Suspension Rates Drop But Not All Agree That Means a Safer School

By Trevor Harrison

Suspension rates at Oakland Tech have dropped by half in the last three years, but some say the new approach to discipline is making the school less safe.

In 2012 the Office of Civil Rights in the U.S. Department of Education began investigating Oakland Unified School District for disproportionately disciplining African-American students and since then the district has launched multiple programs to reduce its suspension and expulsion rates. The percentage of students who received one or more out-of-school suspensions dropped from 7.4 percent in the 2011-2012 school year to 4.9 percent in the 2013-2014 school year.

The report by the Office of Civil Rights cited as a particular concern the fact that African-American students made up 61 percent of total out-of-school suspensions while they represented only 31.8 percent of the student body.

“We are trying to shift from a punitive approach to school discipline towards a restorative approach,” Jean Wing, executive director of research, assessment & data at OUSD, wrote in an email. “District-wide, we have also placed importance on teaching social and emotional skills (such as Self-Management, Self-Awareness, Responsible Decision-making, Social Awareness, and Relationship Building).”

Wing and other district officials believe that the reduction in suspension rates is a sign of progress, but some parents and students say they are still concerned about the safety of the school.

Oakland Tech Wins Big In Professional Theater Award

By Nick Pingetore

Oakland Tech’s Theater and Tech programs have been described as hidden gems. Often overlooked by actors and two techies in particular were given the rare moment to breathe life into OT’s large auditorium every semester. Last year, however, one actor and a tech in particular were unaware of the drought, students showed that none were unaware of the drought, and all but a couple were doing things to help. The few that weren’t taking actions to help. This year, the hopes of Californians soared as the weather phenomenon known as “El Nino” was predicted to alleviate the drought that has plagued the state for five years. El Nino is the term used to describe the shift of warm water in the western Pacific Ocean towards the coast of South America. The warm water evaporates, bringing precipitation to the southern U.S. and increasing normal temperatures in the Northern U.S.

The drought, which has grown to gain historic significance, has led to increased awareness of water usage and of environmental issues overall. The term “California Cringe” has been invented to describe Californian’s reactions to excessive water use, such as leaving a tap running for no apparent reason. New legislation has been passed at the state and national levels, and representatives in Congress are lobbying for more aid and action.

All of this represents a fundamental development in how people view their place in the world, for the drought has caused them to become more aware of their use of the world’s natural resources. Forests, animals, lakes, rivers, and oceans have become increasingly at risk due to human population increase, poverty, accidents (like oil spills, nuclear power explosions, etc.). A survey of Tech students showed that none were unaware of the drought, and all but a couple were doing things to help. The few that weren’t taking actions to help.

(El Nino continues on Page 8)

El Nino Update: How the Rain Will Affect California’s Drought

By Sonia Aronson

This spring, the sight of a stampeding, shivering crowd of Tech students rushing for the front doors has become somewhat normal. Lunch can start out warm with clear skies, and end in pouring rain. Most Bay Area natives are used to the inconsistent weather patterns, and simply shrug and shake their heads. “I saw John McCain eyeing my rain jacket last week when I was in DC,” said junior Gabriel Louis-Kayen. “Sometimes carrying a raincoat around with you everywhere really pays off.”

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(Suspension Rates continues on Page 8)
News

By Aiko Takata
At Oakland Tech, spotting local football stars Marshawn Lynch and Josh Johnson helping out on the field is common. Sighting a famous actor is far less likely. On Saturday February 20, Marshawn Lynch and Josh Johnson, were joined by Wolverine star, Hugh Jackman, to help out a football clinic for Oakland Tech students at Tech.

Hugh Jackman wanted to bring the hopeful message to the athletes at Tech, so students were able to screen the movie after the clinic.

Jackman's movie also related to Marshawn Lynch's career because he proved himself with skill and hard work to become a football superstar.

At the clinic, Hugh Jackman and Marshawn Lynch led players through drills, hurdles, and ladders. Clinton Hall, a 9th grader, said that "Marshawn and Hugh Jackman brought a lot of positivity to the practice. They were a little competitive, which was fun to see." Rosemary Whisenton, the treasurer at Tech and a supporter of athletes, said that "this event was a great opportunity for kids to get excited about sports and to learn how to work hard to achieve a goal."

Marshawn Lynch is known for his continued dedication and support of the Oakland athletic community.

OpEd: Turning the Tide on College Admission

By Joseph Harmon
The question was bound to come up. "What's the acceptance rate?" called a Tech student from the back of the room, interrupting the MIT admissions officer's upbeat spiel.

