the virus.

Furthermore, a fifth case was reported when an asymptomatic individual was required to take a COVID-19 test after the Thanksgiving holiday and tested positive for the virus. Garcia states that she has had no involvement in treating the several individuals who have contracted the COVID-19 virus, but instead, works to find the people the individual may have been in contact with.

"You could assume that you're not going to be symptomatic or you're not going to get that sick, but everyone's different—everyone's immune system is different and I think the wisest thing we can do is operate with an abundance of caution," Del Rosario said.

Wise indicated in her message reporting on the Dec. 3 case that all students and staff recently on-campus should "consider themselves as being potentially exposed" and should avoid coming on campus if they feel ill or have any symptoms within the next few days or weeks.

"Anyone experiencing symptoms should self-isolate and contact [their] doctor. If you're feeling ill, it is recommended that you separate from others in the home, wear a face mask, cover coughs and sneezes, clean hands and surfaces often and avoid sharing personal items. It is important to monitor symptoms for potential worsening," Wise wrote.

Additionally, when learning an individual contracts COVID-19, SUHSD supports Del Rosario by providing resources from the district that allow the individual to recover.

"There's such a potential light at the end of the tunnel with this [COVID-19] vaccine, I just think that it's really important that we don't let our guard down and that we continue to be vigilant because you don't know how you're going to react [if you contract the virus]," Del Rosario said.

This article was updated on Dec. 23, 2020.

SUHSD saves millions during pandemic school closures

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Since March 13, 2020, schools in the Sweetwater Union High School District (SUHSD) have remained closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to reduced expenditures, the district saved over 18.3 million dollars during the 2019-2020 school year. SUHSD Director of Grants and Communications Manuel Rubio was unable to provide the total number of funds the district saved for the 2020-2021 school year.

The Crusader's findings reveal that these funds, in addition to federal aid from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, were largely utilized for student and staff needs during distance learning, including academic, technological and logistical necessities. SUHSD will provide a numerical breakdown of expenditures on Dec. 12, 2020, during the next district board meeting.

According to Rubio, due to school closures, saved funds were used to purchase laptops, wifi hotspots, personal protective equipment, additional supplies needed for on-campus instruction and other accommodations needed to facilitate both distance learning and Phase 1 of SUHSD's reopening plan.

"There's a lot of things we've had to step up our expenses on. Things are changing and [they] are going to change over the next couple [of] years in terms of enrollment and attendance. We [SUHSD doesn't] know where the state [is] going to go as far as how they're going to fund [the expenses of the pandemic for schools]. We need to be prepared for when this does happen. Our goal is to make sure that we're transparent about what those funds are," Rubio said.

Some parents and community members speculate that SUHSD used saved funds to address budgetary deficits. Rubio says these claims are false, as the district's main priority is to keep students safe. Because the South Bay region continues to have high COVID-19 infection rates, SUHSD deemed in-person instruction unsafe.

"We are not closed for the sake of saving money. There have been savings and additional funds but we want to extend [those funds] in the most responsible way towards making sure that our schools are [safe and] better. [We agree] that the best way to learn is in person, [but] the South County is really the hub of where this pandemic is. Our commitment is: you have to be healthy to learn, so we want to make sure we continue to be safe," Rubio said.

According to Bonita Vista High (BVH) Principal Roman Del Rosario, Ed.D., BVH received 210,000 dollars from the CARES Act to address school needs during the pandemic. These funds have been used to address student and staff needs during the pandemic,



SEA President Julie Walker believes that SUHSD is using the funds saved from school closures for good use but that the district must be held to scrutiny. PHOTO BY ISAAC LOZANO

including wifi hotspots, laptops, meal services, instructional materials for remote learning, school staff to support academic and mental needs of students and additional employees to assist in on-campus virtual learning per Phase 1 of BVH's reopening plan.

"What I try to do as a principal is identify priorities. I try to look at [BVH] holistically as opposed to in compartments. Then I try to see where the greatest needs [are], where we should focus our funding and what funding is available to support that need," Del Rosario said.

Across all SUHSD schools, Sweetwater Education Association

(SEA) President Julie Walker believes the district is using the funds saved from school closures for good use and that SUHSD has no financial or ulterior motives. However, she thinks the district should always be questioned and held accountable in their financial decisions.

"[SUHSD] is not just throwing money out, and I'm seeing very open communication. I'm glad they're using the money on services and kids [who] are really struggling," Walker said. "[But] I think [SUHSD] [needs] to consistently be questioned by county officials [and] the community. We want to take a look at what [SUHSD is] spending on. How much is personnel? How much is equipment? What are we needing? Anybody can ask under the Public Records Act. Those numbers tell what your priorities are."

SUHSD will continue remote learning for the rest of the semester and provide updates on finances and school reopenings in the next district board meeting. Despite the difficulties of the pandemic for staff and students, Rubio hopes that staff and students remain optimistic with SUHSD's support.

"I think we all need to continue to be optimistic. It is hard to watch friends and people [be] affected by COVID-19 and [lose] jobs. School [is a] hub for people's activities, especially students. They need socialization. [But] I think over the last nine months we've come together and figured out new ways of teaching [and supporting] our students to maintain a sense of community," Rubio said. "Let's keep trying."



Photo taken during the 2019-2020 school year. Junior, Rachel Cepe hits the puck towards the opposing team's end at an earlier match during their season. PHOTO BY KARA BARRAGAN

Sidelined

On-campus conditioning postponed, girls' field hockey forced to leave BVH fields

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The Bonita Vista High (BVH) fields are now vacant since the BVH girls' field hockey team postponed their conditioning for 2020. The news was sent to them in an email Dec. 6 from head coach Bree Paxton who made the call to put the practices on pause. On-campus conditioning for the team is set to resume in 2021 with no official date until more guidance is given from the California Interscholastic Federation (CIF), according to Paxton.

"My heart breaks for our players, but I know this is a situation no one could have imagined and we are not in control of it," Paxton said.

Before Thanksgiving break, which lasted from Nov. 26 through Nov. 29, Athletic Director Tyler Arciaga proposed postponing conditioning, due to the rise in COVID-19 cases and athletes testing positive at various other schools.

After Thanksgiving break, conditioning was set to resume if players had proof of a negative COVID-19 test on or after Dec. 1. With parent feedback taken into account, it was decided that players would continue their conditioning

and skill development at home. Paxton was not "particularly surprised" by all this news, nor were the players.

"The girls are rolling with the punches this pandemic has brought, so they were not surprised [by conditioning being postponed] either. I feel for them, that they aren't getting the chance to play yet. I can tell we have amazing players this year," Paxton said.

After months of not playing with the team, players like junior and forward Sabrina Ibanez and senior and forward Sachiko Kure returned to the field with players from last season. Regulations were set forth for conditioning by the Sweetwater Union High School District (SUHSD) through the Centers for Disease Control and Protection (CDC) guidelines.

"[The team and I] were actually excited [to be able to condition]. We're outside seeing each other like; 'we're actually starting up again?,' 'this is going to be a different experience since it's the Corona edition,'" Ibanez said. "It was exciting, that feeling that we're gonna play a sport again."

When participating in conditioning, players were required to wear masks at all times. To follow precautions, their temperatures were checked by Arciaga and they were asked if they experienced any COVID-19 symptoms. The players remained six feet apart throughout

all sessions of conditioning. Kure was a player that felt the same enthusiasm as Ibanez, but had felt hesitant in returning for conditioning.

"I was scared of what's been going on with COVID, because I have my grandma living with me. If I go out, then that would be a huge risk for her and I wouldn't want her to be put in a position where she would get even more sick than she is now," Kure said.

With a short lived time on the field, players like Ibanez continue conditioning from home, but are still disappointed about postponing conditioning.

"It was a step back. I thought we were going to get in the groove and gain our rhythm back, but we were stopped. We were starting to become a team again, having that rhythm of running, having fun. With [conditioning] ending, it bummed everybody out," Ibanez said.

Paxton still keeps hope for having "some resemblance of a season." She sees it as a stretch to get a full season in, but is hopeful the team can at least get to play against teams within their league.

"I have some smart, talented and determined young players. As a coach, I can't ask for more. I really hope they will be able to get out on the field together this year and play their hearts out. They deserve it," Paxton said.

Future IB exams to follow the footsteps of 2020 modified exams

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The future of the International Baccalaureate (IB) exams is unknown. In March of 2020, the IB organization made the decision of canceling exams for the 2019-2020 school year due to the global effects of COVID-19. This was done in order to have a consistent experience for IB students. Currently, most exams will be evaluated through the Internal Assessments (IA) and a procedure called predicted scoring.

"Given the circumstance, [canceling the exams] was reasonable. IB is a good organization in a way that they're cognizant of what happens and they're compassionate towards students that may be struggling," English Accelerated and IB Literature Higher Level (HL) 1 and 2 teacher Raymond Chhan said. Sweetwater Union High School District (SUHSD) has made efforts to resume on-campus instruction with the intent that in-person exams could be held, however, these efforts have been in vain as California experiences a rise in COVID-19 cases. Consequently, IB will be utilizing the method carried out the year before, only on a much larger scale.

"Distance Learning has made it difficult for student interactions. If I'm not running into technical issues, students are having trouble feeling engaged from their side of the camera," Honors Chemistry, Advanced Placement (AP) Chemistry, and IB Chemistry teacher Jeffery Rivera said. "The pandemic has changed the course and the assessment structure a lot."

IB administrators have now been taking out entire papers from the written exams, or have certain subjects weigh their IB test scores heavily on the IAs. For the IA, students are tasked with completing a student-driven project or writing a paper with minor guidance from their teachers in class. Unlike last year, for instance, IB Environmental Systems and Societies (ESS) is requiring every student who is taking the exam to turn in an IA for their IB score.

"My students do so much better on [the] exam than [they] do with IAs. [This year,] you're coming up with your own experiment, you're doing it at home, you're going to have to get equipment. I would have been able to control that if it was in-person learning, I can't control what's going

on in a person's home," Accelerated Biology and IB ESS teacher Jennifer Ekstein said.

The IA is worth the same amount as other IB exams. Previously, the IA was a smaller project that would be graded by the teacher. This year, the IA is especially crucial as it will determine students' scores. As a result, teachers like Ekstein have shifted their course and centered it around the IA to prepare their students.

"At this point, I have to give up my weeks to the IA, where I would normally have done my IA back in December. I would have been running over topics for the IA at the same time. I'm going to have to make sacrifices for the sake of my student's health, and due to the fact that I don't know what's

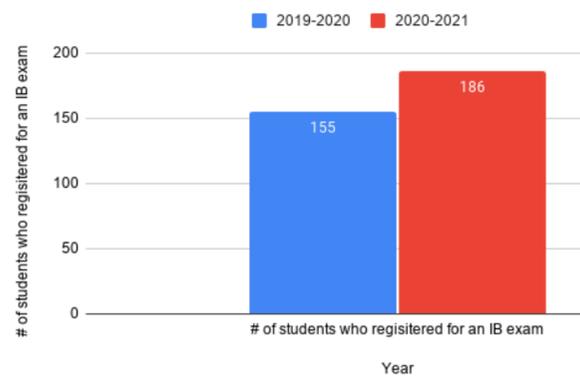
made up of required topics that the students choose.

"If IB decides to strictly assess candidates by the IA it will be stressful for my students to run effective investigations," Rivera said. "They are not allowed on campus yet and there is only so much equipment or chemicals I can send home for safety reasons. I am hoping that the second semester will allow some opportunities for actual small group meetings to have them run labs."

IB instructors may not be able to provide the typical instruction for their students and have made some concessions. For IB Chemistry, there is no paper 3 of the exam, so there is less for students to study for.

"Everything is now geared towards

BVH IB exam registration over the past 2 years



Between the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school year there was an increase of 31 students registered for IB exams. There is a 20 percent increase from last school year compared to this one. INFOGRAPHIC BY NICOLE MACGAFFEY

going on in May," Ekstein said.

In addition, IB has a process called predicted scoring, where teachers predict what their students' scores will be on the exams. Last year, teachers sent in their student's IAs and then sent in the year's score predictions.

"The theory [of predicted scoring] is that if you've been teaching IB for a few years, you've encountered students, you've worked with them before, you have some sense of how a student in your class compares to how they tend to do on exams," Math Analysis and Approaches IB HL 2 teacher and IB program coordinator Jared Phelps said.

Usually, IB exams are scheduled a year in advance. The exams are split across multiple days because many of them involve different sections. For instance, IB Chemistry is tested on three separate papers. Paper 1 is a multiple choice section, paper 2 is a free-response section and paper 3 is

the core material. I'm fine with that. The core material is essential to a strong chemistry foundation. However, I firmly believe that the additional material that is now not required is what separated IB from AP," Rivera said.

Currently, the plan for IB exams is still changing due to the condition of schools re-opening resting on the climate of California's COVID-19 cases. However, for now, IB exams are predicted to have the same procedure as the year prior.

"[The IB organization] knows that a lot of students aren't going to learn everything, so teachers should do their best," Phelps said. "IB wants to keep their options open and be able to apply a non-uniform solution. Unfortunately, the people that are hurt by this uncertainty, are teachers and students. Hopefully, everything works out in the end."

Hitting the ground running

BVH administration continues track & field renovations amidst pandemic



The renovation plans for the BVH stadium, which depict additions such as a turf field, rubberized surfacing for the track and expanded bleachers. PROVIDED BY ROMAN DEL ROSARIO

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While students continue to work at home through distance learning, the

Bonita Vista High (BVH) track and field is being prepared for a major makeover after 54 years.

On Nov. 12, 2019, the Sweetwater Union High School District (SUHSD) Board of Trustees voted unanimously to renovate BVH's track and field using funds from Proposition O and the Mello-Roos Fund. Over a year later, progress continues for this project to be completed with little interruption from

the COVID-19 pandemic.

An environmental impact study has been conducted to approve the project, which allowed the team in charge, led by SUHSD Director of Planning and Construction Janea Quirk to move forward with contracting an architect. Lord Architecture Inc. will be the design team along with Kitchell Corporation as the construction manager for the new track and field. The contractor will be

determined after the completion of the public bidding process. Although the team hopes to send their construction plans to the Division of State Architect for approval in Jan. of 2021, there is no set timeline for the project until construction formally begins.

"The reason why it's difficult [to outline a timeline] is because there are so many variables and contingencies that are outside the realm of our control," BVH Principal Roman Del Rosario, Ed.D., said. "As a result of being conducted by an outside party, these types of processes could really drag out or they could go faster."

The new track and field that was proposed will replace the current track consisting of a dirt, grass field and old wooden bleachers with a turf field, rubberized surfacing for the track and expanded bleachers.

"[Our hope is] for students to experience great success, develop memories that last a lifetime and to cultivate opportunities and community [with these new renovations]," Quirk said.

Del Rosario sees the project not only as a form of campus beautification, but also as a source of pride for the Barons. Out of 12 comprehensive high schools in SUHSD, BVH is the only campus without its own track and field stadium.

