

**LBJ STUDENTS SIGN TO COLLEGIATE ATHLETICS**



LBJ seniors Deitrich Heard, Ashley Knight and Johnnie Williams signed to Navarro College, the University of Alabama and the University of Tulsa on National Signing Day, Feb. 3. "I really liked Alabama because the campus is beautiful I felt really at home," Knight, who was recruited to play basketball, said. "I loved everything about it." Knight is also a McDonald's All American Games nominee. photo by Emma Jane Hopper

**A FIRST TIME FOR EVERYTHING**



UIL introduced this year a pilot robotics program consisting of two competitions, UIL FIRST and UIL BEST. However, the LASA Robotics team has decided not to compete in the new events. photo by Chelsea Banawis

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**SOFTBALL IN FULL SWING**



The LBJ softball team is gearing up for a new season, with a preseason focus on teambuilding according to co-captain and LASA senior Cat Llamas, as a majority of varsity players graduated with the class of 2015. "It would be incredibly nice to win [the district championship] this year, although it won't be easy," Llamas said. photo by Oliver Powers

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# the liberator

Liberal Arts and Science Academy and Lyndon Baines Johnson High Schools

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## Investigating educational equity gaps

*Amidst concerns from community groups and board members, AISD begins assessment of disparities in funding, resources in schools throughout district*

**LOGAN KRAMER & SAM ZERN**  
Editors-in-Chief

The Austin Independent School District (AISD) is moving forward with an equity self-assessment, with a planned completion date of October 2016. The need for the assessment, according to AISD Board of Trustees Vice President and chair of the AISD Board Oversight Committee on Excellence through Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Paul Saldana, arose from growing concern by the Austin community and members of the board about the state of equity in the district.

"Austin is now the most economically segregated city in the U.S.," Saldana said. "There's a great deal of gentrification that is occurring in our community. I think certainly folks would see that there is certainly a length between all the challenges that are going on in our community, and challenges that are being faced by low income communities, which will ultimately have an impact on the education and the experiences of those students."

The self assessment will look at classes offered, teacher experience, extracurricular availability, access to counseling, achievement gaps and many other measures as a means of analyzing the differences between schools across the district. Saldana and fellow trustee Edmund Gordon both ran for the school board on equity platforms. Saldana himself is a product of the desegregation that occurred in AISD in the 1970s. Saldana said as an economically disadvantaged and dyslexic student who attended ten different schools before graduating from Lanier, he saw first hand the disparities that exist in AISD. In his work as the vice president of the AISD Board of Trustees and the chair of the AISD Board Oversight Committee on Excellence through Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, he has made equity a priority.

"We have to address these issues of equity across the board," Saldana said. "We're not just talking about equity from the perspective of low income families, we also have a large special education population and we need to make sure that the kids with special needs are also receiving their fair allocation of resources and support. And so the equity assessment is really going to do several things, but it's also going to give us an opportunity to really highlight and focus on the things that we are doing well."

At its most recent meeting, the board spent 90 minutes discussing the district's equity. The current focus of discussion is the timeline for the equity self assessment that AISD has decided to conduct in the coming months. Already, AISD has released an initial report card



art by Claire Cannatti

of their equity findings, covering the difference in school performance in relation to gaps in student economic backgrounds, program participation and race and ethnicity. The district will be using a model developed by the advocacy group Voices for Racial Justice, which starts by looking at whether or not barriers or disparities exist in multiple education opportunities using data, observations, and engagements with stakeholders. From there, the district will inquire as to why these barriers exist and begin developing ways to combat any disparities that are found.

"What we've discussed in the board meetings was...basically a proposal from the superintendent," Saldana said. "It pretty much laid out a timeline in which we facilitate a self assessment that's going to look at the resources, academic achievement [and] the achievement gap. I think in all it proposed eight of nine criteria that we would consider and look at and we would probably end up following a model Minneapolis ISD put out a couple of years ago. We're also talking about creating an equity committee in our communities that we serve as an extra set of eyes and ears to work in partnership with our board, our superintendent and then the tools that we would bring in from Minneapolis."

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## Retired LBJ soccer coach returns for 2016 season

**MAX IRBY**  
Staff Writer

After spending over 25 years as the coach of LBJ boys soccer, as well as teaching at LBJ, Cipriano Martinez decided it was time to retire following the 2014 season. He left for a year, and then came back. He said he was hungry for the game, and there was still an open spot with his name on it waiting for him at LBJ. Coaching was Martinez's passion, and he wanted to continue it, he said.

"The opportunity to come back and coach was one that I just couldn't say no to," Martinez said.

LASA senior Roberto Guzman, the captain of the varsity team, was coached by Martinez before he left and said he was happy to have him back.

"I was pretty excited when I heard that he was going to come back," Guzman said. "I really have a lot more faith in him than I have in other coaches because the way he would coach our team worked out a lot better in our favor. He knew how other teams played because he had played against them for so long, so with him as our coach it made it easier to come out winning in the end."