"Around seven percent," the officer admitted back in September. She quickly launched into some damage control, adding that everyone interested should not be intimidated by numbers, that the school was competitive but not unattainable.

There was still an intake of breath as she said the number. The same sense of alarm strikes before every SAT, every AP test and every college decision letter. Year after year, student anxiety seems to surge. High achievers are expected to reach even higher, and college-bound students that choose not to are expected to settle for schools that tend to be branded as less rigorous or less prestigious.

The repercussions of increasingly competitive admissions have become difficult to ignore. Not far from Oakland and home to Stanford University, the city of Palo Alto has gained international attention since 2009 for its series of high school suicides. As of this February, the Center for Disease Control has launched a mental health study of the school's pressured student body.

Colleges themselves have finally begun to take action. Harvard’s Making Caring Common Project recently released a report titled Turning the Tide: Inspiring Concern for Others and the Common Good through College Applications. The report was prompted by the results of a study conducted by the Project which found that only around 20% of mid-level to high school students valued supporting others over pursuing their personal achievements.

While that statistic is saddening, 20% should not come across as a surprise to anyone. As high school students, we live in a culture of competition. We are bombarded with messages telling us that we are defined by the numbers and grades we gain, to the point where it seems logical to chase the highest rankings possible. Tech’s own hallways are filled with Scholastic magazine posters, drawing arrows to the same effect. Have held College Board proctor, drawing arrows to the same effect.

The report gives us reason to rethink what we think of college. Colleges should give potential applicants the agency to seek the college that genuinely fits their individual profiles. The report mostly gives this responsibility to parents, calling on them to "challenge the misconception that there are only a handful of excellent colleges and that only a handful of colleges create networks that are vital to job success."

However, the "excellent colleges" themselves have yet to challenge this misconception. Every year, the U.S. News and World Report compiles a list of the best American colleges, cross-referenced with data ranging from test scores to specific subject strengths to graduation rates. As prospective applicants begin their college search, they are constantly exposed to lists like these, which in turn favor the elite colleges. It is not completely fair to pin the misconception that there are only a handful of excellent colleges and that only a handful of colleges create networks that are vital to job success.

The report does succeed in pointing out one of the most inequitable aspects of the admissions process: that wealth provides a shortcut to the golden ideal college. For AP tests and admissions assessments like the SAT, wealthier students are more likely to have full access to private tutors, testing classes, and released test materials. In terms of volunteering, wealthier students can travel to foreign countries for a more impressive resume. In terms of giving back to the community, it is much easier to found a nonprofit organization as a high schooler with a certain income at their disposal.

So while it is important that colleges are beginning to reexamine the injustices within their system of admissions, and while the Making Caring Common Project articulates valid concerns, making a slight shift to the hoops that high school students are expected to jump through really the best way to resurrect our generation’s compassion? Maybe the best way to help college-bound high schoolers connect more meaningfully with those around them is to grant them the freedom to do so. Rather than guiding their judgement with competitive rankings and testing propaganda, colleges should give potential applicants the agency to seek out what they feel is important in their lives, regardless of external pressures and requirements. "In the face of deeply troubling trends," the report concludes, rallying the support of likeminded colleges, "it is time to say ‘Enough.’"

Maybe it is time for the students themselves to decide when enough is enough.
By Alice Gold

While most Tech students spent last summer working minimum wage jobs, vacationing, and doing copious amounts of summer homework, one rising junior was setting up an international nonprofit that grants microloans to people seeking educational opportunities in developing countries.

"Over the summer I wanted to set up a business that was sustainable and that enabled microloans," says Asa Kalish, 17. Kalish had been researching the most effective ways to help people in developing countries when he stumbled upon the idea of microloans: small sums of money, usually ranging from a few hundred dollars to $30,000, that are loaned to individuals or businesses meant to get their feet off the ground. Over a specified amount of time, the recipients pay back the loans with a low interest rate.

Over the summer, Kalish attended a summer academic program at Columbia University and realized that there were tons of really smart kids who actually wanted to help people who could tutor," states Kalish. He then created Tutors for Opportunity, his non-profit network of over 80 students from all over the world. "I got to Columbia and realized that there were tons of really smart kids who actually wanted to help people who could tutor," states Kalish. He then created Tutors for Opportunity, his non-profit network of over 80 of whom he met at Columbia—who tutor students and then redirect the money into microloans for people in developing countries to pursue education. Tutors for Opportunity has partnered with Kiva, a much larger NGO that grants microloans, to help ease some of the administrative work.