"BVH is a school with such a distinct history characterized by a legacy of excellence," Del Rosario said. "I grew up in this community, and for decades and decades, Bonita has this reputation of distinguishing itself in so many ways. Juxtaposed with [that success], there is a cognitive dissonance that people have when they see our dilapidated facilities."

In Nov. 2019, when the project was first approved, Head Track and Field coach Ray Peterson noted that the outdated track has proven to be a safety hazard for students, both in sports and in Physical Education (PE) classes. PE students and student athletes may benefit greatly from these renovations. "These students utilize the track and field on a daily basis and expressed excitement for the project when it was first approved."

"[The renovations will lead to] improved physical education and athletics facilities for PE, sports, band and community use," Quirk said.

When the proposal was voted on, advocates opposing the project argued that the money for the project would be better spent elsewhere. Many suggested redirecting the funds to refurbishing outdated classrooms and bathrooms on the BVH campus. While Del Rosario sympathizes with the need for

improved facilities, he expresses that the priority at the moment is the track and field since those renovations are approved by SUHSD.

"Some of our dated architecture doesn't look institutional, and I don't disagree that those [renovations to bathrooms and classrooms] are priorities, but I support what the community wants right now, which is a new stadium," Del Rosario said. "There's an opportunity to move forward and it's going to be a very good thing for the community, but it's not going to prevent us from advocating for other renovations."

While the students of BVH will not be on campus to begin their second semester, Del Rosario remains optimistic that the project will prove to be a unifying symbol when the school community returns to Otay Lakes Rd.

"I'm very much looking forward to someday being at the ribbon cutting and opening up that new field for our community," Del Rosario said. "At the same time, I'm going to continue working with the stakeholders, the parents, volunteers, students and staff on campus beautification. Even [with the absence] of new construction, I think there's a lot we can do to make our campus a more open and welcoming environment."

Bonita Vista High School the Crusader

Mission Statement:

The intent of The Crusader staff is to inform, entertain, and discuss current issues in a professional unbiased manner. The thoughts expressed are not necessarily those of Bonita Vista High School or the Sweetwater Board of Education.

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STAFF EDITORIAL: Our new and improved expectations for the SUHSD board

Standing on the other side of the screen alongside his wife and mother, Adrian Arancibia, Ed.D. raised his right hand. He proceeded to repeat the words that officiated his new position as a Sweetwater Union High School District Board (SUHSD) of Trustee member. This was part of the Dec. 14 live streamed SUHSD Board of Trustees meeting during which SUHSD students witnessed their new board commit to their roles as responsible and caring community leaders.

This transition of power happens in the midst of several district crises, and although the pandemic has made it easier to forget, SUHSD students have been through a lot, and for no fault of their own.

In 2018, a deficit of over \$30 million threw the district into disarray, resulting in unimaginable budget cuts. More recently, the San Diego County Office of Education and the Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistant Team (FCMAT) released an extraordinary audit of the SUHSD that found "fraud, misappropriation of funds and/or assets, or other illegal fiscal practices may have occurred in the specific areas reviewed."

This deficit, in part caused by fraud, found its way to the many pre-existing cracks throughout the district, such as old infrastructure and a lack of funds,

exacerbating present problems and leaving little unaffected.

Nearly a year ago, 237 positions within the district were approved to be cut, removing students' mentors and critical jobs from community members.

These budget cuts reached the SUHSD learning centers, where at-risk students found solace and tangible solutions to problems like difficult medical conditions and homelessness that made the main campus incompatible with their socioemotional needs.

Students saw funds for summer school cut in half, the SUHSD International Baccalaureate program threatened and many more severe results of mismanagement by those at the top.

But now, a new cycle of board members has begun, with Arancibia representing Trustee Area 2 after winning the election for Kevin Pike's former position in November. Board of Trustees President Nicolas Segura will officially continue his role in this new cycle after replacing former President Frank Tarantino. Tarantino resigned in June following the placement of former Superintendent Karen Janney, Ed.D., on administrative leave, as he felt "that the board deserves a leader that supports this action."



As the Sweetwater Union High School District's (SUHSD) new Board of Trustees are sworn in, students look forward to improved leadership and transparency. Bonita Vista High students will also experience the leadership of a news representative Arian Arancibia, Ed. D. GRAPHIC BY LUCIA RIVERA.

In a time of major disruption, uncertainty and distraught, Bonita Vista High (BVH) students need to feel capable of looking towards this new board with hope. The trend of fraud and mismanagement in SUHSD has gone on too long. Not only do students hope for a better district, but we expect it.

During the pandemic, the counseling office can appear to be far removed from the students looking for support.

We have higher expectations for

the Board of Trustees and the greater SUHSD administration. We expect that the SUHSD "Beliefs" will be met, especially the belief "in a culture of trust based on integrity and transparency." Segura expressed his intent in the past to "put students first" as Vice President, and has continued to do so as President. He voted against the cut of over 200 positions, calling instead for transparency and cuts from the top. While our previous representative in the board, Pike, helped pass the

resolution that laid off hundreds of educators, Arancibia should focus on collaborative solutions.

It is our families' money that has been mismanaged. It is our community members who have lost jobs. It is us, the students, who have feared—or experienced—damages to our deserved and free public education.

In March of this year, we called on the board and district to accept responsibility for their financial mismanagement. Now, with a newly sworn-in board, we make our expectations clear: in this critical time of student, staff and teacher need, our community wants to be heard, prioritized and truly put first.

As most board members voted for in June by supporting Janney's placement on administrative leave, students need their representatives to "provide a fair basis for holding the Superintendent accountable." This is only one of the many outlined "Policies and Regulations" our Board of Trustees is guided by.

One of the most relevant policies to our community at this time is the expectation that "The Board of Trustees accepts its critical responsibility for adopting a sound budget for each fiscal year which is aligned with the district's vision, goals, and priorities." As the board goes into 2021 with newly

acquired funds, as an indirect result of the pandemic, students expect that our administration and board will properly manage these funds that we so desperately need.

Students and community members should do their part as well. They can contribute by attending board meetings to stay informed or by submitting public comments to make their voices heard. Students are also more than excited to collaborate with the new board, just as teachers and the Sweetwater Education Association (SEA) were willing to work with SUHSD administration when positions were on the chopping block.

The district itself outlined in the "Concepts and Roles" of the Board of Trustees that the board "desires to represent the community and provide leadership in addressing community issues related to education." To do this, the board will "establish effective two-way communication systems between schools and the community."

By electing and re-electing the new Board of Trustees, the SUHSD and BVH community has given their first contribution to this two-way communication system. Now our elected representatives have the power to follow their own guidelines and contribute back to building a better community. We expect it of them.

EDITORIAL CARTOON



After a long, painful year 2020 has come to an end with the new year bringing hope for everyone, including those who have lost their loved ones to the COVID-19 pandemic. ILLUSTRATION BY ADALI LEON.

A step in the right direction

SUHSD made the right decision to continue distance learning

Jaime Jazo
A&C EDITOR
@JJazoCrusader

The alarm is blaring in a student's ear, yelling at them to wake up and get ready for school. They shiver out of bed and drag their feet over to their desk, where they see their laptop waiting for them. They sit down, turn on their device, join their Google Meets call and start their school day.

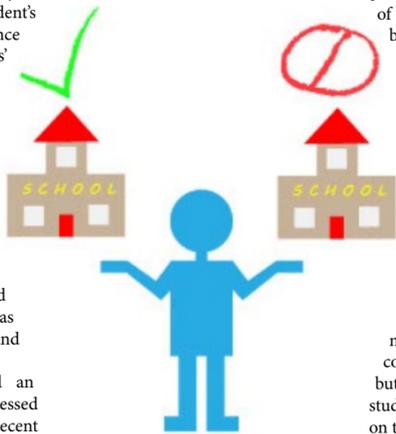
This has been the average student's daily routine ever since distance learning started. Students' schedules will remain unchanged in the near future as the Sweetwater Union High School District (SUHSD) will continue distance learning going into the second semester. Numerous students, parents and teachers have expressed their disdain towards virtual learning; however, going back is not the answer because it would only lead to more complications, such as COVID-19 exposure to families and students.

On Dec. 3, SUHSD issued an announcement where they addressed Governor Gavin Newsom's most recent stay at home order in California. In the speech, it was explained that "private gatherings of any size" were prohibited and masks were mandatory to wear when going outside. Furthermore, the district is keeping their campuses closed to a majority of students because they wanted to "follow the guidance of our health professionals: wear a mask; socially distance; and wash your hands." At BVH, only about 10% of students are allowed to go on campus.

This order led to much anticipated uproar and dissatisfaction from some Californians. According to the California Health Care Foundation, when questioned about the necessity

of quarantining to limit the spread of coronavirus, 7.5 percent of Californians somewhat disagreed and 6.4 percent strongly disagreed. This is due to the fact that people are tired of being stuck in their homes. That being said, there are some citizens who understand why Californians must stay indoors and respect that decision.

According to Healthline, "In terms of sheer numbers, California remains on top with its nearly 290,000 new cases" as of Dec. 22, 2020. It is definitely reasonable for SUHSD to



The SUHSD community contemplating whether or not the district made the right decision by keeping campuses closed. Distance learning is continuing into second semester. GRAPHIC BY JAIME JAZO.

prioritize students' safety and keep schools closed. California is in the lead when it comes to coronavirus cases, and that is why the district must take extra safety precautions, such as being quarantined at home, shutting down school campuses and wearing masks when going outside.

Opponents of the recent order

attempt to argue that students should be sent back to school because it is less likely for them to contract COVID-19. Nevertheless, less likely does not necessarily mean it's impossible. According to the Hospitalist, COVID-19 cases discovered in children are only getting worse because of a "20% increase over the previous high of 61,447 cases reported for the week ending Oct. 29." After the aforementioned increase in contaminated adolescents, "The number of new child cases [was] 73,883." This false perception of immunity is harmful to students because returning to campus will expose them to the virus, and, by extension, expose their families.

By sending students back to school, they would be placed in harm's way. Students will be susceptible to the risk of contracting the virus as a result of returning to in-person learning. In December, 16 on-campus individuals at BVH contracted COVID-19. This deadly pandemic is not an issue to be taken lightly. Granted, not as many adolescents have coronavirus compared to their older counterparts, but the district should not send students back to school simply based on that fact.

SUHSD is taking the necessary steps in order to guarantee student safety, which is better for the community overall. Where would a student go after their school day is over? They would go home where their family also resides. That student puts their entire family at risk of contracting the virus; a situation that could be avoided if the child does not return for in-person classes.

Many issues could stem from kids being sent back. Safety, not emotions, needs to be valued the most when making this critical decision. At the end of the day, it is a question of values; does the community prioritize safety, or not?

Letters to the Editor

The Crusader Letters Policy

The Crusader encourages community dialogue on public matters. Letters submitted to the Crusader may be edited prior to publication and must include a full name and class grade. Please email letters to Opinion editor Yealin Lee (ylee6@sweetwaterschools.net) or Evan Abutin (eabutin@sweetwaterschools.net).

Dear Editor,

In [Carina Muniz's] piece "The Drama of Distance Learning," I appreciate how it brings attention to the drama elective and club. As a beginning drama student myself, I agreed with many of the points highlighted as distance learning has completely changed how I thought my experience with drama would [be this year]. For instance, you mentioned how there is this fear of being vulnerable and judged by your peers as a beginning drama student. I personally felt the same way as I was amongst intermediate students who have two to three more years of experience, which can be a bit intimidating at times. But as interviewed student [and President of the Drama Club] Dana Tween mentions, she tries to create a "comfortable," "kind" and "friendly" [environment]. There seems to be this connotation that drama isn't fun and it is not seen as something "cool" as depicted in a variety of media, but it's completely the opposite. It truly does feel like a family as we're working more collaboratively together, especially on our latest virtual play, "Left to Our Own Devices," [which] comes out during the week of finals. We reassure each other that everyone is doing well and we share fun jokes with each other each class period. Although we can't physically see each other, distance learning hasn't stopped us from connecting with each other and having a fun semester. So thank you for shining a spotlight on the drama department and hopefully it encourages more students to join.

Sincerely,
Ashley Ratcliff

Dear Editor,

I found the article "BVH athletes push back against SUHSD's decision to postpone sports season" by Nicole Macgaffey and Rosario Ortiz really interesting. This topic is really important to a vast majority of students at BVH including myself, as I am a student athlete. However, the article covered little about the students' "push back" and what it entails. It felt as if the article was more fixated on the fact fall sports were once again postponed instead of what the title says it was going to talk about. I hoped the text was going to include why student's pushing back and wanting the sports season to begin, including the fact that sports is the reason that keeps people living and breathing because it is their life. This way, there would be more empathy and momentum for the student athlete's pushback. With that being said, I'm glad this issue is being brought to attention because playing sports in high school is life changing and [is] a critical component to many students.

Best regards,
Marissa Carreon

Dear Editor,

I recently read the opinion piece, "In the driver's seat" by Nadia Martinez on [The Crusader] website. I found the piece to be quite intriguing and something that I had not known about previously. In the article, Nadia explains how Proposition 22 (Prop. 22) essentially "passed right under our noses" and I found that shocking. To know that so many people were oblivious to the major impact that Prop. 22 would have certainly shows that there is a lesson to be learned here. It shows that it is important to know exactly what you are voting for beyond just surface-level knowledge. In this instance, people were blinded from the true nature of Prop. 22 because they were only aware that they would lose the convenience of companies such as Uber and DoorDash. I appreciated how this piece was structured to allow the best understanding of the subject matter because I too was unfamiliar with Prop. 22 before reading this opinion piece, but the context and explanation helped me understand the significance of what Nadia was discussing. I agree with Nadia's stance as well. Knowing now how Prop. 22 has caused these drivers to lose their rights is completely wrong and unjust. More people should have been aware of this and need to be aware of it now as well. Overall, I found this piece interesting and insightful, and it was a great read.

Kind regards,
Nathan Mitchell
Dear Editor,

I really appreciate Evan Abutin's article, "Stepping towards a healthier lifestyle," because it discusses the various benefits of walking as it promotes both physical and mental well-being. I was particularly interested in [this] story because it not only brought to my attention of how such a simple act such as walking can have a drastic impact on our health, but it also made me reflect upon the role walking has had on my day-to-day life [...] Ever since we have been in quarantine and stuck in our homes during distance learning, I've noticed that I haven't been as active as I used to be and it has definitely taken a toll on my mental health as I felt a lot more anxious and stressed having to stay within my home for the past seven months. I never realized how much walking influenced our daily routine when we were physically in school because, as described in the article, walking is something we tend to dismiss; we don't give much thought into how it shapes our day-to-day life. Thank you for pointing out that we need to spend more time walking because it will help us maintain a healthier lifestyle, especially during these challenging times when we need it the most.