Most soccer coaches have a unique philosophy when it comes to coaching, and Martinez is no different. His professionalism and overall goal of success is part of what makes him such a good coach, according to Guzman.

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## Student spends semester spreading STEM in Cambodian schools

**OLIVIA TUNG**  
Staff Writer

It's 5:30 AM, the sun is up and the streets are filled with the notoriously pungent odor of durian and people eager to start their day in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. After her daily morning run alongside the river, LASA senior Becky Carmack gets ready in her and her mom's temporary apartment before they head off to the Royal University of Phnom Penh to continue their mission: rebuilding the country's broken education system.

"Cambodia definitely has a long way to go before their education stops hindering their development," Carmack said. "It's a bad cycle, honestly. People aren't becoming educated so then they can't change anything."

Since the summer of 2011, Carmack and her mother have made annual trips to Cambodia with aims to reconstruct education after the system was decimated under the Khmer Rouge, a communist party led by Pol Pot. The regime officially ruled from 1975 to 1979, though its leadership unofficially remained in power until the early 1990s. According to BBC News, an estimated 1.7 million people died of starvation, execution, disease and overwork under the regime.

In attempt to turn Cambodia into a classless society, the regime took such measures as country-wide forced labor, a ban on all religions and a ban on all leisure activities, which, if violated, were all punishable by death. The regime executed almost everyone with an education, everyone who knew a foreign language and anyone who wore glasses, as all signified intellectual superiority. As such, the country was left with no educated people, no educators and no schools (they were all shut down or turned into prisons). In the 1990s, the new government quickly attempted to establish a new education system, but with resource restrictions and heavy cultural stigma around education, most schools now do little more than lecture directly from the textbook and force rote memorization.

"After the Khmer Rouge, they slapped together an education system, but didn't have anyone to teach it because everyone with an education was killed," Carmack said. "[The Cambodian government] basically gave out honorary degrees, but they didn't know what they were doing. And [in their culture,] they couldn't fire anyone after they've been hired because it would be disrespectful."

During the winter of 2011, Carmack's mother Gail

Dickinson, an associate professor in the College of Education at Texas State University, was influenced by a coworker to visit Cambodia. In 7th grade at the time, Carmack went during her winter break with Dickinson to collect information and local materials from Cambodia to create more hands-on lesson plans. They then returned the following summer and tested them on a group of students.

"They loved the hands-on activity and they got really into it and asked questions," Carmack said. "The next year she was invited back, but this time to help train teachers to come up with their own lesson plans."

The two would continue to work for part of the year in Cambodia for the next five years. In 2014, Dickinson applied to The Fulbright Program and was given a grant to attend a nine month program in Cambodia to educate local university teachers and design inquiry-based lesson plans for college students. Previously, inquiry-based lessons were uncommon because of the cultural stigma surrounding the questioning of authorities.

"It's disrespectful in their culture to ask questions, so the students wouldn't ask questions about the material or the teachers or anything," Carmack said.

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LASA senior Carmack poses with a group of teachers in training. She led the group in hands on robotics labs to both show the teachers the importance of hands on learning and STEM education. photo courtesy of Becky Carmack

Liberal Arts and Science Academy and  
Lyndon Baines Johnson High Schools

## the liberator

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Responsibilities of a Free Student Press: Serving the primary communication link within the Liberal Arts and Science Academy and Lyndon Baines Johnson High Schools and between the school and the local community, this newspaper accepts the responsibilities inherent in being a free press. *The Liberator* staff strives to produce a professional-quality publication that follows the Code of Ethics of the Society of Professional Journalists. The objective is to print the news in a fair and objective way with the utmost regard for integrity.

#### Editorial Content:

1. The students on *The Liberator* staff will print articles which have been researched to the best of their ability to obtain most complete information.
2. The information will be presented in an objective, truthful and fair manner.
3. When personal commentary is given it will be in good taste on issues that have been researched, analyzed and where expert opinion has been sought, and then presented with the best ability of the writer. In addition, all opinion or commentary will be clearly labeled as so.
4. No material which is obscene, libelous or that will cause an immaterial and substantial disruption of the school day, according to accepted legal definitions, will be printed.

#### The Editorial Boards and its Functions:

*The Liberator* staff will be governed by an editorial board comprised of the following individuals: editors-in-chief, section editors and the business manager.

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1. Determine the content of the publication (with input from other staff members).
2. Stress the editorial policy.
3. Ensure the accuracy of the publication.
4. Address disciplinary or other inappropriate behavior of staff.
5. Vote on removal of staff members.
6. Change or add policy as necessary with three of four board members voting favorably.

#### Viewpoints:

Printed material which is a view of a staff member or a contributing writer will be labeled as such. These views are not intended to reflect the view of the administration of Liberal Arts and Science Academy and Lyndon Baines Johnson High Schools nor the School Board of the Austin Independent School District. Viewpoints will be given in two areas in the newspaper.

**Editorials:** These will be determined by the staff consensus. The editorial will be unsigned and will represent the viewpoint of the publication.