When asked if he wants to expand to more regions, Kalish is apprehensive, stating that, "it's only 80 tutors, but that's still actually a lot" to manage. Additionally, in many of the countries where Tutors for Opportunity operates, tutors are not currently used. "It's very difficult to find people to tutor" in many countries. Kalish also would like to remain the same size because he has "realized that it is best to focus in on just a few regions and maximize profit there."

In addition to being the CEO of Tutors for Opportunity, Kalish takes advanced math classes after school and runs track. "It's quite a bit of delegating," says Kalish on how he's able to keep up with all of his activities. Continues Kalish, "We have a system where we set up a mini CEO in each region called a regional manager," to oversee the day to day work of managing individual tutors. Kalish does not do any tutoring himself as his workload as CEO already takes up about 20 hours per week.

So far, Tutors for Opportunity has granted microloans to hundreds of people across the world to access educational opportunities that they would not be able to otherwise. Many of the recipients of the money live in countries where their educational opportunities are limited based on their sex, race, or economic bracket. On the Tutors for Opportunity website there is a section for success stories where beneficiaries' pictures and stories are displayed. Some of the women from Middle Eastern Countries have sent pictures with their faces blurred out, so as to avoid retribution from governments that oppose female education.

Kalish continues to be committed to running his nonprofit. Visit tutorsforopportunity.org for more information or to learn how to get involved.

As Intel Money Flows Into Tech, Academies Expand

By Trevor Harrison

When Intel donated $5 million to OUSD last fall, it had a radical vision for Oakland Tech's future. The Santa Clara-based company wanted to turn the school into a tech hub, with a 400-strong Computer Academy beginning in ninth grade.

Vice Principal Josue Diaz and other district administrators told the company that simply wouldn't work. "It is unrealistic to ask middle schoolers to participate in a program for four years when they haven't experienced high school," Diaz said.

Out of these clashing views of the future was born a seven-period schedule for freshman, internships for Computer Academy students, three new teachers and a massive expansion of the academies.

Next year freshman will start their school day at 8:15 a.m. and finally make it out of school at 3:55 p.m. This long schedule is designed to accommodate a mandatory advisory and basic computer science class. The introductory class will teach students how to make spreadsheets, start Google docs and build websites. It will also show them how to create a resume and conduct a job interview. Lastly, the class will get a month-long taste of each academy so that ninth graders can decide what area they want to explore in the next three years.

The plan will advance one of OUSD's long-term objectives: to vastly expand academies across Oakland secondary education. Currently, only 37 percent of high school students are enrolled in academies or Linked Learning Pathways, but Superintendent Antwan Wilson wants to see that number rise to 80 percent by 2020.

In a February letter to the Oakland community, Wilson wrote, "These programs require a strong connection to local businesses, as students get to experience what it's really like to be a part of the workforce." He also pointed to figures that show higher graduation rates and lower dropout rates for students in Academies.

Next year Oakland Tech will hit the 80 percent goal early. And the new plan will further strengthen academies by putting BioTech students, who start their academy junior year, into classes with one another in 10th grade. Money from Intel will also allow the Computer Academy to expand from 30 students to 110, remodel its classroom and offer 35 paid summer internships at its patron company. Teachers will vote soon on whether to implement the plan in its present form but some question whether it makes sense to ask more students to pick a career readiness program at 14, Ms. Tania Kappner, a union representative and history teacher, says that while she is in favor of expanding elective offerings at Tech, she is "opposed to any thing that limits student's options to a set vocational track.

Ms. Marietta Joe is also doubtful about whether the plan will give student many more options. "A seven-period day works because it allows for a lot of creativity but creativity is expensive," she said.

Kappner, in addition, worries about the later finish time for the school day. "I don't think studying late will be beneficial for students" she said. "I also don't think teachers will be properly compensated for working late."

Others are concerned that Intel might have the short attention span that many corporate donors suffer from and let the money dry up after a couple of years. Right now Tech is promised around $2.5 million for the next three years but Diaz is hopeful more will come. "They've been very receptive and collaborative," he said.

Joe also believes the money will be helpful. "I would love to see Intel show the possibilities of satisfying, well paying careers," she said.
News

Sierra Club Tree Team “Greens” Oakland’s Concrete Jungle

By Laurel Hennen Vigil

San Antonio Park was dying. From her house across the street, Wendy Jung, a 30-year resident of East Oakland’s diverse, densely populated San Antonio neighborhood, watched as it withered. The park had once offered a verdant refuge from the harshness of the city, but “due to relentless budget cuts, maintenance has been hit and miss for many, many years,” Jung said. Over time, dozens of trees toppled during storms or succumbed to Dutch Elm disease, and were not replaced. Determined to restore her neighborhood’s much-needed greenery, Jung reached out to the Sierra Club Tree Team—a program in partnership with local nonprofit Keep Oakland Beautiful—for help.