Sincerely,
Wallae Zeidan

Dear Editor,

In the article titled "The not-so-small things," written by Editor-in-Chief Lucia Rivera, she writes about her experience with distance learning and how she misses the small little details that in-person school offered. I appreciated the perspective that Lucia offered, especially when she mentions that she feels recharged by having a packed schedule filled with social interaction. I can understand where she is coming from, as I also miss the social interactions that my daily school routine offered. From spending time in classrooms with teachers during lunch to going out with friends after school, the lack of in-person socialization is mentally taxing in its own way. Furthermore, I can also relate to the struggle that Lucia is facing in trying to find substitutes for real-life relationships. I've lately been trying to use virtual communication platforms such as Zoom and Discord to try and stay in touch with friends; however, it simply just doesn't replicate the same feeling of learning together in-person. For example, each classroom offered a different environment depending on the teacher, the decorations and the students in them. Whether it was my English classroom where my friends and I hosted our own "Hot Ones" interview for our final project, or my Biology classroom filled to the brim with plants and animal decorations, there was something to look forward to each period.

Sincerely,
Darius Montefalcon

Dear Editor,

My name is Nicole Hill, [and] I am writing to you regarding the article titled "Rough start for on-campus learning, students break safety protocol" composed by Madison Geering and Lucia Rivera. As the Associated Student Body (ASB) President, this article has great relevance to me as these were my officers breaking the social distancing guidelines. I appreciated the fact that these students, the publishers of the article, reassured us of the severity of the issues. Although we shouldn't need these reminders, sometimes it is necessary as we are adjusting to [the COVID-19] pandemic even though it has already been almost ten months. Especially with distance learning and the lack of social interaction, it is very easy to forget how much of an impact we have on our student body. After all, I am the one that represents them [...] at a district level. Taking this into consideration, I do apologize for the mistake made by us as a leadership team. I agree with everything stated in the article, and once again I thank you for not letting this slip by, as it is more of a concern than we all realized.

Sincerely,
Nicole Hill

Pink is the new white

Start listening to pink noise



Kara Barragan
PHOTOGRAPHER
@KaraBcrusader

My one and only love is starting to fall apart. It's starting to get quieter, and I don't know what to do. It feels like the world caves in on me, with plundering waves of anxiety commencing in my chest, without its beautiful, abstract music to my ears. I can't sleep without it, and I'm worried it can't hold up any longer...

It's my fan.

I want my room to feel like an igloo before I go to sleep. I keep my blinds open to let all the cold wind collect into my room and make the temperature drop low. As a night owl, I let my eyes suffer from the brightness of my monitor and work all night. I feel more motivated to work during this time with the help of the sound of my janky fan and, occasionally, whatever music I'm feeling at the time. It could be some soft rock or even some instrumentals from nostalgic video games I used to play as a kid. Whatever floats my boat.

I need to accept the fact that my fan is coming to the end of its days. I've realized music is more of an excuse to dance or doze off than concentrate on the piles of electronic homework before me. But, I found an alternative solution to my need for noise.

I stumbled upon this sound through a recommendation on my YouTube. This is strange to ask, but have you ever listened to a "color noise" that wasn't white noise? I'm subjective in that pink is my favorite color, but I was pleasantly surprised at this discovery of 'pink noise.'

The YouTube video was titled *Pink Noise Ten Hours - The Classic Now in Dark Screen*.

I wrapped myself in my Christmas blanket, sat on my legs and started to listen at a lower volume, weary that it would blow out my eardrums. I would think a loud color like pink would have a legitimately loud noise, but it was the exact opposite.

I closed my eyes, and I dramatically flashed my eyes at my black screen. Merriam Webster defines pink noise as "a mixture of sound waves with an intensity that diminishes proportionally with frequency to yield approximately equal energy per octave," but to me, pink noise is bliss.

At that exact moment I started listening and thought, this is it... This is bliss.

Everything going on around me didn't matter when listening to the noise. It automatically silenced the sound of my neighbors' labrador, my dog Fudge's constant barking and even my racing thoughts. I started my school work immediately and couldn't be budged to do otherwise.

I was completely focused and my heart trailed at relaxed beats. The sound is more flat compared to white noise. It's like TV static noise mashed with a gentle rainstorm; very comforting.

I took off my headphones and listened to my surroundings. I became perplexed: the world sounds way too silent now. Looking left and right with a shocked expression, I put my pink headphones back on my head.

Everything's better like this.

With my deteriorating fan now silent, pink noise has done wonders in helping me fall asleep more easily and comforting me overall. I suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), which makes me incredibly paranoid at night, getting triggered from any sounds that aren't my fan or my creaking bed.

Pink noise, however, made me feel safe and ensured uninterrupted, amazing sleep. Waking up from the noise makes me feel very well rested and relaxed the next morning.

For those who struggle with sleep, it's worth a try. However, for those who face anxiety, listening at a low volume is best to start off with, just so you're not startled by an amplified version of pink noise. You can take the volume up a notch in different situations where pink noise is needed. For instance, there are times that surrounding sounds distract me, like screams coming from my brothers playing video games. During times like those, a higher volume can mask out any noise.

Trying to listen to pink noise was such a surprise, and most importantly, a life saver for my day-to-day issues.

This noise is now the reason why I can sleep peacefully and work more effectively. All I can say is, pink is the new white. And to my fan, you were good to me...

A crucial decision for a community in crisis

Don Dumas should be elected to the Southwestern College Governing Board

Isaac Lozano
FEATURES EDITOR
@ilozanocrusader

The Southwestern Community College (SWC) Governing Board will make a decisive choice on Feb. 15 to appoint a new board member after board members Nora Vargas and Tim Nader announced their departure.

Amid the upending of in-person classes due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the SWC and Bonita communities have much at stake. Our community needs a leader who will prioritize the needs of students, work to bridge socioeconomic gaps produced by remote learning and support SWC faculty and staff.

The right choice, however, could not be clearer: Don Dumas brings a beacon of experience and moral clarity to a community in crisis.

Dumas, an Advanced Placement (AP) United States History teacher and basketball coach at Bonita Vista High (BVH), comes from humble beginnings.

Dumas grew up in poverty and felt resentment toward his struggles. He struggled to maintain a stable academic record in high school, often skipping his classes, according to Dumas. He worked several jobs before entering the educational field, including jobs at a mail delivery company and a grocery



Advanced Placement (AP) United States History teacher Don Dumas announced his Southwestern College (SWC) board candidacy on Twitter. Board members will choose two new candidates on Feb. 15 to fill the seats of two parting members. **GRAPHIC BY ADALI LEON.**

store.

Several years later, however, a friend introduced Dumas to historian and

author Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States*, which—along with James Lowen's *Lies My*

Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong—inspired Dumas to become a history teacher and sparked his passion for addressing socioeconomic inequality in America.

Dumas looked to education to further his passions and enrolled at San Diego City College (SDCC) in 2004. There, Dumas excelled in his courses and found solace in his academic readings, including the works of Howard Zinn and other racially conscious works. Dumas said his academic awakening "verbalized" his struggles and further fueled his vision to advocate for justice and equality.

After graduating from SDCC, Dumas enrolled in San Diego State University and was praised by his professors for his intellect and breadth of knowledge. He went on to earn his teaching credentials in 2008 and began working as a BVH teacher in 2014.

In the classroom, Dumas's magic unfolds. As a former student of his, I can attest to Dumas's empathy for students and devotion to empowering them with knowledge.

In his AP US History classes, Dumas regularly presents videos and readings to offer students alternative perspectives on American history and the current state of politics. His speeches are never short of fiery passion, and I never left his classes without feeling enlightened.

However, his political advocacy does not serve to impose his viewpoints; on

the contrary, he once invited students to anonymously share their opinions of him and his views, which he shared in class.

Dumas does not evade criticism and is honest about his intentions: he teaches to empower. His emphasis on highlighting the needs of the vulnerable does not detract from his support of the privileged. Dumas works to uplift all—not to favor the few.

In June of 2020, Dumas spoke at a Black Lives Matters event to highlight police brutality and his advocacy has been covered by The San Diego-Union Tribune and an education magazine.

It is no surprise that Dumas was named one of five 2019 San Diego County Teachers of the Year. Dumas is devoted to the transformative value of education and critical thinking—the same thinking that led him from the steps of his childhood home to the county office podium he spoke at after being titled Teacher of the Year.

Dumas understands the full scope of student needs, which is especially relevant during the pandemic. Many students are facing the brunt of unemployment and food insecurity. Dumas knows these issues are important to address to build the next generation.

At SWC, Dumas would advocate for students and staff well after the pandemic. His appointment to the SWC board is not only a necessity: it's a step toward true justice and equality.

Breaking barriers through fashion

Teens who defy gender norms deserve acceptance

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David Bowie, Kurt Cobain, Young Thug, Jaden Smith and now Harry Styles; artists have been challenging the idea of gendered clothing for decades. Following the Vogue December 2020 magazine cover featuring Styles in a lace Gucci dress, the conversation surrounding what should be socially acceptable for men to wear continued. While many have praised Styles' self-expression, some conservatives like American author Candace Owens continue to bash the British celebrity for continuing what she calls, "the steady feminization of our men."

People too often criticize those who experiment with fashion in a way that does not follow traditional gender norms. This is especially true for men, who are expected to look masculine or risk being targeted by their peers. According to Mental Health America, LGBTQ+ teens, who are most frequently the students challenging gender norms, are nearly twice as likely to be called names, verbally harassed, or physically assaulted at school compared to straight, cisgender peers. Such bullying can be rampant on high school campuses, including Bonita Vista High (BVH).

This harassment is rooted in sexism and homophobia and is based on arbitrary notions of what it means to 'dress like a man.' Bullying others for the way they present themselves is harmful and unjustifiable; therefore, students and teachers need to make BVH a safer place for students who defy gender norms through their clothing.

Judging people for being feminine is deeply rooted in sexist, heteronormative ideas. In most societies, women have traditionally been expected to tend to their homes and care for children while men work to provide for them. These roles have resulted in the modern stereotypes of women as sensitive, weak and unintelligent beings that depend on strong men to survive—effectively smearing women and erasing LGBTQ+ people. Alongside belittling women and femininity, these gender roles exclude queer people from social ideas of what is normal by suggesting that the two binary genders are the only valid ones and need each other to survive.

Due to this narrative, men are frequently viewed as having more wealth and power in society, and masculinity is treated as an asset. Feminine men often have their sexualities questioned by others or get bullied because they do not meet the masculine ideal.

"Women can dress like men because men have more power, [whereas]

men don't dress like women because that's seen as emasculating and girly, and they'll get punished for it," Ph.D. candidate for Sociology at University of California, San Diego (UCSD) Haley McInnis said.

In short, McInnis and Ph.D. candidate in Sociology and Science Studies at UCSD, Catherine Crowder point out that from a sociological perspective, there is no reason for a man to want to look feminine since women are considered less powerful, which is why men being feminine often confuses people.

In accordance with societal norms, men are punished for attempting to defy gender norms because masculinity is seen as something valuable to protect, while femininity is a weakness. Even minor deviations from what is seen as "masculine" often lead to backlash against men.

"I've been really looking to get my ears pierced, but [my family] is really against anything feminine," BVH senior Andre Ghashghaee said. Something as simple as a stud in his ears gets a strong reaction from people around him because it threatens his masculinity in their eyes.

Furthermore, according to Crowder, "You can look at masculinity, and similarly there is a lot more anxiety around 'you're not a real man,' [or] 'that's not fully masculine' [...] Masculinity is much more easily polluted than femininity in our envisioning of the two."

Because of our strict envisioning of masculinity, men who dress slightly "feminine" are assumed to be weak by their peers or are called homophobic slurs, even if they identify as straight. People constantly discourage men from seeming feminine because, consciously or subconsciously, they see masculinity and being straight as a more valuable social commodity.

As a result of these sexist ideas, there is typically a sense of inhospitality towards anyone who does not identify as female wearing feminine clothes to school. In school environments, boys often intimidate or bully other boys for trying to experiment with their fashion choices. For instance, junior Mharck Cruz described trying to blend in after watching others be shamed for their fashion choices.

"It happens mostly with boys in the locker room," Cruz said. "[People who dress feminine] are called slurs or are called these words that are meant to bring people down when they are just being themselves."

Junior Frankie Lopez added, "When

"We move through the world with those ideas [taught to you] when you're four: 'Don't throw like a girl.' 'That's for girls.' When we learn that at a really young age, we grow up to hold these [gendered] ideas."

— Haley McInnis, Ph.D. candidate for Sociology at University of California, San Diego (UCSD)



Senior Luke Svehaug, senior Brandon Stigall, junior Sophia Ramirez and junior Mharck Cruz are shown with articles of clothing that they feel comfortable with. They all have their own unique sense of fashion. **PHOTOS PROVIDED BY LUKE SVEHAUG, BRANDON STIGALL, SOPHIA RAMIREZ AND MHARCK CRUZ. GRAPHIC BY ROSARIO ORTIZ.**

you put a boy in a skirt, it throws [other boys] for a loop, and their response to something that is different or doesn't make sense to them is to attack and ostracize it."

As Lopez explained, male students tend to make fun of femininity because they are raised to be masculine and suppress whatever feminine traits they do possess. McInnis elaborated; "We move through the world with those ideas [taught to you] when you're four: 'Don't throw like a girl.' 'That's for girls.' When we learn that at a really young age, we grow up to hold these [gendered] ideas. Then in the way that we speak, behave and interact with other people we end up reinforcing it, even if we're not aware that we're doing it."

While parents may not explicitly say that being masculine is better

than being feminine, small comments like those mentioned by Lopez can subconsciously teach children sexist concepts. Similarly, when one student makes fun of another for being feminine, they are furthering a misogynistic agenda, whether they realize it or not.

This feeling of seeing femininity as shameful also affects girls. For example, junior Sophia Ramirez described how being feminine is accompanied by bad connotations of unintelligence and weakness.

"I was considered a tomboy in elementary school because I was really athletic, [...] but it sucks that I had to feel good by not being feminine," Ramirez said. "I do also deal with internalized misogyny—how people are so afraid to be feminine and how it is perceived as bad."

As McInnis stated, the stereotype that women are weaker is taught to little girls too. Some girls feel the need to downplay their own femininity and are rewarded by peers and adults for being more 'masculine and strong,' even though femininity is not weak or inferior in the first place. These stereotypes of femininity are extremely harmful to people's perception of women and men who dress in a feminine manner.

The way clothes are gendered—and the fact that they are gendered in the

first place—are just social constructs. The concepts of 'femininity' and 'masculinity' have and will continue to change. For example, Crowder stated, "In the Victorian era, baby boys in wealthy families wore pink. And now pink is a baby girl color, right? So there's a certain arbitrariness to the signals that get sent out." Because people can change what clothing they associate with a particular gender, the clothing in itself has no 'true' meaning at all.

Given the fact that clothing has no inherent gender, people of all genders should be free to dress however they want without being harassed. In Vogue's *Playtime* with Harry Styles, Styles states, "It's like anything—anytime you're putting barriers up in your own life, you're just limiting yourself. There's so much joy to be had in playing with clothes. I've never really thought too much about what it means—it just becomes this extended part of creating something."

While some still argue that distinctions between clothing for each gender are necessary, that is a complex debate. Styles believes that gender should be irrelevant when considering the clothing that is acceptable for people to wear.