**Letters to the Editor:** Letters to the Editor are accepted for topics of general interest to the readership of the newspaper. Letters must be submitted typed or neatly printed in ink and must have the signature of the writer and the writer's grade level. Editors reserve the right to determine which issue the letter goes in, with every effort made to print the letter as soon as possible. The editors also reserve the right to edit the letter for grammar, length and repetition.

**Non-Staff Contributors:** Bylined contributions are welcome.

**Correction of Errors:** The staff makes every effort to print accurate information. In the case of errors, a written correction will be made in the following issue of the newspaper.

#### Sources:

In general, no anonymous sources will be used in reporting. Sources from within the school, as well as those not connected with the school, will be used. Under no circumstances will gifts, including coupons, etc., be accepted by the staff members from sources or advertisers.

Note: *The Liberator* is an open forum.

The staff thanks: Kathy Cox, Sheri Mycue

# STAFF STANCE

## Federal government needs to address Flint water crisis, create plan to replace water infrastructure

When brown, foul-smelling water came streaming out of residents' taps in Flint, Michigan, state officials assured the community that the water was safe. And when an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) scientist measured high lead levels in a Flint resident's water, the findings were not immediately released. It wasn't until a local pediatrician demonstrated harmful levels of lead in children's blood that residents of Flint realized they had been slowly poisoned by their water for the last two years.

Most Americans would agree that access to clean water is a fundamental right in the United States. But in Flint, residents have been denied this personal liberty, and now, over 9,000 children face the lifelong health consequences that result from lead poisoning. The safety of Flint's water first became an issue when the city switched water sources from Lake Huron to the Flint River in 2014, saving an estimated \$12 billion. Law requires that the city treat the water with anti-corrosion chemicals so that rust, iron and lead cannot leach from old pipes into the water. However, under directions from the "emergency manager" appointed by former Michigan Governor Rick Snyder, the city did not treat the water despite the process being inexpensive. By ignoring this important regulation, the Flint river water became contaminated.

This dire situation points to a larger societal problem: attacks on regulation-championed mainly by those on the far right--are putting pressure on city and state governments to ignore safety measures such as the use of the anti-corrosion chemicals. Compounding the problem, Congress has been unwilling to assist states with funding for large scale infrastructure projects claiming it is not their role to help. We, the *Liberator*, believe that to make sure the Flint water crisis is not repeated elsewhere in the US, city and state governments need to ensure that regulations are more strictly enforced by officials. The federal government should also create a long-term plan to improve the current state of water infrastructure. Providing citizens access to safe, clean water is a major responsibility of the government, and it is unacceptable to deny community members this fundamental right.

The water piped in from the Flint River was highly corrosive and without treatment of anti-corrosive chemicals, it ate away at the pipes. The recent discovery that about half of the service lines to homes in Flint are made of lead easily explains why so many families were affected by lead poisoning. But this isn't a problem specific to the small community of Flint. A 1986 EPA study revealed that one in five of the nation's drinking water systems contain more lead than is safe.

In Travis County for example, an analysis of the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality data showed that over 15 local water suppliers--including utilities at St. Stephen's Episcopal School and Garfield Water Supply Corporation--exceeded safe levels of lead in individual tests. While these results were isolated incidents and almost certainly do not pose a threat to the Travis County community at large, it simply proves that the issue of lead content in water is more prevalent than expected and should not be taken lightly. While the ideal solution would be to completely upgrade America's water infrastructure

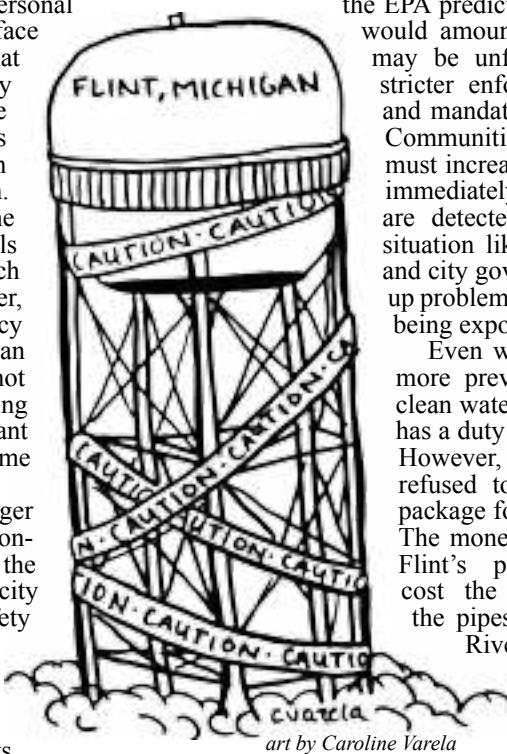
so as to remove any old pipes containing lead, the EPA predicted in 2003 that the final cost would amount to over \$276 billion. That may be unfeasible at the moment, but stricter enforcement of water treatment and mandatory water screenings are not. Communities at risk for high lead levels must increase testing efforts and respond immediately when high lead levels are detected. We cannot have another situation like Flint where both the state and city government ignored and covered up problems indicating that children were being exposed to toxic lead.