Sierra Club volunteer Arthur Boone founded the group in 2010, after the recession-strapped City of Oakland slashed funding to its Tree Services Division. “The city used to have employees who planted and maintained trees along the streets and [in] public places,” said the project’s current coordinator, Derek Schubert. “But they stopped doing that as a cost-saving measure.” At the suggestion of a friend, Boone gathered a group of volunteers to carry on the work of softening the edges of our city’s concrete jungle.

Since its founding, the group has planted “more than 1,500 trees, and the numbers have been going up year after year,” Schubert said. “Besides that, we’ve had probably 150 or 200 people who have come out as volunteers.” The Tree Team has received donations from city officials including then-Council members Jane Brunner and Jean Quan, as well as local businesses. It was recently awarded a large grant from the California Climate Initiative, which will go toward planting another 1,500 trees over the next few years. In Wendy Jung’s neighborhood, more than 70 volunteers—many of whom call the area home—came together on January 30th to plant 25 trees around San Antonio Park. The event was a positive one, filled with bonding, snacks, and encouragement from fellow volunteers. Jung even made framed “Thank You” certificates for the participants. “I think the event helped unite our neighborhood,” Jung said, noting that it brought neighbors together despite the language and cultural barriers that had previously kept them apart.

The Tree Team primarily works in East Oakland neighborhoods like Jung’s—areas that tend to have noticeably more concrete and less greenery than other, more affluent Oakland districts. The group hopes that bringing foliage to Oakland communities that don’t have much will benefit these areas and their residents environmentally, socially, and psychologically. Numerous studies have shown that living amid plentiful vegetation improves health and quality of life, lowers crime, and makes residents feel safer. “It reduces the stress and mental agitation that people get under when they’re in a place that doesn’t have trees or greenery,” Schubert explained. “So planting more trees, especially in dense cities like Oakland, is a way to directly improve people’s lives.” Beyond the trees’ emotional benefits to humans, they also help the environment by producing oxygen and reducing carbon dioxide, as well as providing a habitat for birds and beneficial insects.

In addition to sowing seedlings for homeowners, rental properties, and parks, the Tree Team provides evergreen and deciduous trees for schools, including Oakland Tech. “So many campuses around Oakland are under-treed; there’s a lot of asphalt, a lot of chain-link fence,” said Schubert. “That’s a hard place to put a student into for six to eight hours a day.” While we are here at Tech are fortunate to have a fair amount of foliage around our campus, including seven trident maples that the Tree Team planted along 42nd Street near the tennis courts, many Oakland schools are not so lucky. Helping to plant trees for fellow Oakland students and other members of our community is an excellent cause well worth pitching in for.

Back in the San Antonio neighborhood, Jung keeps watch as the young trees her community worked to put in the ground take root and begin to thrive in the park across the street. The new elms they planted together are just putting out tender new leaves, and Jung is busy organizing volunteers to take turns watering the saplings this summer. “My greatest hope,” she said, “is that folks will see that their caretaking can yield visible, tangible results that bring pleasure, and a sense of safety and stability, to everyone.”

A schedule of the Tree Team’s volunteer planting dates is available at KeepOaklandBeautiful.org/Events/. To request a tree for your home, school, or a nearby public space, contact Derek Schubert at SCTreePlanting@gmail.com.

Many new trees have been planted around Tech thanks to the Sierra Club

Playlist to Motivate You Through the Last 2 Months

By Sophia Taylor

Now that the hellish period of waiting to bear back from college (if college is a part of your future plans) is over, all you seniors can finally relax and truly enjoy the last few months of high school. If you, like me, have seen one too many movies about high school, you should understand the significance of the perfect soundtrack to end your days. The following are a few of songs I’ll be singing along to in the coming weeks.

“One Day More” by Les Miserables: the Motion Picture Soundtrack

The anguished voice of Hugh Jackman as he sings about continuing forward in the face of adversity will help any student get through the last few days of school. (Snearitis is real…)  

“America” by Simon & Garfunkel

This song depicts the journey of a young couple traveling across the country. It is a story of exploration and growth that one can’t help but feel inspired by!

“Campus” by Vampire Weekend

The perfect song to get pumped about heading off to college and joining a new campus!

“School’s Out” by Alice Cooper

A classic immortalized in the opening scene of Richard Linklater’s “Dazed and Confused,” as well as Guitar Hero games everywhere, Cooper’s song about the last day of school is a great way to begin the summer.