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“I miss school” Special Education students navigate new world of distance learning



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A cool winter breeze ruffles the palm trees swaying on Bonita Vista High's (BVH) campus. At the front gate, a slow stream of students makes its way through the quad and between hallways, settling into desks spread apart outside classrooms.

A school administrator directs students with a smile, who greet each other six feet apart but keep their masks on and complete health screening upon entry. They then turn on their laptops and log into their online classes, ready for a new day of in-person learning.

For many students in the Special Education Program and those with Individualized Education Programs (IEP), this is their new reality. Remote learning has upended their education and created new challenges and priorities. Amid these changes, administrators, teachers and students continue to navigate the intricacies of distance learning in hopes that Special Education students regain a sense of normalcy.

On Nov. 5, many BVH students in the Special Education Program and those with Individualized Education Programs were permitted to attend online classes on the BVH campus.

Adjusting to in-person learning

Nov. 5 marked the first day students with IEPs, including those with disabilities, could attend online classes on campus per Phase 1 of the Sweetwater Union High School District's (SUHSD) reopening procedure.

With district approval for partial reopening, the BVH administration established two models for on-campus learning in accordance with the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines and negotiated protocols with teachers and counselors.

The first is an all-day program where students stay on campus from 9 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. and attend their online classes with teacher guidance twice a week. The second is a shorter biweekly tutoring program where students only visit campus from 2 to 3:15 p.m. to receive additional academic or emotional support.

Initially, the BVH administration reached out to school staff and community members to ask for on-campus support to facilitate in-person learning. Volunteers assisted in directing students to their desks, enforcing social distancing protocols and ensuring all procedures

line classes.

"I can't tell you how many stories I've heard," Principal Roman Del Rosario, Ed.D., said. "There's such a wide array of students with special needs. Two of our cohorts are students that [are] moderate to severe. Those students tend to need more support; some of them need one-on-one support. They have difficulty covering their face with coverings. Too many of our students with special needs are languishing so we have tried to prioritize [them]."

Some teachers recommended students to BVH administration as individuals needing additional on-campus support. However, BVH also contacted parents of students with disabilities or in Special Education Programs to offer on-campus learning services.

When senior Manny Bautista's mother Vanessa Rojas was informed of the opportunity she felt "happy" knowing it would help her disabled son, who struggled to stay focused in his online classes since the outbreak of the pandemic. Melendrez says one of her students appreciated going back to campus and significantly improved her performance on campus.

"She said, 'Mrs. Melendrez, I just don't know how [to do the assignment], it's too hard. I couldn't figure it out.' So I walked



During on-campus learning, students settle in desks along the hallways, in the quad or on grassy areas, and they begin their online assignments individually but receive guidance from volunteer teachers.

separated," Wise said.

Students bring their laptops and settle in desks arranged along the hallways, in the quad or on grassy areas and begin their online work individually. Students greet each other with a smile, which "you see in their faces," according to Wise. She says most students with disabilities come to campus for social and emotional learning as opposed to academics.

"From our special day programs, there are two groups and they're the ones with the best attendance. They'll come in after school and play a sport [or] some games. They even celebrated Thanksgiving, [which] culminated with a Zoom meeting," Wise said.

Once in their classes, students stay connected and can ask teachers, usually four or five patrolling school grounds, for help with their schoolwork while staying physically apart.

Students have paper packets and class materials that correspond to online lessons, which they pick up every week at BVH, and work on arts and crafts activities or safe science experiments at home. According to Davies, on-campus learning has kept students engaged. Despite the different circumstances, they

have "made the best" of distance learning.

"I felt like [in-person classes] helped the kids because I'm doing it with them," Davies said. "We did a lot of mystery science videos [and] experiments. I would get all the materials [and] drop it off [and] each kid would do the science experiment. So supplying all that help [keep] them engaged."

Due to the pandemic, however, Davies had to implement social distancing protocols into her lessons. Many students in her classes initially struggled to comprehend the implications of the pandemic, so Davies taught them new manners to reduce risks of infection in their everyday lives.

"Even before Thanksgiving, we talked about how it's going to be different because of the pandemic. [I tell them,] 'you [have] to wash your hands, don't shake hands anymore. You're going to do the elbow, or you can wave from a distance.' So we constantly go over those things [and] they know that stuff. We teach them every kind of subject [and] life skill: math, reading and even games, like [playing] Uno or how to get on the com-

puter [and] go on YouTube," Davies said.

Because students are engaged, Davies feels that going to campus has helped improve their mental health despite many initially struggling to attend their online classes.

"They like to talk about it with the other kids who didn't come on campus. They were like, 'Hey, I got to go on campus.' And everybody's like, 'What? You did?,' and it seemed to be a big deal that they got to come on. They kept asking, 'We're gonna do it next semester, right? When are we going back? I miss school.' So it helped mentally with them because they haven't got to see any of their friends in person," Davies said. "[It helped] us as assistants, too, because we're all close. It was awesome."

In spite of the uncertainty and difficulties of the pandemic, Davies remains hopeful in seeing her students' faces; they are "cheering" and "laughing" in solidarity, ready for the next day of smiles.

"We're just a really big family. We all care about each other and the parents sit next to the kids [during class]. We've also bonded so [everyone] really cares about each other [and] involved. It's a great class," Davies said.



Students in the Moderate Transition Program share their Christmas tree crafts with their peers and teachers on Dec. 18. During the holiday season, these students were given various crafts to ease their way into winter break and celebrate together. PHOTO BY JENNIFER DYE

Features

Navigating distance learning

With the last eight months of distance learning at BVH and the continuation of the pandemic, students' entire learning environments have adapted. BVH students as a whole have had to develop new schedules and routines, including Special Education students.

Similar to the rest of BVH, the majority of Special Education students have been in distance learning since April and have continued virtually. However, due to the constant demands and the disadvantages of these Special Education students' disabilities, various elements within their regular routines have had to be shifted.

For Moderate Severe teacher Darci Davies, she ensured that she made distance learning as accessible to her students as possible. Prior to the pandemic, she had her students use school-issued laptops for in-class activities such as Kahoot or YouTube videos. However, once the pandemic escalated, she programmed all of her students' laptops to be linked to her Google Classroom in order to ease the process as much as possible.

Once the 2020-2021 school year began, Davies expressed that her students were more accustomed to the process of logging into class. Currently, when online, she meets with her students four to five times a day about 30 minutes to an hour at a time where they explore different subjects.

"[My students] have been doing really well in my class. My assistants join [the class and] we get excited when [students] get the correct answer. We have party horns [that] we [use] to get all fired up when they get the answer right," Davies said.

Additionally, while Davies' class focuses on academics, it also prepares students with moderate to severe disabilities from freshman to senior year for the Moderate Transition Program which works with students that are 18 to 22 to aid them in becoming more independent adults.

"Every Wednesday we used [to do] community-based instruction [where] we [went] across the street to Ralph's [and had] the kids pick something out. We taught them how to use the self-checkout [which is] something that they could do on their own or with their parents. Also, we would go to Carl's Jr. and teach them how to order for themselves. A lot of times they are shy and tell their parents [what they want], but [then they have to order themselves]," Davies said. "We teach them how to be mature and independent."

Before the pandemic, students in the Moderate Transition Program were aided in applying for jobs at sites such as CVS, Sprouts and Marshalls, as well as utilizing public transit systems to navigate their way there. Rather than being on campus every school day like most students, they actively learned in the community.

Conversely, with the pandemic, students are no longer able to work at these

Challenges and solutions

With the uncertainty of COVID-19, challenges have approached the Special Education department in a variety of ways. Teachers are dealing with technological issues, parents are having to monitor their children's progress more closely and many in the BVH community are unsure about the health risks of bringing students on campus.

For Curtis, Davies and Melendrez, technology has been something they all have had to learn more about and adapt their curriculum for. As the last nine months have been fully online for most students, it has become the main means of communication.

"Some [students] are [very] adept at [using technology], and probably better

“Other people are suffering because of [they are not being safe] it. I understand also that parents think that their kids have to be in school, but as far as in person at this point, I’m out.”

- Moderate Transition Program teacher Yvonne Curtis

than I am, and then there are others who struggle, so I've had to be flexible," Melendrez said. "Some of them, I will make phone calls if they're having issues with technology. I allow them to turn in assignments [written] in their notebook and [they] show it to me on FaceTime chat."

Moreover, parents have also had to take on a heavier responsibility in aiding their students throughout the school day. For Rojas, distance learning has taken a toll on her due to the difficulties of taking care of her son.

"From March to June, it was super hard for him, for me and for the whole house. He didn't want to log in, he kept saying he wanted to go to school. Then, I would text the teacher [to talk to Manny] and let him know that [the class is] going to be online and that he could see his friends," Rojas said. "[There was] lots of crying and it was very, very hard."

Rojas has six children, including Bautista, and expresses that she struggled to balance her responsibilities upon the outbreak of the pandemic. Usually, she left Bautista in school during the day while she bought groceries and ran errands, but the pandemic forced her to supervise her children at all times. Bautista spent 72 hours in a mental hospital because he was "jumping on cars," according to Rojas, which further distressed her.

Rojas says teachers' support helped alleviate her difficult circumstances, and taking Bautista to campus for in-person classes made him "really happy." Though she continues to face the brunt of the pandemic, she expresses that she has adapted to her new routine and hopes that SUHSD can permit schools to reopen when deemed safe.

"I just hope this [COVID-19 pandemic] is over soon," Rojas said. "I want my kids to go back to school. There's a lot of [open] private schools. I wish the kids could go back to school but I also

and learn from their experiences in the community. Moderate Transition Program teacher Yvonne Curtis explains that when the pandemic began, she was at a disadvantage as technology was not something she immersed herself in and had to teach herself with YouTube videos.

"I was suffering. I didn't even know my login for Google, for the school district or anything, so I was at a disadvantage," Curtis said. "I hadn't kept up on technology as much as maybe I should have. [I never thought] that this would happen where I would have to use a Google Classroom period."

In addition to using Google Classroom as their main way of communicating with their students, Davies and Curtis both use a system of packets that include the following week's lessons. They ensure that each student has what they need for the week in their packet by delivering them to students' homes.

"My assistants and I would go on campus every day, or at least a couple times a week [to] make all of these packets, and [we] would drop off and pick up homework once a week. [Students] had paper packets that corresponded with the on-line lesson and I felt like that helped the kids," Davies said. "[This system] is the same kind of stuff we did in the classroom, but we just brought it into this virtual world."

To guarantee the safety of her students, Curtis indicates that the packets for her class sit for at least 48 hours before delivery. She does not come in contact with

students and wears a mask and gloves. Although this process is completely different from when students would come on campus last year, Curtis attempts to normalize the situation as much as possible.

"I try [not] to make any kind of negative comment about [distance] learning. I deliver the lesson as if they were in front of me and try to normalize the process because this isn't normal. This is a weird year, but I have to do it as normal as possible because I may be the only person that they see online or my staff may be the only one person that they talk to, even during the entire [distance] learning process, which is terrible, but it's a reality," Curtis said.

Both Davies and Curtis emphasize the importance of engagement and meaningful lessons throughout distance learning. Not only that, but making sure activities allow students to be successful and motivate them to continue is a prominent aspect of Curtis' lessons.

"I have 10 students with different needs, so [for] each one of those students inside of their packets or projects, we have to take into consideration that we may have to do a little more for them to be able to [complete activities]. For example, maybe they have a fine motor deficit and they're not able to glue the eyeballs on [a] craft or other things. We preassemble some of it so that they can still have success with at least one or two components of the craft if they're not able to do it themselves," Curtis said. Included in the many programs avail-

Looking forward

Amid the challenges brought on by the pandemic, much remains uncertain.

Since the implementation of distance learning, Rojas and other parents have tried to adapt to the tribulations of remote classes with varying success. For Special Education students, their hopes to return to the classroom seem dim as SUHSD makes no definitive plans to enter Phase 2 of reopening due to rising COVID-19 cases.

Rojas believes reopening would provide the most relief to her family, though she notes other avenues like respite care work could be more feasible due to health precautions.

"To support my son, [he needs] to go back to school. What else could they do if they can't open the school? I've heard of having aides to go to the kids' house and work with them one-to-one. I don't know. I just hope and pray that by next year, they're in school," Rojas said.

As a teacher, Davies believes many students are ready to come back to the classroom, especially as vaccine distribution begins nationwide.

"We need to get back to school," Davies said. "[We have] a vaccine. The district's done what it can do, but I'm ready to get back. The students are ready to get back. We need to get back to somewhat normal."

Curtis, however, believes the health risks are still too great to reopen classrooms. She worries about contracting the virus and "felt unsafe" when she

able at BVH for students with disabilities, students with IEPs have also adapted to distance learning. For instance, Fundamentals English teacher and Education Specialist Joy Melendrez values quality over quantity in her classes and reduces the amount of work she would normally assign.

"[Lessons] used to be [on] novels, and now [it's] shorter stories and [in] smaller chunks [to] try to make it easier for students. As far as differentiating outside the classroom, a lot of my students are visual learners [and] audio learners, so whatever writing or reading that we have, I try to make sure that I have associated videos that I can show so that I can address all students' needs," Melendrez said.

Curtis, Davies and Melendrez highlight that social-emotional learning is one of their main focuses in distance learning. They do so by having more interaction online where they speak to their students during class or create outlets outside of class available to speak with them one-on-one about their struggles.

"My ultimate goal is to get back into the classroom, but also just to make sure that we're meeting each child's individual needs, and mostly social-emotional needs right now rather than academics," Melendrez said. "Being home all day for myself affects me emotionally, so I can [only] imagine how it affects a teenager who's struggling through their own issues and trying to get academics done during a pandemic."

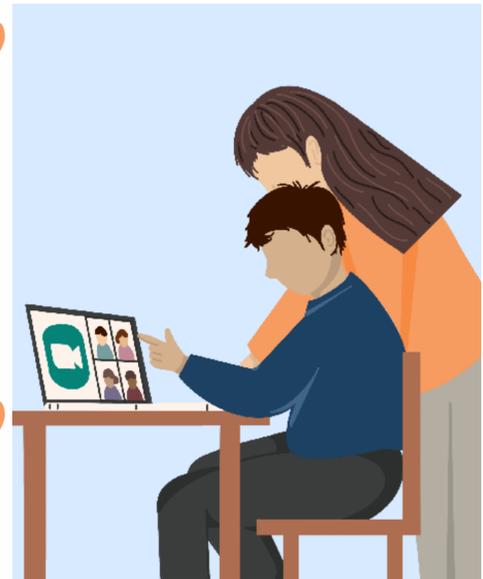
have COVID-19 than to go [to campus]," Curtis said.

As distance learning resumes for the second semester of the 2020-2021 school year, Davies believes parents can also play a role in helping their disabled children navigate remote classes.

"If they have the time, maybe sit and read and do the assignments with students. [Sometimes] they just need someone to read to. If parents [have] 30 minutes a day, let your kid sit [down], vent and talk to you. You may be struggling as the parent, [but] don't forget, your kid is also struggling and not understanding certain things," Davies said.