Even with local governments taking more preventative measures to ensure clean water, the federal government still has a duty to aid communities like Flint. However, Senate Republicans recently refused to attach a \$600 million aid package for Flint to a major energy bill. The money would go toward replacing Flint's pipes--a huge infrastructure cost the state cannot afford. Since the pipes were corroded by the Flint

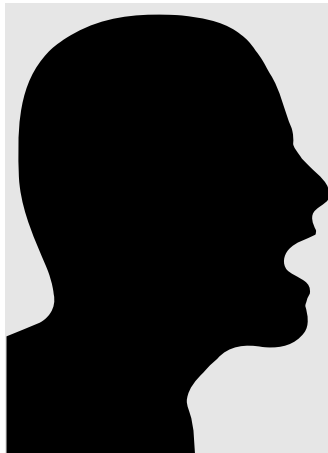
River water, their replacement is a necessity that cannot be put off. Yet Republicans, including Texas Senator John Cornyn, cited the country's \$19 trillion debt and

stated that it is not the federal government's job to help Michigan deal with this crisis. Despite the intent of Senate Democrats to come to a compromise (they've offered to cut the proposed aid package in half), Congress is getting nowhere closer to an agreement. Republican Senators need to relent; yes, states should be responsible for providing their citizens with safe water, but in the case of Flint, the federal government must meet the immediate needs of poor families if the state of Michigan is unable to due to financial reasons. Flint resident LeeAnne Walters, for example, testified that one of her children with lead poisoning is now dealing with a compromised immune system and speech issues.

As a country we need to develop a plan for the future that addresses replacing failing infrastructure in the United States. Let's start with Flint--funding these projects would provide safe drinking water to poor communities. That is a right that no one should be denied.

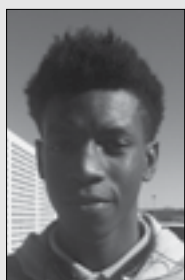


art by Caroline Varela



liberated  
minds

*Should governments in the United States be held responsible for providing their citizens with safe, clean water?*



### Christopher Cook

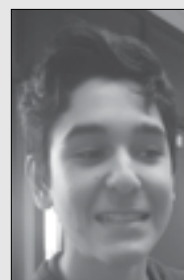
LBJ senior

Yes, governments should be held responsible because everyone deserves a clean amount of water.

### Shahin Masoumi

LASA freshman

I believe that the government should be responsible for providing us clean water because they need to protect the health of the people.



### Gabriel Trevino

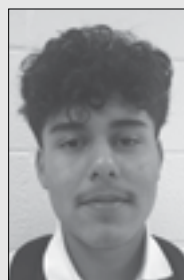
LASA senior

Yes, [the government] is there for the public, and they have the money and the resources to easily manage that. They'll neglect to do that in certain cases to save on revenue, but it's not worth risking their citizens' lives.

### Justin Barientos

LBJ sophomore

I think people need clean water so people can have stuff to drink, and we can stay healthy.



Have an opinion about a new school policy? Have a bone to pick with something the *Liberator* has published? Anything else on your mind? Write us a letter and drop it off in room 265 or in the boxes in the school offices.

### Poor transportation system

Dear Editor,

I really dislike the transportation system because where I live I have to wake up at 5:30 to catch the bus and get to school an hour later. It's just a lot of wasted time.

— LASA senior  
Isabella Contreras

### Call for longer lunch period

Dear Editor,

I really don't like the short lunch period. Thirty minutes is not long enough to get food and actually sit and eat.

— LBJ senior  
R.Z.

### Praise for music program

Dear Editor,

I really, really like the music [at LBJ]. I like choir and the arts because I'm a writer and a singer and a rapper, so it inspires me.

— LBJ senior  
Alexander Young Junior

### Change language requirement

Dear Editor,

LASA should only require two years of language like every other school, because some people aren't passionate about language and want to pursue other things.

— LASA sophomore  
Noam Ben-Avi

## Trailblazer, peacemaker, attention-seeker

### Students argue why their birth order in their family is the worst



LANEY PHILLIPS  
Staff Writer

#### Oldest

I admit it: I was incredibly spoiled as a baby. But after only three years of constant attention and adoration from my parents, my triplet sisters had the nerve to be born, and all my glory disappeared.

I suddenly went from being an over-indulged only child to being the oldest of four. I had to get used to being my parents' last priority fast, and even as a little kid, there was no other option than taking all the responsibility for myself. So even though the first three years of my life were pretty great, being the oldest has taken a turn for the worse.

But wait--there's more. My parents weren't satisfied with four girls and in 2007, my baby brother was born. I guess since my siblings haven't been in my parents' lives as long as I have, they always get more attention than me. My 8-year-old brother especially, is constantly smothered with attention. Even though I love him and always take the fall for him, I can't help feeling resentful that he basically took my place as the spoiled child.