“Don’t Stop Me Now” by Queen

If not to simply listen to the poetic words of Freddie Mercury (“I’m a shooting star leaping through the sky”) Like a tiger defying the laws of gravity”), I recommend this song to all graduating seniors because it completely captures the spirit of the class of 2016: There is no stopping us!

Any songs I missed? Send your suggestions to the Scribe or add them to a playlist of your own!
Features

How Peer Tutoring Can Bridge The Achievement Gap

By Sophie Schafer

The “achievement gap” in American education is the disparity in academic performance between groups of students of different socio-economic status or race. The seeds of this gap are planted very early in a child’s life. When a child’s parent has the ability to stay home or hire a nanny to take care of them, they are read to, and spoken to, increasing their language and understanding. This directly correlates to higher future literacy levels, which then plays a determining role in their success in school.

Without this early learning opportunity, children enter kindergarten already at a disadvantage. Once in school, and a sense of “being behind” takes hold, the gap grows further, exacerbated by other external stresses. A clear example of the achievement gap can be found at Emerson Elementary School, just a block from the Oakland Tech campus. One Emerson teacher illustrated the problem, and the slippery slope that many lower-income children face in terms of their learning: “A handful of my students frequently come to school late. They haven’t eaten breakfast and they fall asleep in class.”

During the weekend, Tech students often hang out at Lake Merritt, oblivious to the thousands of magical creatures surrounding them. Since 2012, peculiar paintings of gnomes have graced the neighborhoods surrounding Lake Merritt, arousing the curiosity of the community. The gnomes have since grown to an astonishing number of over 2,000. These gnomes, hand-painted on scraps of wood, can be seen attached to utility poles and in a few cafes. Many feel that the essence of Oakland’s community is encaptured in these small yet attention-grabbing pieces. These gnomes brighten up the Lake Merritt community and add a little bit of magic into everyday life.

When a child is hungry and tired, convincing them that learning their times tables is crucial, becomes a very difficult task. She continues, “These students aren’t able to even start the first assignment of the day. This creates a snowball effect throughout the day. They are unable to focus and participate in direct instruction, which leads to being unable to complete the assignments, which leads to being irritable and frustrated, which leads to an outburst or a conflict with a peer, which leads to being sent out of class, which leads to more missed instruction and assignments. Then it’s time to test and they are unprepared.”

The needs are too great and too many; one teacher is simply not enough. Supporting your local neighborhood school may seem like a small step, but it could save a child’s education. Everyday, for an hour starting at 8:30, I help out in a third grade classroom at Emerson. I greet the kids, help the teacher with any copies or lesson plans she might need, and read with kids who are below grade level. Often, I have long check-in conversations with kids who may be struggling at home or don’t seem prepared to start the day successfully.

Another tutor, in a fifth grade class at Emerson, described how she views the program. “Tutoring at Emerson is definitely the best part of my day,” she says, “but apart from just making me happy, it has made me aware of how important it is that young kids have good role models and consistent expectations placed on them by those role models. The kids love having cool older kids around who want to listen to them.” Everyone needs to talk things out, and frequently kids who have harder home lives or no one around to listen to them, boil over when they can’t express themselves. I have seen numerous kids melt down because they feel they aren’t being heard, or even don’t know how to articulate their feelings. Being able to ask for help is essential to these kids’ growth. However, if no one around is able to support them, they will give up. As an individual in a world of injustices, it may seem impossible to make a change, but anyone can, and the opportunity is less than a block away. Major progress would be to have one Tech student in every Emerson classroom, available to all students. These kids would thrive with good role models and helpers there to listen to, teach and support them. Ask your counselor to sign up today for the Peer Tutoring program to be a part of your schedule next year!

Artists Attempt To Brighten Community With Concealed Gnomes

By Kendall Prime

During the weekend, Tech students often hang out at Lake Merritt, oblivious to the thousands of magical creatures surrounding them. Since 2012, peculiar paintings of gnomes have graced the neighborhoods surrounding Lake Merritt, arousing the curiosity of the community. The gnomes have since grown to an astonishing number of over 2,000. These gnomes, hand-painted on scraps of wood, can be seen attached to utility poles and in a few cafes. Many feel that the essence of Oakland’s community is encaptured in these small yet attention-grabbing pieces. These gnomes brighten up the Lake Merritt community and add a little bit of magic into everyday life.