For now, Melendrez is focused on addressing her students' well being amid the tribulations of the pandemic. She says staying home already affects her emotionally and believes that for teenagers who are coping with other personal or domestic issues, the toll of the pandemic may be worse. Her ultimate goal is to "get back into the classroom," but she stresses the importance of students' emotional needs during an unprecedented era.

"While academics are important, we don't know what [students are] dealing with in their homes. My focus is to just provide support and resources in any way possible. I have an open-door policy [and my students] all have my phone number. They can call me at any time. I will reach out and help them. I think it's a big deal to build trust with a student that they feel comfortable enough to call you and ask for help is huge. I hope that each of my students knows that they have somebody," Melendrez said.



As Special Education students navigate distance learning, parents assist, guide and monitor their children.

discovered BVH reported two cases of COVID-19.

"I will only say as soon as possible when it is safe. A lot of people think [it's] okay to go whenever. When you see the news [that] parents are complaining about their kids not being in school, I would rather my kid be alive and not

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Features

A trip down memory lane

Students travelling during the pandemic remain attentive to health guidelines

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Bonita Vista High (BVH) senior Priscilla Ling steps into New York for the first time ever since COVID-19 spread globally. With her face mask on, she leaves the airport and arrives at her aunt's house with her father. Travelling may be inconvenient to students and families within the BVH community due to the ongoing pandemic; however, following the regulations for the pandemic could help make travelling safer.

Ling visited her aunt in Upstate New York with her family in early September until the beginning of December. She and her father arrived in New York a week earlier than her sister and her mother. Afterwards, she returned to New York on Dec. 17.

"It wasn't that difficult because we knew the [travelling] procedures; you have to wear your mask. And all the airlines have air purifiers, so we knew it was pretty safe. But we also had to take the risk of travelling with the pandemic going on," Ling said.

Ling explained that she and her

family had to constantly sanitize their hands as a precaution while travelling. They made sure that they were following the government's COVID-19 guidelines for travelling safely. Overall, Ling stated that the actual procedure of traveling was not difficult.

"When we got to our aunt's house, we had to wipe down all our luggage and all our belongings that we brought with us and quarantine in their guest house. Then, we got tested for COVID-19 and got our results; we were negative so we were able to interact with our family and go to the main house area," Ling said.

Sophomore Daniel Haslett first travelled to Missouri in the beginning of October to a Bass Pro Shop Resort. Then he travelled to Portland, Oregon, at the end of October to visit a plane museum with his grandparents.

"[Going to another state] wasn't that hard. We had to take a lot of precautions [like] wearing masks and stuff. Also, the plane had some seats blocked out for social distancing," Haslett said.

Haslett describes that he stayed in a hotel room that was sanitized thoroughly. The dining tables were spread out and the pool was closed due

to pandemic regulations. According to Haslett, travelling in these times gives him something to look forward to and says that it's a new way to get away and explore a new place with family.

"Travelling during the pandemic felt normal to me and it was fun. I would be thrilled to do it again," Haslett said.

In October, BVH senior Frances Acueza had the opportunity to travel to Seattle. The visit was partly an opportunity for Acueza to explore the city's college campuses since she wanted to see what the city was like and hopes to live in Seattle in the future.

"There's definitely a lot more restrictions. There's more things you have to get past, a lot less people [and] also the financial differences. It [financial difference] is kind of significant since there are a lot less people traveling. The prices of plane tickets are actually a lot lower," Acueza said.

Acueza took an Amtrak to Seattle, a passenger railroad service that provides medium and long-distance intercity service, and took a plane back to San Diego. She explains that she didn't sit next to anyone in the Amtrak because of the travelling restrictions. However,



Senior Frances Acueza looks out from the window of the Amtrak she took to Seattle, Washington. Acueza hopes to live in the city, Seattle, in the future. PHOTO PROVIDED BY FRANCES ACUEZA

while coming back, Acueza mentions that the plane was full with people and there were even some people switching flights.

"I would say if you're going to travel, travel very infrequently and make sure you're always following safety precautions for [staying safe of COVID-19]. If it's not essential, then I suggest you to not travel or at least until the vaccine is out," Acueza said.

According to The Washington Post, the virus infection rate is now 11.5 percent, meaning that the spread rate is more than twice what experts consider high-risk. However, COVID-19 vaccines have arrived in California, which could slow down the spread of the virus in the near future.

Not only is the pandemic worse, California is also setting daily death records. The increase in new cases,

virus hospitalizations and deaths doubled. The number of deaths in San Diego County, specifically Chula Vista, is approximately 17,071 people. BVH students are advised to be careful and follow the COVID-19 guidelines at all times.

"Travelling is different and is harder because you have to make sure that you're safe and you're more aware of what you're doing," Haslett said.

Students jazz up home work spaces

Pablo Dollero
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On a speckled marble countertop lies a pink metallic laptop next to various kitchen appliances. Surrounding it, a tall kitchen stool stands in a wide, empty living room. The space is quiet with no people in sight, except for one student sitting on the tall stool, leaning towards the laptop. For Associated Student Body (ASB) President and senior Nicole Hill, this kitchen is her new workspace.

The start of distance learning in April forced students to work from home and readjust their school routines. As the Sweetwater Union High School District (SUHSD) announces the continuation of remote learning for the next semester, many students like Hill have crafted their unique workspaces to maximize their productivity and express themselves.

"Because it was optional and it was towards the end of the school [year], I definitely lacked motivation to work. I would always do school in my bed all the time," said Hill. "But now I try to get up just to be more motivated and it pushes me harder."

As president of ASB, Hill says she needs a workspace that encourages her to focus on her academics and ASB responsibilities during distance learning. Hill says that she starts her day at her desk in her bedroom since she needs a place to concentrate when her parents are at the house. When Hill's parents leave the house, she can work and attend virtual classes in her kitchen without disruptions.

"I think of my room as a space for me to relax, so coming [to the kitchen]

separates the whole [academic side] and the relaxation [side] of it, and I'm able to focus and motivate myself more to do work here," Hill said.

Hill also uses the on-campus ASB office to discuss the group's activity plans with ASB Advisor Christopher Alvarez and sign off checks or paperwork. Hill likes to sanitize the countertops inside the ASB office before settling down to work. The office gives Hill a "new scenery for education," which she feels is more beneficial than her workspace at home.

"Working at the ASB office allows me to work with another mindset. I am able to focus on ASB more as the environment encompasses a working atmosphere. [Because] we aren't used to working in such a space for very long hours, going to the ASB [office] helps to provide that normality I had before distance learning," Hill said. "It's definitely different than before, but I feel like it still gives me that academic environment that we are missing from school."



Hill likes to work in her bedroom and then move to her kitchen once her

Hill has expressed that she misses the social interaction between friends and teachers in a proper classroom environment. But despite the challenges of working at home, Hill says that distance learning also teaches her discipline.

"Distance learning will definitely stick with me for a long time because it's something so different and I know



Neuner has adapted to distance learning by making her workspace as distraction free as possible. PHOTO PROVIDED BY URSULA NEUNER

that I'll be able to take my work ethic here at home and I'll be able to bring it to college or work in the future if I end up needing to work from home," Hill said.

Similarly, junior Marielena Boyd also transitions between multiple workspaces, as she routinely switches households between her parents. Boyd says she makes schedules with her family, who often watch television in the living room or make noise in the kitchen, to reduce distractions.

"At my mom's house, I work here in the living room. There's three siblings here and it makes it extremely difficult to concentrate. There's constant distractions, but I had to adjust," Boyd said. "Then I'm at my dad's house; I have my own room and the only distractions were the cats."

Before schools shut down due to COVID-19, most schoolwork material necessary for students was located either in the classroom or in their backpack. Because students now require their school resources at home, Boyd

struggles to transport her school supplies between households, including her Italian textbook and her trumpet case for her Mariachi class.

"While we were at school, it was easier because I always have to have [textbooks] on me. But with these classes this year [...] I'll leave textbooks at one house because I think that I'm not going to need them and then we have to keep going back and forth," Boyd said. "I feel like I forget something every time I go to the other parents' house and it's a pain."

Despite having issues with school resources, Boyd points out that other necessities are more accessible.

"At home, I always have my things next to me or in a pile in the corner of my room, so I always know where everything is and it's become easier," Boyd said. "When I have to start the day, I know immediately what I have to do [...] so I think it actually works better when [I get] ready in the morning

or [work] because I can keep myself in one place."

While Hill and Boyd have several workspaces based on family or academic necessities, senior Ursula Neuner prefers one workspace that is most ideal for her during distance learning: her mother's office. Although Neuner sometimes works on her couch when she completes less important tasks, Neuner tries to avoid spaces of her home that she believes may reduce her productivity.

"I've read a lot about how when your workspace and where you relax become the same, it mentally makes it really hard to focus. I never work in my room because I know that my bed is there and I won't get anything done," Neuner said.

As part of the Bonita Vista High Speech and Debate team, which went virtual at the start of the pandemic, Neuner attends virtual tournaments and delivers argumentative speeches against opponents live through a com-



Boyd says she needs access to her instrument and textbooks as she moves between her parents' households. PHOTO PROVIDED BY MARIELENA BOYD

puter. At first, Neuner encountered issues when trying to fit her prepared reading notes and her live audience on a single screen. However, those issues were alleviated when Neuner convinced her mother to buy her an additional computer, one where she can face her opponent during online debates and another to read her script. "The cases you read and your re-

sponses to your opponent's case are all on a laptop and it's really difficult to be on a call and see yourself and your opponent while working on that same computer," Neuner said. "I think having that double setup is really nice, and the workspace in general is really organized."

While her primary goal in her office is to focus on schoolwork, virtual meetings and Speech and Debate, Neuner finds the traditional classroom environment more beneficial when working. Neuner believes that a big problem with having a workspace at home is that there is "no one to hold you accountable."

"In school, you have your teacher who you don't want to disappoint [or] be seen off task, but if you are off task, they will go to you and say, 'Why are you off task?'" Neuner said. "It's not just the teachers; having classmates around you who are also working and being productive [makes] the whole environment productive; you can turn to the person next to you and ask a question that comes to mind whereas at home it's a lot harder to ask questions."

Although students prefer the traditional classroom environment, many have made much progress to their workspaces since the start of distance learning. BVH students weren't sure how long distance learning would last, which slowed productivity among students, but as distance learning continues to the next semester, Neuner hopes to stay productive throughout the school year.

"I regret the way I first reacted to distance learning," Neuner said. "I was not productive and I wasn't taking school seriously, but now I realized there's a possibility that this entire school year is going to be online, so I better get my act together."

At your service | Students adapt to changing community service requirements



A student reads a story to children over video call. During the pandemic, students have the opportunity to pursue virtual community service activities. ILLUSTRATION BY NADIA MARTINEZ

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Empty lunch tables and dusty floors fill the Bonita Vista High (BVH) cafeteria, where the voices of BVH tutors once buzzed. Due

to the COVID-19 pandemic, however, tutoring and other community service opportunities have come to a grinding halt. To accommodate for these changes, BVH has canceled the 30-hour community service requirements which have been reduced for freshmen and sophomores to 15 hours per district orders. For seniors and juniors,

community service hour requirements have been waived.

"I wouldn't worry about [the community service requirements] too much. If things go back to 'normal' in the fall, then there's still plenty of time, ideally, for a current [freshman and sophomore] to do their community service," BVH Counselor Reynila

"Community service is important. For me, it's giving back my time and resources, building community and connecting with [others]."
-Key Club Co-President and senior Faith Rivera

Calderon-Magbuhat said. Since students still have the rest of the year to participate in community service, Magbuhat believes that sophomores and freshmen can relax knowing that their requirement is shortened. However, Co-President of Key Club and senior Faith Rivera stresses the importance of community service.

"Community service is important. For me, it's giving back my time and resources to those that might not have those opportunities, and also building that community and connecting with [others]," Rivera said.

Community service has long been a way for students to connect with their community. Some BVH staff members, including Magbuhat, believe that students should still pursue community service opportunities because they may boost students' college applications.

"When colleges look at the community service, they're going to look [for] the student committing

themselves to a cause or something that they believe in [and] enjoy doing," Magbuhat said. "It means more when students have an invested interest in an activity rather than being forced to do something because they have to do it."

The pandemic significantly slowed down community service activities. President of Junior Optimist Club and senior Ally Guerra expresses that her club was heavily involved with community service when the pandemic hit.

"I was disappointed in not being able to finish the year and celebrate our biggest event; we didn't get to do that. With everything that's going on right now, it's really hard not to be disappointed and frustrated," Guerra said. "But at the end of the day, there's nothing we can do about it [except] go through it and eventually get out of it. I'm just glad I was able to do what I was able to do."

Although the required community service hours were shortened for

freshmen and sophomores, there are still many opportunities during distance learning. However, some students do not know where to start and find it significantly harder to find community service opportunities in the pandemic.

"Since quarantine has started, I have not done any community service. I feel like there's not a lot of options with that anymore, so it's harder to find anything available," junior Karinna Monzon said.

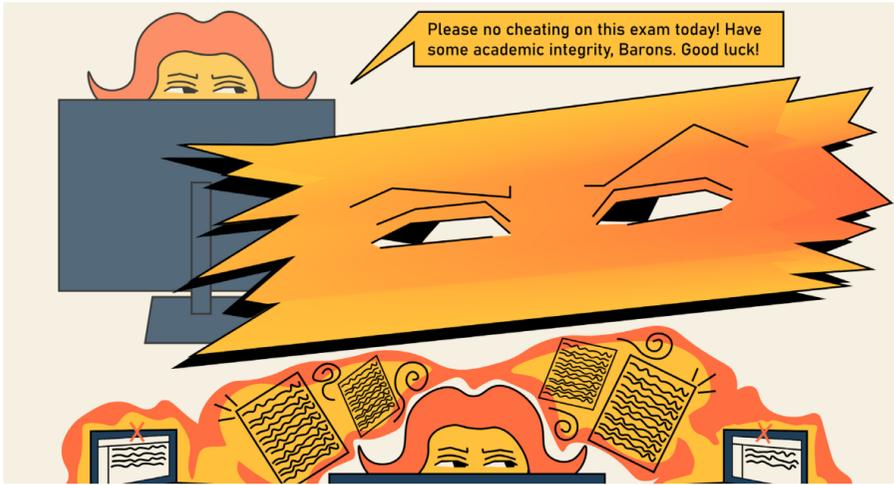
Rivera, however, expresses the importance of community service, as students can pursue volunteering opportunities during the pandemic through organizations such as Key Club, Junior Optimist Club and websites like VolunteerMatch.org.

"It just makes us more connected, especially during quarantine. Everyone has their own challenges. So doing community service, like helping the elders or giving back to minors, just makes this [a] little bit more bearable," Rivera said.

Features

To cheat or not to cheat

BVH reports sharp increase in students cheating during distance learning



Although it is easier for students to cheat their way through distance learning, Regular and Accelerated Biology teacher Joseph Szakovits believes that integrity is crucial to success. **ILLUSTRATION BY KARA BARRAGAN**

Pablo Dollero
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The teacher passes out the exam to his students, one by one. As it is being passed out, the teacher ensures there are no cheat sheets, phones or notes under each student's desk. The teacher sits in the back of the classroom, occasionally peaking up at the students. The students know they must keep their eye on their paper and their mouths shut to prevent a big F on their exam. Now, due to distance-

learning, the ability to guarantee that Bonita Vista High (BVH) students are not cheating on exams is threatened.