My problem with being the oldest isn't just that my parents seem to be more attentive to my younger siblings. I also have to deal with those same four siblings who get away with everything, leaving me to always act like the responsible and

mature one. Every day when I get home from school, I find crumbs from Pirate's Booty all over my bed or last night's leftovers sitting on my side table. My new lotions and hair products tend to mysteriously go missing between the time I leave for school and the time I get home. And no matter how often I complain to them and tell them not to, my sisters think it's acceptable to raid my closet and then pretend they didn't take any of my clothes. Occasionally, they throw my little brother under the bus. When this rare occasion occurs, he'll get very defensive and start crying, trying to convince me it wasn't him. I have to give into his shameful display and clean the mess myself, unless I want to roll around in food crumbs when I go to sleep.

Besides having to take more responsibility than the others, the oldest sibling is the first one to try everything, the ultimate guinea pig. I was the first to start school, first to choose a sport, first to disobey my parents and their first experience at parenthood. By the time their last child came along, my parents were so accustomed to all the previous slip-ups, it's not such a big deal anymore. While I had no one to give me advice or to warn me before I made a mistake, my younger siblings get to follow my example and avoid my misfortunes. For this, they will forever owe me.

Being the oldest isn't a nightmare, but it's the worst place in the family. Don't get me wrong--I enjoy my freedom, but I also long for my parents' undivided attention. Good luck to all of my fellow first born children, and I wish you the best.



ANDY DEGRASSE  
Staff Writer

#### Middle

My parents entered the room, my mom cradling an unidentified bundle. I watched the round, pink face pass by, its eyes filled with warmth, and I knew I was finished. My reign as the baby in the household was over. No longer would I be loved and cuddled by everyone. No longer would people gather around me to bask in my cuteness. This bundle of joy had stolen my spot as the youngest of the family. Slowly, the attention I had received for the first two years of my life would fade away, instead focused on my older brother, the trailblazer of the family, always the first to try anything, and my baby sister, the adorable little princess that would always be doted on.

This has been my life for the past 14 years, with my brother receiving constant praise from my parents for being the first to accomplish everything and my sister being loved just for being cute. In my life, I may succeed just as much as my older and younger siblings, but I will never receive the same amount of recognition. The oldest child may complain about being forced to do everything, and the youngest might complain about always being compared to their siblings, but neither of them has ever had to fight just for their parents' attention.

And if there's one thing a child needs more than anything, it's attention. Even if your parents push you hard, or they set you too high of a standard, at the end of the day, the attention they're paying you is invaluable, and as the middle child, you often miss out on this.

Growing up, my sister and brother fought a lot. My parents spent hours trying to pull them apart and settle their various disputes. I was rarely involved in any of their shenanigans and was usually much more quiet. If I was the oldest, I would've been the golden boy of the family, showered with affection for following the rules. Instead, I was used as a buffer between them, strategically placed in the middle seat of the car, absorbing any strikes, in the form of anything from fists to apple sauce. My parents occasionally would comment on how my brother and sister should be a little more like me, but this was probably just another one of their tactics to make my siblings get along. While I know my brother and sister probably didn't love being constantly ordered around by my parents, they deserved these chastisements for the most part. I was never rewarded for my good behavior, something that every child strives for.

This lack of attention can even drive the child away from their parents if it gets too bad. As the great Will Smith said, "If I have to chase and fight for your attention, eventually I won't want it anymore." He perfectly describes how a lack of attention can make children think their parents don't love them, and that's something that older and younger children can never say.

#### Youngest



ELIZA CAIN  
Commentary Editor

I looked up birth order characteristics today and was not exactly satisfied with what I found, to say the least. Apparently, the youngest kid is typically attention-seeking, manipulative and self-centered. So yes, that's a little insulting, but I think those qualities may result from the fact that the baby of the family often feels a burden to measure up to their older siblings or thinks they need to make their own

path. I guess that's like when I was in fourth grade, and I stubbornly told my mom I wouldn't play soccer anymore because my siblings played it. Or when I refused to join the newspaper staff freshman year because my brother and sister had both already been the editors-in-chief.

Looking back, those decisions might have been short-sighted (I eventually relented sophomore year and took newspaper). But honestly, as the youngest, I do feel like I have a lot of pressure on me. Everything has already been done--and done well--before I get there. By the time I started high school, my brother and sister had already gotten top grades; they both made it onto a varsity sports team when they were underclassmen; and then they got accepted into prestigious universities. While I was proud of their success, it was frustrating at the same time. Deep down, I really just wanted to lay around eating ice cream and watching Netflix, but I also had an urge to live up to their legacy. Of course, I knew that whatever cool things I achieved wouldn't even be as impressive because they

had already been done.