In an interview with SF Gate, the artist, who wishes to remain anonymous, describes the intent of his artwork: “We see too much garbage on the streets here, too many shootings, too much violence, not enough smile…[the gnomes] were meant to be an ongoing gift to my community.” However, in 2013, PG&E announced their intent to strip the telephone poles of these small woodland creatures as they threatened to block crews’ access and threaten the integrity of the poles. The surrounding Merritt community rallied around these gnomes in hopes of maintaining a brighter environment. A Facebook page, titled “Save the Lake Merritt Gnomes,” told their followers to contact PG&E and express how the gnomes benefited the community. The outpouring of love over these mythical guardians of Merritt quickly dissuaded the company, who have allowed the gnomes to remain in the community.

Today, the gnomes continue to thrive and bring joy to the lives of the locals. To Rosemary Grout, an Oakland Tech sophomore and Merritt resident, these paintings are “a little local secret, you don’t notice them if you’re just passing through but once you see one, they pop up everywhere!”
Features

Zika Virus Creates Panic At Tech

By Jessica Nguyen

Fear of impeding pandemics can often spread more quickly than the virus itself. From 2014-2015, the Ebola outbreak made global news as it ravaged West Africa, triggering a wave of paranoid articles and predictions across the media. Though it is most dangerous to unborn children, this year is the Zika Virus’ turn to attract worldwide attention. The Zika Virus is a mosquito-borne virus that originated in Uganda, but has been spreading quickly into Central and South America, as well as the Caribbean.

Researchers have said that the virus is transmitted through the bite of an infected Aedes mosquito. The difference between Aedes Mosquitoes and most other common mosquitoes is the fact that the Aedes Mosquito primarily feeds during the day. Symptoms of the virus include fever, muscle/joint pain, red eyes, and headaches. However, many infected individuals will not experience any symptoms and four out of five infected individuals will not even know that they have the virus.

The Zika Virus is commonly connected to Microcephaly and Guillain-Barre Syndrome (GBS), but researchers have yet to find a definitive link to the disease. Microcephaly is a birth-defect that causes babies to be born with abnormally smaller heads and brains, while GBS is a condition where the body’s immune system attacks its own nerve cells, causing muscle weakness or even difficulty breathing. While researchers are strenuously studying the virus, they are still unable to create any vaccines or treatment.

The best way to prevent infection in areas with outbreaks is to use insect repellents, use door/window screens to keep the mosquitoes outside, wear thicker long-sleeved clothes, avoid using strongly scented products, wear lighter colored clothes, stay indoors, and most importantly, do not store containers of water outside for long periods of time.

It has been predicted that within the next year, millions of Americans will be infected with the disease. However, so far, there are only two confirmed cases of the Zika Virus in California (both in the Los Angeles County). So in the words of a medical advisor for the National Pest Management Association, Dr. Jorge Parada, “There’s no need to ‘freak out,’ at least not yet.”

SBACS Return Brings Fresh Criticism

By Matthew Murphy

The room was quiet except for the periodic flurry of clicks and taps. Last year for the first time, students around the district took the new Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) test on chromebooks. The test was designed to fit national Common Core standards and replaced previous STAR (Standard Testing And Reporting) testing that was set to state standards.

This year the SBAC is in its second year of full implementation and will be administered to students from May 16 to June 6.

Last year, the SBAC tests caused much controversy for their untimely implementation. Because the district chose to administer the test in late April and early May, many AP teachers were concerned that SBAC testing would have taken their students out of class during valuable review time right before the AP tests. Responding to the criticism, the administration moved testing for AP students a couple weeks after non-AP students. Criticism did not end there however, as some raised questions about equity, as AP students were able to receive more curriculum and were arguably more prepared to take the test, than those who were not taking AP courses.

This year, SBAC testing for all students has been pushed more towards the end of the year, where it will not interfere with AP testing.

For those who are wondering, the SBAC, or Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, Test is a standardized test administered by the California Department of Education to all students from third grade to eighth grade, and then again in eleventh grade. It tests two subject areas, Math and English. The SBAC tests replaced the old CST tests in OUSD two years ago. In contrast to the paper booklets of the CST, the SBAC is taken entirely online.

According to Mr. Price, the administrator in charge of SBAC testing, there is no direct link between funding and school testing results. But as Price points out, “most of the school’s chromebooks were given so the district could implement the test.” This year, the school has set a goal of 95% of juniors taking the two tests, Math and English. Last year the school fell just short, (91% and 94% respectively). Mr. Price attributes this to the scheduling last year, but also to the use of the opt-out. Students’ parents or legal guardians can sign a waiver to opt their student out of taking the tests. Students are not encouraged to opt-out, and the date the administration asked families to notify them about opting-out, March 24th, has passed.