"Obviously with [students'] cameras off, it is hard to see what is going on the other side of the screen," Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB) and Honors Chemistry teacher Jeffery Rivera said. "[I ask:] 'Are they doing Google searches? Are they texting?' If I'm in-person, I could literally stand behind them if I wanted to."

Similar to Rivera's experience, Regular and Accelerated Biology teacher Joseph Szakovits found it

difficult to get around the restrictions posed by a virtual testing setting. With students not being required to have their cameras and microphones on, Szakovits said, he is basically blind to what his students might be doing during an exam.

"There's no way around [the limitations of distance learning]," Szakovits said. "It's very different when you're sitting in a class and you're physically taking [an exam]. Even if you're on a computer taking the test in a classroom, it is an entirely different experience. When kids have their cameras and microphones off, they can

go to the restroom in the middle of a test and I have no way of knowing that they're even doing that."

In fact, in a poll of 496 students conducted by the Crusader, 58.1 percent of BVH students admitted to cheating on a test during distance learning, compared to 48.4 percent during in-person school. Moreover, only 8.4 percent of students who cheated during in-person learning cheated two or more times per week, whereas 20.6 percent of students who cheated during distance learning cheated two or more times per week.

Although students are taking advantage to cheat their way through distance learning, Rivera and Szakovits have found methods of preventing students from being able to cheat. Rivera relies on Google Forms for his Chemistry exams, which gives him flexibility to create multiple versions of tests preventing students from collaborating off of each other. Rivera's exams have multiple choice and free response questions that sometimes require students to submit handwritten work in order to receive full credit.

"I try to make questions that do require critical thinking and analysis," Rivera said. "Simple questions that could be solved by a quick Google search are going to be unavoidable."

Szakovits uses a similar method for his Biology exams, but instead of creating multiple versions of his exams, he creates a bank of different multiple choice questions that are then randomized for his students' questions and the question during exams.

"Even if your best friend is in the same class, it's harder for them to help you if they don't have the same questions as you," Szakovits said.

Moreover, Szakovits uses Jupiter Grades' built in quizzing system, Juno Pods, to randomize questions between his students. Although Juno Pods prevents students from clicking on another tab to look up questions, Szakovits admits that students can easily have a phone or another device right beside them if they want to look up answers to test questions. Given that preventing cheating for students in distance learning is not easy, Szakovits designed study guides to support students during exams in an effort to discourage his students from needing or wanting to cheat in the first place.

"With the restrictions that we have set up, there is not really a way to entirely eliminate [cheating], at least not a practical way. All [teachers] can do is set things up so that students feel empowered to do their best; it's harder for them to at least [consider copying] off each other," Szakovits said.

In contrast, Spanish and IB French teacher Patrick Beaulieu no longer conducts regular quizzes in distance learning. Beaulieu believes that there are too many difficulties posed by testing students on Spanish and French knowledge, grammar or vocabulary and, instead, relies on: emails, letters, descriptive paragraphs, notes, invitations, summaries, posters, movie critiques, presentations and other tasks that students submit to him in order to assess students. According to Beaulieu,

he frequently notices students using translators or other language tools, but he says that his system of assessing students makes it easier for him to detect cheating among his students.

"Using the translator to do entire assignments will not help a student become proficient in a language. I believe that students are missing out on an opportunity to learn a skill [and] acquiring a second or third language because they rely on a translator," Beaulieu said. "Learning a second language requires time, focus, dedication and effort. Unfortunately, students often want to take the easy route by using translators instead of doing the work."

In spite of the methods teachers have implemented with the purpose of deterring cheating, they don't fully prevent cheating during distance learning. However, teachers still believe that it's essential to have students take tests during distance learning. Szakovits, for instance, believes that frequently quizzing students prepares them for college which is a teacher's "responsibility to make [students] as prepared for that as possible." Moreover, Rivera furthers by saying that taking tests during distance learning teaches students lessons outside of school.

"In the end, [students] need to see their growth, not just as a chemistry student but as a learner," Rivera said. "Learning is a lifetime effort and being able [to] assess yourself no matter the conditions is the only way to judge your progress."

Wanna FaceTime?

Students turn to new methods of staying in touch during pandemic



Senior Nicole Hill (bottom left) and her friends regularly meet while staying wary of health precautions. **PHOTO PROVIDED BY NICOLE HILL**

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"What's up?" a text reads. "I legit have so much homework."

"Same. Wanna FaceTime?"

"Okay, we can stay up all night, lol!"

The video call begins and two blurry faces exchange smiles, familiar with their routine but tense for the long night of work.

For Bonita Vista High (BVH) senior Courtney McDaniel, video calls like these have become a staple throughout her quarantine. McDaniel is one of many BVH students who have turned to new methods of staying in touch amid strict social distancing guidelines due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Before the outbreak of the pandemic in March, McDaniel spent many afternoons strolling the Bonita mall with her friends before heading home. She rarely had phone calls or video chats with her friends because, according to McDaniel, "I prefer to be with people physically."

The outbreak of the pandemic, however, changed that. When schools closed in March per social distancing guidelines, McDaniel thought quarantine would last two weeks. But as school closures continued until April, it was clear McDaniel wouldn't return to the casual hangouts with her classmates.

To reconnect, McDaniel initially turned to social media, using platforms like Snapchat and Twitter to chat with her friends. Usually, she sent amusing pictures and updated her friends on her everyday life.

When the 2020-2021 school year started, McDaniel began using FaceTime to stay in close contact with fellow senior Jennifer Dye.

"I became a big fan of facetimeing people. I had a couple Zoom birthday parties [with] friends and that was fun [and] new. But I spend most of my time now with Jenny, usually every night. That's the main way that I socialize with her because I don't have very many friends that I consistently talk to," McDaniel said.

McDaniel usually facetimes Dye

without notice. McDaniel says she and Dye spend upwards of four hours on video calls and discuss homework or the classes they attend — sometimes a source of amusement.

"When we started [our Theory of Knowledge class], we were all like, 'we [don't] know how this works,'" McDaniel said, chuckling. "We both didn't know what to do, so we made it a habit to FaceTime during class and be like, 'hey, like what's happening?' so we had someone to talk to. [Class] is harder when you're isolated and [that] helped make it easier."

One night, McDaniel spent an entire night on a call with Dye — both overwhelmed with homework — so they could catch up on their assignments together. According to McDaniel, the two spent most of their time in silence, but being in each other's company made their night a little less tiring.

"I think it's really valuable to have [someone by your side] even if you don't like FaceTime. Before, it was annoying [for me] to have someone on the phone all the time because I wasn't used to it. Now I love it," McDaniel said.

For senior Nicole Hill, the pandemic likewise changed the way she socialized.

Before the pandemic, Hill spent afternoons at her friends' house or on bleachers to watch basketball matches with schoolmates. But when quarantine orders were implemented in San Diego, she didn't know how to adjust.

"We were in the middle of our softball season. That was my first, 'oh, shoot' moment. [I asked myself:] 'What am I going to do?' My team was my first priority but as [we realized] we weren't going to have a season. It was a strange concern because that's never been something I've had to worry about," Hill said.

As the pandemic continued, Hill formed a close-knit friend group with whom she stayed in contact through social media platforms like Snapchat. Because each of her friends stayed within their social bubbles, they began organizing occasional gatherings to reconnect while taking social distancing precautions.

Hill says she and her friends regain a sense of normalcy by seeing each other. They typically play games on popular

online game 'Among Us' or have picnics in local parks.

"Usually we show up wearing masks, but by the end of the time, we end up taking them off just because we feel comfortable around each other. We [take] pictures and [have] a lot of laughs and happiness," Hill said.

Because her social interactions are dramatically different, though still cherished, Hill believes she became closer to her companions over the past several months.

"I've definitely gotten closer to them personally; like a one-on-one relationship rather than a group setting. We can't take these little things for granted anymore [and] having hangouts makes me appreciate them a lot more," Hill said.

As the United States reaches over 16 million coronavirus cases, many speculate that in-person meetings can pose health risks. Hill expresses that all her friends take COVID-19 tests and assure they are in good health before meeting up. She believes there may be a small risk but that she and her friends remain safe by taking the necessary precautions.

"The risk is definitely still there [and] I'm worried about [it]. But my friends [and I] know where we've been. We keep [our] bubble small. I'm just trying to stay as cautious as possible. If I have symptoms, I make sure to stay home, get tested and stay healthy," Hill said. "When we [meet], we make sure that everyone's okay."

BVH Nurse Paola Garcia expresses that students can still socialize safely if they follow social distancing orders, including going outdoors, staying separated, wearing masks, avoiding crowds and canceling events if someone feels ill.

"We don't want to say, 'don't go socialize with your friends.' Socialization is very important for your development and your identity," Garcia said. "[But] when you go out with your friends, it's important to [take] the precautions, even if everybody's staying within their bubble. It can be a form of empowerment."

Garcia believes students have many ways of staying engaged throughout quarantine, especially with outdoors activities.

"There's other ways to stay connected that are healthier like going for runs, hikes or going out in nature. [And it's] always ideal [to have] a core group of friends [that] stay within that bubble," Garcia said.

As forecasts predict the pandemic will prolong into the next year, social distancing guidelines will continue to limit students' social interactions. Nonetheless, McDaniel sees the value in human connections, even if through the lens of a camera. For now, they are all she has.

"Having [someone's] presence, even when [I'm] just doing homework, keeps me on track and engaged in life. It's not just me and my computer. It's me and someone else," McDaniel said.

The final test

Teachers adapt their final exams in distance learning



AP Calculus AB and BC and IB Math SL teacher Benjamin Chan conducts his final as Juno Lessons in Jupiter Grades. **ILLUSTRATION BY NICOLE MACGAFFEY**

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With their caffeinated drink of choice at hand, students prepare themselves for long nights of studying ahead. Cramming a semester's worth of information days before their final is a common occurrence during the end of the semester for many Bonita Vista High (BVH) students. However, distance learning has presented a unique situation where BVH teachers are adjusting the finals they are administering to their students.

"Distance learning has required us [teachers] to recognize that we can't have single moment high stake assessments; it's not equitable. We need to provide opportunities that are spread over time," English 10 Accelerated, International Baccalaureate (IB) English Higher Level 1 and Theory of Knowledge (TOK) teacher Jason Good said.

Good is conducting a final for all of his classes, however, it is unlike the traditional final. In his English 10 Accelerated class, he is conducting a smaller, slimmed down version of the final. For IB Literature, Good is giving his students a small general class assignment that will meet the requirements of a final exam that the district lays down. According to Good, the Sweetwater Union High School District requires all teachers to give an End of Course exam (EOC).

"I don't want students to be overburdened which is one of the big inspirations for keeping the final exam assignment itself quite small," Good said.

One reason Good has formulated a simpler version of his final exam is due to mental health. He recognizes that students are having a difficult time at home as he relates to that as well. Good mentions the challenges students face while studying from home, such as various distractions and at-home responsibilities they need to meet. In addition, Good says that the final assignment is not going to be worth as much as a traditional final.

"The last thing I want to do is give a

high stakes test that all of my students fail because then they [will] leave feeling bad and that's not my goal," Good said.

Accelerated Biology and IB Environmental Systems and Societies (ESS) teacher Jennifer Ekstein has decided not to conduct a formal final. Specifically for her IB ESS class, she will be working with students on their Internal Assessment (IA) since students who are taking the IB exam next semester will need to turn an IA in. She is also planning to use her time to conduct chapter exams and interventions for struggling students.

"It's come down in recent media that D and F grades are up. We [teachers] felt that in our classroom, we could do a better job of targeting those students during those two hours [rather] than having them sit through a test that doesn't measure accurately what they learned all semester," Ekstein said.

Ekstein describes that the EOC that the district presented to her Accelerated Biology cohort did not align with the standards they taught during first semester. She furthers that it is a better use of her and her students' time to help them improve their grades in the hour and a half left in class.

"We're [teachers] helping them [students] do better so they'll feel better about themselves," Ekstein said. "I'm going to target specifically what they're missing and what they didn't understand. What better way in the end of the semester to get them to feel positive about what they've accomplished in class when they go from an F to a C, or D to a B?"

Moreover, Ekstein does not see the benefit in conducting a final. Instead, she sees benefit in targeting and connecting with the students who need extra assistance from teachers.

"For us, as teachers, connecting with students [who need support] is really important which we don't necessarily get to do all the time. This is the last 'hurrah' for some students because this is going to be their final grade on the report card," Ekstein said.

Advanced Placement (AP) Calculus AB, AP Calculus BC and IB Math Standard Level (SL) 1 teacher Benjamin Chan is conducting a final but has

adjusted it to better suit distance learning's environment. For his IB math SL class, the exam is being broken up into five parts with each day having a different topic. For his AP Calculus AB and BC class, he is conducting a short final exam activity.

"We [teachers] know [that] right now, extra stress is not what anyone needs. We want a summative learning experience, but don't want it to be high stress," Chan said. "This [final exam activity] is our way of keeping students accountable."

The final exam for Chan's IB Math SL 1 and final exam activity for AP Calculus AB and BC are set up as a Juno lesson in Jupiter Grades which automatically grades each question and gives the students immediate feedback if they got the question correct. This format gives students the opportunity to retry the question until they are able to get the answer correct. Chan's intent for this style of final gives a second chance for students to learn topics they have not quite mastered. Chan emphasizes that he wanted to reinforce learning without it being high stakes.

"I want students to bring everything [they learned] together. Since [my exam] is not high stress, I'm not hesitant about doing it. I want it to be a summative learning experience that [allows] students [to] go back and look at everything we've learned," Chan said.

Furthermore, Chan explains that the preparation for the AP Calculus AB and BC exam was a factor in his decision to conduct a final exam activity. AP exams will be happening in May and Chan saw this as an opportunity to prepare his students for the upcoming AP exam.

"I want to find [the] least stressful ways possible to push [students] to remember [course material] because May [is] going to come and [they] need to know [these skill sets] for that AP exam," Chan said.

Good, Ekstein and Chan believe that a challenge with conducting a final over distance learning is having limited instruction time for their classes. They are having to scale back on the amount of lessons they teach in class which makes it difficult to get through all the course material. Ekstein also mentions that conducting a final without a secure browser has been an issue because without it, the final exam conducted over distance learning would not be an accurate gauge of what her students know.

Overall, although some teachers support conducting a final during distance learning, teachers like Good do not think teachers should be giving EOC's to students during this time. He is opposed to giving a high stakes single day test during distance learning.

"We [teachers] do two things when we give big high stakes tests. We stress students out, which isn't good, and we lose instructional time. We [are] already short on time and [by] conducting final exams] we are losing more time to see what we didn't cover; but we know what we didn't cover," Good said. "I wish we weren't doing End of Course exams."