Okay, so that all sounds really cynical, but it's not exactly my fault! I was getting pretty tired of people asking me annoying questions like "Are you gonna go to Stanford, too?" But unfortunately, I soon learned that comparisons between me and my siblings are not even the worst thing about being the youngest. Ironically, once they left for college, I would have given anything for them to come back and make me feel inferior again. Because their absence meant I was

suddenly an "only child," receiving 100 percent of the parental attention instead of a healthy 33 percent. It was a jarring change, and now, after two and half years with the entirety of my mom's energies targeted on me, I don't think I've had a second of privacy since.

To be clear, I wouldn't change my birth order. I just wanted to share a little PSA to older siblings that yes, I know you think your younger brother or sister is the most annoying creature on the planet, but they're just trying to follow your example and live up to it.



## New state policy absent of logic



SESHA MCMINN  
News Editor

Everyone has heard of senioritis. It's a rite of passage for all teenagers, a chance to enjoy their last year of high school and take it easy. But suddenly, seniors are panicking, rushing to redeem lost credits from absences.

The Austin Independent School District (AISD) recently sent a letter to families across the district reading that in accordance with new Texas Education Code 25.092, "any grade level from kindergarten through grade 12 may not be given credit or a final grade for a class unless the student is in attendance for at least 90 percent of the days the class is offered." Now that doesn't seem too unreasonable--at first! But then it goes on to list absence codes that will, starting with the fall 2015 semester, be considered in denying credit including everything from documented illness to immunizations to unexcused absences in general. Take a second to think about that. Sickness is now no longer excused by the state. Even with a signed note from a doctor vouching for an illness, credit can still be lost from something students have absolutely no control over, like getting the flu.

Let's say a student is involved in a sport outside of school, like rowing. Rowing is an intensive sport with daily practices and regattas. However, because it is not UIL-sanctioned or sponsored through the district, when rowers miss school for a regatta, they receive unexcused absences. Many of these students lose credit for classes because they are traveling to compete across the United States. And though they continue to excel in their classes

while balancing sports, all AISD sees is that they have missed a certain number of class days and are therefore forced into struggling to regain their credits. It seems illogical that absences due to competitions in sports like tennis, soccer and swimming are excused while absences for equally valid competitions in sports like rowing and fencing are unexcused. Suddenly these students have to meet with the principal because they've missed more than five days of class, for perfectly valid reasons. They have to explain every instance of their absence, provide evidence for every competition they attended and fill out a credit recovery form, or worse, go to Saturday school. Come on, AISD.

Take another scenario that can happen to many students with this new policy. Say someone has a tendency to get sick a lot. It's not their fault that their immune system is more prone to illness. They end up missing six B days in the course of a month. With the new policy, students

now can't miss more than five A days or five B days. Otherwise, they'd attend less than 90 percent of class and lose credit. Five days. That's it. So after missing six days, all of their credits for their B day classes are gone. They talk to the assistant principal to figure out how to get their credits back. Their choices are to either go to

Saturday school to make up the credits or talk to teachers to get additional assignments to make up for the time missed. One of the classes they missed was newspaper. Now, as a newspaper editor they spend hours outside of class working on the paper. The week before publication they stay after school until 8 pm to finalize everything, and yet they've lost their newspaper credit for being sick too much, a reason completely out of their control. AISD

wants them to go to Saturday school to get hours that they more than make up for after school and during lunches. Luckily for them, after a grueling two weeks of talking with the assistant principal to try to come up with some sort of recovery plan, they were able to fill out a course recovery form. They had to jump through all of these hoops just to get credit back for a class that they already commit insane amounts of time to.

So now I speak directly to AISD. Do you want me to come to school sick? Because it sure seems like you're promoting the spread of illness by encouraging students to come to school when they're sick. I mean, I personally don't want to lose credit for my classes, so if it comes down to it, I will be forced to come to school and spread sickness everywhere. So thanks, AISD. Thanks for looking out for us. Thanks for making it super easy to lose course credits and add unnecessary stress to our senior year. Thanks for scaring seniors into thinking they may not graduate because they missed six days of class. I can see how well Texas and AISD thought this one through.

### Thumbs Up

- Beyonce
- Self-actualization
- Fried chicken
- Dating apps
- Compliments

### Thumbs Down

- Zika virus
- Concussions
- Heartbreak
- Really tight pants
- Senior prank ideas

Class	Grade	Attendance
English 3	91	85%
Biology	85	86%
Pre-Calculus	71	80%
Newspaper 1	96	88%
US History	93	84%
AP Physics	82	84%
Spanish 3	81	84%
Orchestra 3	97	76%