Mr. Price argues that as the test scores are a factor in why many families choose Tech, students should take the test and do their best so that Tech’s scores are representative of its capabilities. “The fact is many student families choose to send their children to Tech because it is viewed as being a good school” says Mr. Price. However, some Oakland Tech students question what the actual benefits of the SBAC are considering how much time they take out of class. “For me, standardized testing seems more of a nuisance to teachers and students, as it takes away class time,” Tech Junior Sophie Schafer said. “But if the district is getting important data from it, I guess I understand that.”

While attitudes towards standardized testing are changing, there remains little doubt that Oakland Tech students will continue to take standardized tests for the near future.
Hayward Fault More Dangerous Than You Thought

By Jessica Gagliardi

If you’ve grown up in the Bay Area, you’re probably well aware that we live in “earthquake country,” and that unlike in most other parts of the U.S., the seemingly solid ground beneath our feet is prone to relatively frequent bouts of shaking and jolting. Oakland Tech sits less than four miles from the Hayward fault, a giant crack in one of the tectonic plates that make up the earth’s crust where two pieces of crust are slipping past each other.

Instead of sliding smoothly, the plates move in fits and spurts when enough tension builds up in one place to overcome the friction that usually holds the plates in place, causing the shaking that we call an earthquake.

Recently, some scientists made a startling discovery about the faults running through the Bay Area. In a recent study, U.S. Geological Survey geophysicist Janet Watt found pretty definitive evidence that the fairly active Hayward fault is in fact linked to the much less active Rodgers Creek fault to the north. It was originally thought that the two faults terminated separately about 3 miles apart underneath the floor of the Bay, but the data collected by Watt gives geologists reason to believe that the two faults actually run together near the shore of San Pablo Bay.

A rupture along the two faults’ combined length of 99 miles could trigger a magnitude of 7.3 earthquake, while a 6.8 is the highest magnitude the 60-mile Hayward fault has ever produced and the 39-mile Rodgers Creek fault has never produced earthquakes of significant magnitude.

The difference between 6.8 and 7.3 may not seem like much, but the scale of measuring earthquake magnitudes is exponential, so the difference is in fact huge. This means that the densely populated Bay Area is far more at risk than was previously thought, and geologists have possibly been underestimating just how big the “Big One” will be, and just how much of the Bay Area it will destroy.

Earthquakes can’t be prevented, but they can be expected, and people in the Bay Area have been preparing for them for years. Luckily building codes are constantly being updated to ensure that all new construction is up to the highest standards of seismic safety, and most older buildings are retrofitted. You can also personally prepare yourself to respond in an earthquake. If you feel shaking, get under a desk or table or into a doorway and hold on. Stay away from windows (they can shatter) and large furniture like dressers and freestanding cabinets that can tip over, and don’t try to move until the shaking stops.

Keep an earthquake kit in your house—there are lots of websites with instructions on how to assemble these, but the main idea is to keep enough supplies to survive without utilities for a couple of days or even weeks. April is Earthquake Preparedness Month; it’s never too early to start getting ready for the next Big One, but if you don’t prepare, it could be too late.

By Amarit Ubhi

Aries: This month will start off with great energy and vibes. Enjoy the exuberance as you get through your days. The pace will pick up towards the end of April, so you may feel bogged down with a lot of assignments and AP prep. Push through and you’ll be rewarded with a peaceful transition into May.

Taurus: Your creative spirit will flow as the months begin, Taurus. While you may want to spread the word with your classmates and friends, this should be a moment for you to do what you do. This is a month of new beginnings for you, and you will be faced with many surprises and joys. Try to enjoy the moments as they pass, Taurus!

Gemini: April will truly be your time to shine, Gemini. You may feel like you do not have all the answers that you want, but people will be turning to you for your expertise in many situations. Trust your gut when entering into new projects and making important decisions. Many of the things that have been bothering you for a while will start to surface as the month ends. Take the time to properly look at them over.

Cancer: This month should be about looking at the bigger picture. If you want to try to change your lifestyle, now would be a good time. The small changes in your habits will make all the difference, even though you may not notice them. Really try to engage in your classes and learn important skills; you will be doing yourself a favor.

Leo: Adventure is out there, Leo! There is so much out there in the world that you can use to benefit your life. Now is a good time to look into jobs, scholarships, summer classes, and things of that nature. If you’ve wanted to start a new project or read a new book, now is the time to do so. Treat yourself, Leo.

Virgo: The start of the month should be focused around appreciating what you have in your life. Try to reach out to friends and family, and really try to be there for those who need your help. Others may be going through a rough patch, and you’re in the perfect position to be their rock. You will be surprised with what you can learn from others this month. Do not take any of it for granted.