A fresh coat of paint

Students redecorate their living spaces during quarantine



Senior Mia Aguiatang's bedroom in her early stages of redecoration. Aguiatang completed the redecoration of her living space with her family. Provided by Mia Aguiatang. **PROVIDED BY MIA AGUIATANG**

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After spending her pandemic days surrounded by the mint green walls of her room, Bonita Vista High (BVH) senior Alexis Dauz felt the need for a change. That change took its form as a room redecoration, complete with newly painted sand-colored walls.

Dauz, however, is not the only teenager investing time into redecorating her living space. In a poll conducted by the Crusader, out of 496 BVH students, 75.4 percent reported that they redecorated their own rooms or living spaces during quarantine.

The redecoration process for Dauz included repainting, rearranging fur-

niture and finding new decorations. While it took place several months after the pandemic began, Dauz stated the pandemic influenced her to redecorate.

"If the pandemic didn't happen, I'd probably think of redecorating my room but eventually never do it," Dauz said. "I don't think I could've found the time to do it, and I didn't spend as much time in my room to care a lot about how it looks."

On the other hand, senior Viviana Rouston would have decorated her room even without the pandemic and distance learning, during which she has redecorated her room twice so far. Rouston, who rearranged furniture pieces and changed her decor, learned about other teenagers picking up the challenge of redecorating, including her "sisters and a few friends."

"When I redecorated earlier in the year, it was so I could have a space

where I could feel relaxed and comfortable staying in for a long time. Since we couldn't go anywhere, I wanted to keep myself busy and productive as well. My most recent redecoration was simply because I no longer liked how I previously decorated it," Rouston said.

While Rouston and Dauz have completed their redecoration, senior Mia Aguiatang is still in the process as of Dec. 16, but is "really proud of the progress" she has reached so far. Her choice to change her room's aesthetic to more "modern," "neutral" and "minimalistic" was inspired by a variety of factors.

"I have always wanted to redecorate my living space, but I think being in quarantine inspired me to work on it. When I was at school I had a lot of other priorities such as school and extracurriculars, but quarantine was a nice way for me to focus on myself and my goals, in which my room was one of them,"

Aguiatang said. "I was also on Pinterest and TikTok a lot and saw a bunch of people decorating their rooms, so that also inspired me to want to do the same."

All three students recalled seeing the trend on TikTok, a popular social media platform, where according to Dauz, "everyone paints cute accent walls, buys plants and hangs up led lights to decorate." Aguiatang suggests specifically using social media platforms to find ideas and inspirations for anyone doing a redecoration themselves.

Since quarantine began, news outlets have also produced guides for redecorating one's living space, like "8 Steps to Redecorate Your Room in Quarantine" and "Quarantine Redecorating: Live up Your Living Space on a Budget".

In agreement with people across BVH, and the country, Dauz, Aguiatang and Rouston all recommend redecorating to fellow students. Redecorating especially helped Dauz by keeping her "busy and away from [her] devices." For Rouston, the redecoration became a way to "show how much [she] changed this past year," but each student can find personal significance based on

their redecoration choices.

"I felt like [the redecoration] was a mark of my independence because I did it all by myself and without asking my parents for help or advice," Dauz said. "I felt proud of myself. I've never painted a whole room by myself before and I had my doubts about the color I chose when I initially started painting, but when it was all done I really liked it."

Just as she did, Dauz suggests that other students also take the reins on their plan, "because at the end of the day it's your own room [and] you spend the most time there."

As advice to other students, Rouston highlighted the importance of planning steps efficiently, which includes steps like organizing and picking through items one already has prior to new purchases.

"Make the big changes first. Whether it is getting new furniture or just moving them to a new place, do this first and then work on the small details like wall decorations later," Rouston said. "Getting inspiration pictures is also helpful so you can get an idea of what you like and so you have a visual reference when buying new stuff."

For Aguiatang, choosing an aesthetic and developing a layout were important steps she recommended to other students, while she also emphasized choosing pieces wisely. In the end, all three sources emphasized that students are spending much of their time in their room alongside new and old decor.

"When you're shopping for furniture don't settle, make sure it's something you genuinely want. Besides school I made my room a priority activity for me and it honestly has been so much fun and really stress relieving and takes your mind off of anything else that may be bothering you. The planning process is also super fun and allows you to be as creative as you'd like," Aguiatang said.



Senior Mia Aguiatang's bedroom in the later stages of redecoration. For Aguiatang, the redecoration included painting her walls. **PROVIDED BY MIA AGUIATANG**

Keeping the spirit alive

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Laughs and cheers flooded as students gathered for seasonal assemblies in the gym. Whether it be the grade level chants, karaoke by grade or the various dances on stage, Bonita Vista High (BVH) assemblies fostered a warm and welcoming environment. However, the joy of these assemblies were soon replaced with silence as COVID-19 made its debut. Due to distance learning, the majority of students and staff cannot safely visit campus, though this didn't place a blockade on the school's spirit as the Associated Student Body (ASB) continues to hold assemblies virtually on YouTube.

"At first, I didn't expect assemblies to [continue] considering everyone was at home. I didn't see a [purpose] for them, but [the assemblies] turned out well," ASB Spirit Commissioner and senior Kelsey Brito said. "We wanted to give students an opportunity to be more involved while they're at home."

According to ASB President and senior Nicole Hill, it took the ASB months to decide what they wanted to do for virtual assembly videos. A goal of the ASB was to make the 30 minute video entertaining to both staff and students.

"During distance learning assemblies, we often start with a theme and a group of performers. Typically, the officers come up with a few themes and present them to the rest of ASB. If no one seems to like them, they offer their suggestions and we come to a consensus," Hill said.

After discussing their theme, the ASB determines which performances to include in the assembly. Whether that be having the Visual and Performing Arts (VAPA) groups perform or a regular assembly with music, sports, teachers and students participating in different games.



BVH's Mariachi performs 'Feliz Navidad' at the winter virtual assembly. They performed fourth out of twelve entertainment segments. **PROVIDED BY BVH ASB YOUTUBE**

The work that goes into virtual ASB assemblies

"The officers who are in charge of the [ASB] Google Drive will have our folders set up for us. For every assembly, we get our assignments, film the videos, get whatever we need, drop them into the folder and tech will put them together and edit them," Brito said.

Since it is difficult to physically meet due to the pandemic, the ASB uses a group chat to communicate with its participants. In the group chat, the officers communicate with the rest of the ASB and inform them on what will be included in the assembly and answer any lingering questions. Hill stresses that communication is important in the ASB as they work in small groups.

"Our assemblies are always really creative, so that way it [can] be something that everyone wants to do. We don't want to stick to things that are so repetitive. We always liked to do things that are new to students," Brito said.

Hill expresses that the ASB takes

ing and students and staff having differing activities to attend to, ASB members have noticed there has been less student involvement and viewing of the assemblies.

"[Recently], we had a scavenger hunt at the beginning of distance learning. There [was barely any people who participated and] there's a lot less people who go to the assemblies," Technology Commissioner and junior Michael Dimapilis said.

Conversely, Brito finds that hosting assemblies online comes with benefits due to its accessibility. She adds that in school assemblies had limited seating and prevented the entire school from watching, however, on YouTube, everyone has access to it.

"I think [there is a benefit with the assembly online], in school, the space to view the assemblies was limited; [therefore], not everyone had the chance to see it. However, [hosting] the video on-

inspiration from assemblies prior to the pandemic and take into account what can be recreated virtually and catch the attention of staff and students.

"Creating the videos beforehand, we always have to think about what goes into the assembly and follow our plan set. Then, we have to get everything ready for it [and] eventually film it. Creating these videos isn't just a one day process. It's really complex," Brito said.

According to Hill, filming takes around six hours and editing is around 12 hours in total. The ASB's Technology Commissioners, Michael Dimapilis, Waverly Lester, Kyle Santacruz and Pablo Shimizu are the students that put these assemblies together in video form. Due to the limits of distance learn-

ing is [advantageous] because everyone has access to it," Brito said.

Not only can everyone watch the assembly, but students and staff are also able to look back at the videos later on in the year. Hill adds that the virtual assemblies allow other groups such as Drama, Mariachi and Band to be included as well when previously it was uncommon.

"This year is so far from a regular ASB; the experience I am going through right now was something I would have never predicted while running for president. We have attempted to divert our school spirit and unity through virtual learning but it is quite limited due to the platforms students do and don't use," Hill said.

The drama of distance learning: Drama Department perseveres despite distance learning setbacks

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Although Bonita Vista High (BVH) drama students are away from the stage's spotlight and now behind a screen, their new routines bring the "passion" many have towards acting even in an unfamiliar environment. Beginning and Intermediate Drama teacher and Drama Club advisor Rosamaria Sias, finds alternatives in teaching Drama to her beginning drama students while Drama Club President Dana Tween and Drama Club Vice President Kailee Wendeln work towards creating a "comfortable" community in the Drama club.

"[Distance learning has] definitely been different. We're being safe. We're trying our best [and] it's been really slow so far because a lot of us [students] are not used to online learning." Tween said. "But, it's given us a different way to look at things. We still get to do the things that we love and we're still doing drama with what we can online."

According to Sias, distance learning has posed as a "learning curve" for the drama club. Now that drama students are learning online, Sias finds ways to use her previous lesson plans for distance learning.

"I think what I've noticed with distance learning is that it really allows us to think in terms of, 'Well, what can we do that we otherwise would not have been able to do had we been in the theater?'" Sias said.

In order to make theater trouble-free, Sias requires that her drama students use the video-submission application, Flipgrid, so that she can see her students' online performances. During synchronous time in class, Sias has students participate in theater activities and games that teaches students different aspects of drama.

"[Drama is] actually a lot better than my other classes because we use Flipgrid frequently, and it's very similar

to how it was in school. I'm actually really impressed with how [online Drama Club is] formatted. It's very similar to being in class," Wendeln said.

Similar to other classes, many of Sias's beginning drama students do not turn on their cameras or microphones which makes it harder for Sias to know if the students understand the material. "I think that's the biggest dilemma right now—[student's] fear [of] the judgement of others and their peers," Sias said. "I'm just trying my best to [do] more team building activities and just have fun so that they break down those barriers and be vulnerable, and really maximize their full potential."

As the president of the Drama Club,

“For me, drama's a really personal thing and it's theater—I love it, I've grown up with it. I think it's important for people who love something—[...]to surround yourself with the things that you love doing.
”

—Dana Tween

Tween supports her peers by ensuring that everybody in the club is "comfortable," "kind" and "friendly" with each other.

"[Drama Club is] a family, I like to say, which is really cliché, but we want to make sure that everyone is comfortable. I've been in drama for four years now and I tell everybody that it's going to be awkward because you don't know people and you don't know the teacher, but, we all treat each other like a family," Tween said.

Currently, Tween and Wendeln, along with the rest of Sias's students, are working with the Associated Student Body to create a "spooky skit" for Halloween. According to Sias, the skit will be released on Oct. 30, 2020, to all of BVH. Additionally, Sias has other plans to direct a virtual play for her Drama Club to enact.

"We [drama students] don't get to interact as much, which I really miss because drama class is a lot of fun. We all get to hang out together and do little plays when we make jokes and stuff. We don't really get to do more of that one-on-one interaction that much anymore, and I do miss that," Wendeln said.

Life lessons I learned from Nintendo



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My all-time favorite character of the Super Mario franchise is Yoshi. Through tsunamis, hurricanes and blizzards, the quirky half-dinosaur, half-turtle, half-horse, half-frog thingy has become one of my best friends. I mean... Yoshi can jump dozens of feet into the air, grab items with its tongue, lay eggs and even possesses the iconic catchphrase "nang-nang." Simply amazing.

My all-time favorite Pokémon is Crobat. Elaborately described by the Pokédex—the Pokémon franchise's digital encyclopedia—as the "Bat Pokémon," the X-shaped flying behemoth is one of the fastest Pokémon alive and exudes charisma with its purple and turquoise color palette. I'm proud to say that Crobat has been on my team in Pokémon Platinum, Pokémon HeartGold, Pokémon Black 2, Pokémon X, Pokémon Alpha Sapphire, Pokémon Sun and Pokémon Ultra Moon.

Nintendo games have introduced me to vibrant universes beyond my imagination—ones that are unparalleled in creativity and infused with just the right dash of campiness. While I love the PlayStation (Gran Turismo and Call of Duty are amazing games), it simply doesn't live up to the glory of Nintendo. From childhood to the present day, Nintendo games have offered me something that no other video game has: life lessons.

Life Lesson #1: Goal setting creates a sense of purpose.

The first Nintendo game I had the privilege to play was Mario Kart Wii, where you race against an assortment of colorful Mario characters amidst a frenzy of turtle shells to get hit by, bananas to slip on and mushrooms to bless you with speed boosts.

Initially, my naive, carefree eight-year-old self made the critical error of entering each race without a proper gameplan. Therefore, the half hours on the weekends that I was allowed to play were spent inconsistently accelerating, taking sloppy, wide turns and completing each race with a feeling of "it's whatever." The thrill of racing never failed to bring a smile to my face, but there was still something missing.

I can't recount exactly when, but one day I discovered that you could earn shiny gold stars by doing well in Grand Prix mode, where you compete in themed "Cups" that each consist of four different courses. Hence, I set one of the first tangible goals of my life: to earn as many of those shiny gold stars as possible.

In the process of progressing towards this goal, I developed critical skills that helped promote me from an "amateur" racer to a "he actually knows what he's doing" racer. I began to hop into fiery drifts in order to round sharp turns and save speed boosts, save shells and bananas to block items that were about to hit me and use mushrooms to take elaborate shortcuts through courses. I felt an increasingly deeper sense of crunchy satisfaction as I briskly shaved off time during my races—resulting in higher rankings and more of those prized gold stars.

Eventually, I even applied several of these skills to Mario Kart DS. On this new console, I was obsessed with competing in "time trials" in which you were timed against "ghosts"—or computer racers—while zooming through tracks with a mere three mushroom supply. Here was when I set another goal: to beat all the "ghosts."

I did it.

I remember vigorously drifting on straight roads to acquire much needed speed boosts on Figure 8 Circuit and flying over gargantuan dunes on Dry Dry Desert all in an attempt to cross finish lines in the least amount of time possible. And ultimately, it all paid off; I achieved my goal.

Life Lesson #2: Escapism can be a great way to relieve stress.

As I morphed into an awkward teenager, life became progressively defined by deadlines, numbers and letters. Fortunately, I was already well-acquainted with setting goals; however, those goals started to exit the realm of the Nintendo universe. Although my half hour limit on playing time was lifted, I simply couldn't play as frequently because

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Nintendo universe. Although my half hour limit on playing time was lifted, I simply couldn't play as frequently because Nintendo games sunk into the pitiful abyss of "I don't have time to do it."

School breaks served as the intermittent periods of my life when Nintendo took over. In either spring or fall break of eighth grade, I recall getting a new, shiny copy of Pokémon Sun for my Nintendo 2DS console. The game was inspired by the scenic islands of Hawaii, simultaneously reviving the inner 10 year-old within me who conquered the Sinnoh region in Pokémon Platinum and the 13 year-old me who visited Hawaii just a year before.