NO CREDIT

graphic by Claire Cannatti

# LASA junior reflects on the freshman experience



QUINN SIMPSON  
Staff Writer

The first day of chamber orchestra was almost as harrowing for me as for everyone else in our freshly-assembled ensemble. For the other students, it was the first day of high school. For me, it was the first day of being the sole eleventh grader in LBJ's premier freshman orchestra. Though my adventure since then hasn't been nearly as nerve-wracking, it has been surreal and informative in equal part. I've played various roles, sometimes observing silently like an invisible visitor

in the midst of a disconcerting dream and other times intruding to share some of the 'wisdom' I've accrued as a veteran LASA student. In the course of the months I've spent as a faux-freshman, I've learned and relearned a great many things about freshman year and the LASA experience. When I tell people I'm in a freshman orchestra, I get responses ranging from bemusement to amusement to mirth. Some people assume I'm learning a new instrument, or that I just couldn't cut it in the varsity group. If you assumed any of these explanations, I'll have you know that I have been a bassist since first grade and am a proud graduate of the UT Butler School of Music's String Project program. In colloquial terms, that means that I know how to play the bass. My membership in the freshman group is a result of the fact that Ms. Backstrom, our director, realized last year that there wasn't a single incoming freshman bass player signed up for chamber orchestra. She asked me to take one for the team (I say that sarcastically because I felt no particular inclination to participate in the intensive varsity group) and forego advancement to the top orchestra in favor of spending my junior year hanging out with the class of 2019.

Freshmen, on the whole, are very involved in the demanding business of not screwing anything up. As you may remember (painfully, in my case) from your freshman year, the default insecurity is thinking that everyone is better than you. It follows, naturally, that you embrace the near-impossible task of convincing your teachers and your classmates and possibly yourself that you deserve to be at LASA. By never screwing anything up. Ever. This trepidation pervades the chamber orchestra in a noticeable way, manifested during chair tests and exacerbated by the fact that the group is extremely, alarmingly silent.

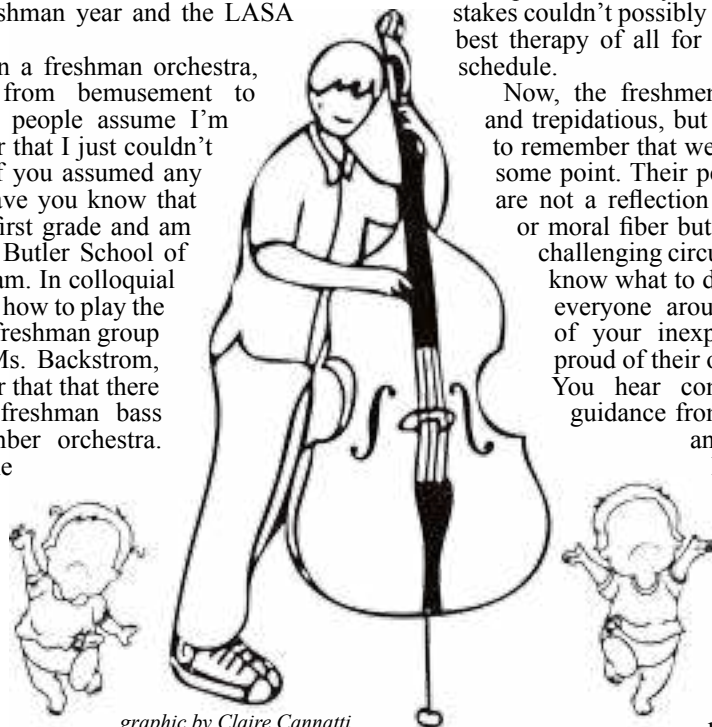
Like, they're dead silent. They don't talk to each other at all. These freshmen appear as though they fear some draconian repercussion if they even think of opening their mouths. In reality, they aren't oppressed by Ms. Backstrom

but rather by a latent fear that saying something dumb will color them in a negative light with their still-mostly-anonymous classmates. Rather than risk speaking out, they obscure their personalities behind opaque screens of studied passivity.

Since I've already served my time as a freshman and experienced all these same emotions, I've essentially become the class clown just because I'm willing to say things out loud. As a reserved person myself, I'm not exactly well-equipped for this demanding task. I generally fail in my goal of derailing the class entirely, but I make myself known from the back of the room just often enough to exasperate my reticent classmates and occasionally get Ms. Backstrom started down a lengthy tangent. I have to say, it's immensely refreshing to immerse myself for an hour and a half every other day in an environment where I have the flexibility to be someone I'm usually not. I literally don't have to care what anyone thinks, and nothing I do or say is of any particular consequence to my actual existence. The stakes couldn't possibly be lower, which is the best therapy of all for my pressurized daily schedule.

Now, the freshmen are certainly timid and trepidatious, but I think it's important to remember that we were all freshmen at some point. Their peculiar characteristics are not a reflection on their intelligence or moral fiber but rather their uniquely challenging circumstances. It's hard to know what to do or how to act when everyone around you is as aware of your inexperience as they are proud of their own jaded superiority. You hear conflicting advice and guidance from everyone you meet and often wonder how on earth you're going to become a graduating senior in just four short years. Your peers are still faceless, and the dreaded task of social interaction presents an oft-paralyzing duality of danger and opportunity.