Libra: Focus on yourself this month, Libra. You’ve been through some hardships and now it is time to show yourself some love. Spend time doing things that you love on the weekends. If you’ve been meaning to do something for a long time, you should start working on it now.

Scorpio: Your body needs your attention, Scorpio. Try to make some lifestyle changes that can help you improve your physical and mental health. Try to get breakfast in the mornings if that has been an issue for you. Stop by the Techniclinic if you feel like you may need to talk to someone. Your wellbeing is of utmost importance in April.

Sagittarius: With the end of the marking period coming up soon, you should try to embrace small joys throughout the month. April will be stressful to some degree, but do not let this stop you from spending quality time doing what you like. Things will ease up towards the end of the month, just hang in there, Sagittarius!

Capricorn: Your personal life will feel strenuous in the beginning of the month. You will be busy with responsibilities, school, and social life. Towards the middle of the month, you may want to pull back from being as social as you normally are. You need to bring your attention to your grades before it is too late.

Aquarius: You might find yourself overwhelmed with family and friends right now, Aquarius. It would be wise to keep yourself for a little while. Maintain those important relationships that mean a lot to you, but put those yourself. Prioritize your schoolwork and health before anything else.

Pisces: The start of the month will feel lazy and you might think you’re a little disoriented. Pisces. You’re doing fine. Just know that some major changes could be headed your way in mid April. Brace yourself, Pisces, and make the most out of the situation.
officials tout the reduced suspension rates as a success and, indeed, the rate for African Americans dropped from 13.9 percent in 2011-2012 to 10 percent in 2013-2014. Suspension rates for white students has also fallen but in smaller numbers.

Some at Tech are concerned about the reduced use of suspension as a disciplinary measure.

Mr. Martel Price, an administrator and history teacher at Tech, believes that suspension can be helpful because parents are forced to get involved when their children are sent home. "Suspension sends the message that we will not tolerate disruptive behavior," he said. "When a student is suspended it is a warning sign that something is wrong."

It was by far the most challenging part I have ever had," Ms. Jessica Tyson, who teaches California Studies and English, has only had to suspend someone once. She believes that in a few cases suspension is necessary, but she worries about its use as a tool on a large scale.

"Students who have been historically underserved are the ones who are suspended the most," she said. "My experience has shown that those consequences are applied badly."

Price says he’s aware of the disparity in suspensions but believes it's still a useful way to deal with behavior problems. "I am an African-American male teacher and some of these kids need to be suspended," he said. "Letting them continue to break rules is not helpful."

Price worries that pressure from the district to reduce suspension numbers may work to hide underlying problems. California pays OUSD per student for every day they are marked present but the district doesn’t get that money if the student is suspended. And with the superintendent estimating that $100 million will need to be shaved from the district budget in the next three years, that money is sorely needed.

The OUSD Office of Communications and Public Affairs would not respond to questions about its suspension policy.

Price would be in favor of an in-school suspension program if he were allowed to administer it but that's not currently an option. Instead Price punishes some rule-breakers with in-school detentions.

"I don't want to bring our suspension numbers up," he says.

But he does have a message he believes offenders need to learn: "You do that stuff out there, and you will go to jail."

Broadway continued from Page 1

The three artists will be back at their craft late April in OT Rep's upcoming production of Shakespeare's As You Like It. Oakland Tech's Theatre Program is often rated as one of the top fifty in the country, and the fact that three high schoolers win or finish as finalists in a professional competition only goes to show it.

"I think that just proves the very high quality of theatrical training we have at our school," Bessie Zolno said in closing.

El Nino Continued from Page 1

water saving action said that they believed the powerful El Nino rains had rained California of its cumbersome water crisis. While the high precipitation rates of December and January have certainly helped the state dig itself out the large hole it’s in, the soaring February temperatures most definitely have not. Yet true to Bay Area weather inconsistency, March brought an onslaught of wet and rainy weeks that once again raised the hopes of many citizens. Ski resorts, after years of artificial snow, short seasons, and small turnouts, rebounded; the big resorts attracting tens of thousands of eager and ski-hungry customers. Where do places like California stand on the whole drought issue right now? The answer is mostly unclear. Because the state is so large, different parts are at different levels of drought recovery. Governor Jerry Brown has emphasized the need for water usage cutbacks to continue, stating that Californians must learn to deal with water in a frugal manner if they hope to support an increasing population.

At Tech, we can only hope that the rain continues, that people continue to stay drought conscious, and that our hopes for a savior El Nino spring don’t get the best of us. As Junior Grace Nwakudu put it: "It's going to take a lot more rain to counteract the drought. We need to continue bringing awareness to more Californians and continue to conserve as much water as we can."

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THE SCRIBE

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