Within three days, I trained a team of six diverse Pokémon, dismantled the plans of the nefarious, Pokémon right-abusing Aether Foundation, challenged the prestigious Elite Four and was crowned the champion of the Alola region.

Those were three days where the ever-constant stress of deadlines, numbers and letters faded from existence.

Five years later quarantine took over, and the daily school routine I was so accustomed to was profoundly disrupted. School was less than half a traditional school day, it became rare to see someone other than the teacher turn on their camera during video calls and "social" interactions fell into a sea of text messages. Nothing felt real.

One day on YouTube, the music for "Eterna City" from Pokémon Platinum—my first ever Pokémon game—visited my "recommended" tab. I clicked the video. Soon enough, the chill and mellow synthesized melody triggered a flood of memories—when I emerged victorious in the battle with the grass-type gym leader Gardenia, zoomed through the city with an in-game bicycle and visited the Pokémon Center to heal my poisoned Pokémon.

That feeling was real. My stress faded into oblivion as I realized life's potential beauty.

Life Lesson #3: Family bonding should be appreciated.

This past year, I've relished playing Mario Kart 8 Deluxe, Super Smash Bros. Ultimate, Mario Tennis Aces and Super Mario Party on my Nintendo Switch. On Fridays, my family gathers in front of our TV screen in the living room to decompress as we immerse ourselves in the world of Nintendo.

With a set-up of Black Yoshi, the City Tripper and a Cloud Glider, I challenge them on Mario Kart 8 Deluxe, still accomplishing the slick drifts that were so integral to my Mario Kart Wii experiences.

The game we play the most is Super Mario Party, which consists of an assortment of minigames that are quite impossible to get bored of. You can shoot Koopa Troopa off a platform with a water gun in "Soak or Croak," punch Donkey Kong out of a paparazzi's line of vision in "Slaparazzi" and catch popcorn falling from a volcano in "Snack Attack." We especially enjoy playing "Square Off," a game mode similar to tic-tac-toe where you can claim "squares" by winning minigames.

On these Fridays, the harmonious amalgamation of yelling, laughing and occasional cursing makes me truly appreciate my family.

Ridiculously sharp turns, exhilarating gym battles and heated games of Mario-themed tic-tac-toe extend far beyond the digital world for me. They symbolize the complexities of my life. They've given me something tangible to reflect on and enamored in a time of my life when I'll only be considered a "child" for a few more months.

Thank you Nintendo.

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Pokémon, Naruto, Dragon Ball and One Piece—these are just some of the most popular and most viewed animes in the world during the summer of 2019, according to Anime streaming service Crunchyroll. Whether it be watching anime shows or movies, anime has been part of many Bonita Vista High (BVH) students' daily lives. Anime includes various Japanese animated shows and movies depicted by colorful graphics, vibrant characters and action-filled plots. In spite of the COVID-19 pandemic, students passionate about anime have come together to create the Anime Club. The Anime Club aims to provide a platform and environment for students to discuss and watch anime together.

"[Due to] COVID-19, it's been hard for people to meet up together, to join calls and to have the same environment as if we were at school. Through [Anime] Club, we hope to emulate that sense of community by having watch parties, coming together and talking about anime," co-President of Anime Club and senior Darrius Montefalcon said.

"It's okay to say 'I'm stressed'"

BC2M seeks to create an environment to educate about mental health at BVH

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With the first semester of the 2020-2021 school year at a close, a club emerges from the stress of distance learning and calls out to recruit new members. Bring Change to Mind (BC2M) is a newly established club at Bonita Vista High (BVH) aiming to educate students on mental illness, spread awareness and provide various coping mechanisms to its members.

BC2M was brought to light by President and junior Mia Gonzalez, Secretary and junior Isabella Garcia and Vice President and junior Nicole Estolano in their sophomore year but did not come into fruition until the beginning of the current school year. However, as pointed out by Estolano and Garcia, the mastermind behind the idea of the club with continuous support was Gonzalez.

"[The officers and I] decided to [start] the club because we wanted to help other people realize the importance of mental health and feel like they can have some sort of resource where they can learn about mental health without feeling like they have to open up themselves," Garcia said.

When beginning the club, the officers found BC2M, a student-led club initiative created in 2010 with its sole purpose being to explore the topic of mental health in safe and supportive environments. Gonzalez has seen how mental health is perceived at BVH and expresses her hopes to rid of the stigma that surrounds it through this club.

At the moment the club only has seven members in total, three being members and four officers.

The club at BVH is a branch off from the official BC2M's high school program; each member has an account within the organization where they receive a monthly newsletter with resources for mental health. Additionally, there is an app called Headspace that grants the members the ability to access its premium settings which they utilize for meditation.

When it came to dealing with the technicalities behind kickstarting BC2M, the club that was supposed to start at the beginning of the year—like the rest—resulted in only recently getting approved near the end of November.

Co-President of Anime Club and senior Ivan Vergara has been considered by fellow officers as the founder of Anime Club. Similar to Vergara, English 9 Accelerated, International Baccalaureate English Higher Level 1 and 2 teacher and Anime Club Advisor Raymond Chhan both share their passion and love for anime. Despite not having Chhan as an English teacher throughout his four years in high school, Vergara and Chhan connected with one another by talking about certain anime shows or recent updates about new and upcoming anime.

"I was hesitant to [start Anime Club] because I was really nervous. I've never managed [a club] before, but Mr. Chhan persuaded me into starting [Anime Club]," Vergara said.

Montefalcon furthers by saying that anime's increasing popularity and impact on BVH students' lives caused by extended amounts of time staying at home, have both been reasons why the club's officers and Chhan expressed their desire to create the Anime Club.

"Due to quarantine, a lot of people are starting to take up on anime as another form of entertainment since what we would normally do after school is go out with our friends, play sports or do certain club activities, which is limited now," Montefalcon said. "[As a result,] people have turned to playing video games [or watching] anime."

Anime Club meetings are held on Thursdays during lunch at 12:20 p.m. According to Anime Club Vice President and senior Tyler Carter, officers are currently working on planning future activities for club members, such as hosting "watch parties" on Discord, a messaging, communication and video streaming platform, where Chhan or an officer shares their screen, streams a movie and watch the movie together with all the club members. Anime Club officers plan on hosting the watch parties some time after the week of finals.

"We've planned a watch party after finals to take a breather from semester one stress. Having watch parties allows [club] members to react and discuss what we just watched with other peers," Gomez said.

The issues that came with signing digital forms delayed the club's official opening, but now the club is looking to expand by recruiting more members to begin their activities in this new semester.



Bring Change 2 Mind's (BC2M) first post was made to advertise the club's opening. Their first post was made on Nov. 25, after the club's official registration with ASB. PROVIDED BY BC2M'S INSTAGRAM

As the pandemic continues and has altered the structure of school for BVH students, many have faced various mental health issues due to the lack of physical interaction. Although the officers' intentions were not to create BC2M during a pandemic, Gonzalez believes it makes the club all the more important for students who "feel like their life is spiraling out of control."

"I think that even though people might not know what everyone is dealing with, if everyone just knew that it's okay to talk to each other about how you're feeling [and that] it's okay to say 'I'm stressed' and 'I don't know what to do' [dealing with mental health would be improved]," Gonzalez said.

The ultimate purpose of BC2M is to educate members about mental health and teach them coping mechanisms to aid in overcoming personal struggles. The officers have emphasized a want to normalize conversing about mental health and illness and create a comfortable environment to talk about one's feelings if wanted. Estolano describes wanting to teach the members empathy towards others who decide to open up about their struggles.

"At Bonita, we have [other] support [systems] but people sometimes don't feel comfortable talking to others about their emotions, and though for some

people that really does help, [for] others it can make it worse," Gonzalez said.

A concern Garcia held in beginning the club was that she did not want the officers or other members of BC2M to act as therapists. The purpose of the club is not to give counseling, but rather provide a resource for various mental illnesses by learning how to deal with emotions in the healthiest way possible, according to Gonzalez.

"I went through some things during my freshman year where I did not know how to control or monitor my feelings," Gonzalez said. "Everything was in chaos and I think that at the time, if I was given the resources and the opportunities to learn how to manage things safely and know that it's okay to talk to my friends about it, things for me would have changed."

Gonzalez hopes for conversations in the club to be comfortable and tension free when addressing mental health and well-being. In addition, she wants to be able to work on mass projects within the club such as where a positive note can be passed along throughout the school day, however, that plan would be for



Bring Change 2 Mind's (BC2M) began having its club meetings at the beginning of Dec. This post details a guest speaker from the organization's headquarters that came Dec. 7. PROVIDED BY BC2M'S INSTAGRAM

when students return to campus.

"One of the main things I want [is for the club to] go beyond just senior year for me [and] that it'll continue after the other officers and I have left. I also want it to be able to help other people outside of the people that I know, I want it to bring in people that I don't know," Garcia said.

It's animazing!

BVH students create new anime club



Anime Club members pose for a photo to commemorate their first ever watch party on Discord on Dec. 18. Anime club members gathered to watch the Studio Ghibli film "Howl's Moving Castle" through their Discord home theatre. PROVIDED BY RAYMOND CHHAN

Other than students, teachers at BVH are also encouraged to join the watch parties hosted by Anime Club. Chhan believes that having both students and teachers involved in the Anime Club helps de-emphasize the focus on academics within the BVH community.

"We're reaching out to other teachers who might be interested in joining the watch parties. Rather than focusing only on academics, it gives teachers an opportunity to share what they're interested in so that students can see their teachers in not just a professional setting," Chhan said.

During quarantine, it has been hard for many students to maintain social interaction among one another. Many have their cameras and microphones turned off during virtual classes, so little communication is passed through the students and teachers. Consequently, developing relationships with people during online learning can be difficult. It can be especially hard for freshmen since it is their first time attending BVH. However, the Anime Club seeks to solve

the problem as it is easier to find fellow students who share common interests.

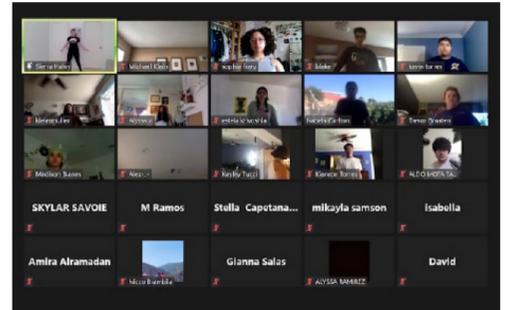
"It's really easy to feel isolated, especially when [freshman students are] starting [their] first year of high school," Montefalcon said. "That's why we're planning on advertising towards a lot of freshmen classes in order to get them out of their shell and introduce new people to [peers] that would also like to help them during high school."

In addition, teachers face the struggle of not being able to connect and relate with their students since students' faces are hidden behind the screen. Not only this, but teachers carry out a constant routine of making assignments and teaching classes, so they rarely have the opportunity to personally talk to their students. For Chhan, Anime Club provides an opportunity for him to get to know his students better and to talk about common interests.

"From a teacher's perspective, it's nice to not talk about school," Chhan said. "It humanizes teachers a little bit more; it makes us feel like we can have the same interest just like you, no matter

Behind the curtains

VMD continues to rehearse despite challenges in distance learning



Dance co-captain and senior Sierra Hahn demonstrates a pose for the Vocal Music Department's (VMD) zoom class. Everyone including director Michael Klein must have their microphones off during class time. PROVIDED BY SOPHIA FRARY

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As the COVID-19 pandemic swept the country, concerts, parties and performances were cancelled. As we now enter our ninth month in quarantine, the Bonita Vista High (BVH) Vocal Music Department (VMD) is one of the groups adapting to this lifestyle. VMD has multiple ensembles that play a part in their numerous productions of the year such as Music Machine, Sound Unlimited, Lady Tones and their own tech team.

During VMD's zoom classes, performers can be found warming up and working on their vocal technique and dance while also learning new music. VMD Music Director Michael Klein has been surprised by the lack of changes that have occurred to the way that the VMD normally practices.

"It's been surprising to me how much hasn't changed," Klein said. "It's our job to make excellent art that our audiences can enjoy. The only things that have changed are the ways we make those goals happen."

Klein stated that he constantly tells VMD students "how mistakes should be celebrated." He stated that VMD also applies the same concept to distance learning. The environment that VMD has created is accepting and constantly adapting to their circumstances.

On the other hand, dance Co-Captain of Music Machine and senior Sierra Hahn said "There have been a lot of changes from our regular routine in person," when asked about any changes in their usual routine. "I miss being all

together and performing as a group. It is really hard to connect with one another and feel that connection with dancing since it is all through a screen now."

While practicing, the team must have their microphones on mute so Hahn cannot tell when someone is out of pitch or how well their voices blend together.

"It is a lot easier to do the dancing components than the singing ones since you can see people dancing on the screen, but you can't hear anything," Hahn said.

Alternatively, Hahn has stated that there has been more time for working and perfecting technique than if students were back in school. Previously, they would be more focused on perfecting their choreography.

At the same time, the most distinct type of work in VMD goes to the students in the tech department. One of the two-tech leaders and junior, Sophia Frary explains how difficult it is to replicate the tech's work through a screen.

"We could teach them [the freshmen] how to work lights or use the sound board, but trying to teach or understand something without even being able to touch it is hopeless," Frary said. "On the bright side, we've been able to get to know each other a little so that when we go back we'll be able to skip introductions."

Overall, VMD has been determined and hard-working despite the circumstances that arose this semester. As for the future of VMD, preparation for Spring Sings, a competition they attend yearly, will begin in December or January.

"I've told students that we're making music in a way no one has ever done in the history of the world. It's both exciting and daunting," Klein said.

in the club."

Some extracurricular activities, clubs, organizations and sports teams require a lot of time, attention and effort from students. However, Chhan assures team members that there is no sense of obligation in being a part of the Anime Club as the club is more "recreational," and gives students a place to meet one another and discuss anime.

"The purpose of this club is to be an outlet and to decompress from school. So there isn't going to be any requirements like, 'Oh, you have to watch a certain amount of episodes in this amount of weeks,'" Montefalcon said. "We want to offer a place for people to pop in [and] watch an episode or watch a movie and invite some of their teachers and relax."

Chhan and officers alike believe that the Anime Club creates a welcoming environment as it is not only a place for people who already enjoy anime, but a place to encourage others who are unfamiliar with anime as well.

"[The officers] are passionate about anime. They really enjoy it and [Anime Club is a way to] raise awareness for what is important to them," Chhan said. "[Anime] is something that they're interested in personally, so they had that investment to keep that going. [Anime Club is] not only for the students who like it, but to expose students that have never watched it as well."

Ultimately, Anime Club is a place where students can come together and talk about anime without fear of judgment. Anime Club not only promotes an inclusive environment, but provides a community for students to de-stress by separating themselves from their academics and interacting with others in a non-academic setting.

"It's difficult right now to separate school from home because [students] are at home doing school. [Joining Anime Club] is one of those ways to find that balance and to strike that separation. It's important to not work all the time and to have some leisure," Chhan said. "This is an opportunity to meet and interact with other students [about] another form of entertainment. If [students] are interested, check us out."