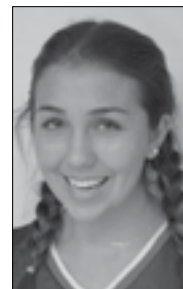
Spending a few hours every week immersed in the freshman experience has grounded me in an understanding and appreciation all the people and ordeals I've encountered. As I look back over my own successes and challenges, I'm overwhelmed with excitement imagining the unique ways in which each of my freshman classmates will forge through their formative years and come to own their enviable positions as students of LASA. Along with their firm friendships and soaring victories, however, I also anticipate their inevitable failures. It's the painfully awkward moments, the stinging defeats and the heart-sinking losses that life throws at them despite their most strenuous efforts that will ultimately breach those paper-thin walls of silence and teach them how to stop taking life quite so seriously.



graphic by Claire Cannatti



## Student demonstrates intense dislike for Valentine's Day



ZOE TRUNGALÉ  
Staff Writer

As "I like being single, it gives me more time to focus on myself!" begins to echo throughout school hallways, office buildings, and snapchat's everywhere, stores start to fill up with rows and rows of never ending pink and red. Wandering aimlessly past shelves of Valentine's Day cards at Target, I am vaguely reminded of that time in sophomore year when I read Dante's *Inferno* and experienced the descent into Hell secondhand. Already it is the season of endless PDA and heart themed PJ's, the time of year when you gain at least five pounds from eating creamy milk chocolate. And trust me, that's just one of the many reasons why Valentine's Day is a depressing holiday.

If this year, the only Valentines you are getting are from your mom, don't stress, you're not alone. I mean, you're alone, but you're not the only one who's alone. Valentine's Day is the worst. Somehow your friends in relationships can't really grasp this concept because they have never experienced the awkwardness of being surrounded by couples on a day dedicated to love and devotion (two things you aren't currently experiencing except with your previously mentioned, and constantly affectionate, mother).

At first, V-day isn't so bad. Let the couples have their moment this year (they probably won't last long anyway, because let's be honest, what high school couple actually makes it through more than one of Cupid's birthdays?) For some reason, despite my resentment for the holiday, I always think I can handle the affectionate Valentines themed commercial breaks while watching *New Girl* on Hulu, but I can't. And as the season begins, so does chaos.

February starts pure and virtuous as ever, but like a pair of white Converse at ACL, it gets dirty real quick. Not only does it take over our stores, schools and radio, but there's always a themed episode of your favorite TV show about the main character searching for (and finding) love that ends in a happily ever after. They make whole movies dedicated to the worst holiday (ahem, 2010's "Valentine's Day")! Like, come on you guys. Let's not forget about St. Patrick's Day!

When the dreaded day finally arrives, you have to decide between venturing out to get brunch with friends or curling up in a warm comforter with your computer and a cupcake from your ever-devoted mother. All one can really do during this time of turbulence is listen to a lot of sad Drake songs and pretend he's your boyfriend when asked about your relationship status. So, sorry for being honest, but Valentine's day is just not an enjoyable holiday for single people. And maybe I'll change my mind later, but for now, my mom is not an acceptable alternative to a boyfriend.

## Need for more strong, female movie leads



LENI MILLIKEN  
Staff Writer

Rey lives alone on her home planet, waiting year after year for her family to return. She collects old parts from a run-down star destroyer and trades them to pay for enough food to keep herself alive. And when the fate of the galaxy falls into her hands, Rey steps up and proves once and for all that she has what it takes to be a powerful, brave heroine.

The Star Wars movies have typically been more appealing to boys. But in the recent movie "The Force Awakens," a modern Star Wars generation has finally been born—one that is filled with girls and women of all ages who can relate to Rey, the new female character. Rey is recognized for her independence and determination instead of the "damsel in distress" persona that is present in so many other female characters. We need more of these capable female leads in order to inspire more girls to take part in the film industry and to continue to empower our next generation of women.

The film industry—specifically the part working in action and sci-fi genres—is finally beginning to realize that women watch movies, too. But one, two, or even three female leads is not enough. There are girls in our world who love action films but have never had a female character that stands out and sets an example for them. Instead, they're barraged by movies like "Twilight" and "The Princess Bride" in which the female leads—in this case, Bella Swan and Buttercup—are portrayed as needy and unable to protect themselves, therefore requiring constant saving by the heroic male lead. Sure, Buttercup has attitude, and she is a memorable character, but at the same time, she is practically helpless, waiting around for Westley to do the heavy-lifting. But characters like Rey allow young girls to gain confidence in their own ability to be strong, brave, and independent.

The film industry needs women because there is a whole point of view missing from movies made with only male producers, directors and actors. From the various James Bond Girls to Teresa from "Maze Runner," the film industry keeps getting it wrong. Even throughout the three Iron Man movies while Tony Stark was saving the world as a superhero, his female counterpart Pepper Potts could barely save herself. She may be the CEO of Stark Industries, but she is never even given the chance to stand up for herself.

It isn't enough for women just to be in movies. They need to have complex characters and in-depth personalities in order to accurately represent real women, not just be likeable or pretty. They shouldn't have to only play roles as the love interest or the weak assistant. Several new movies are making strides for women in the film industry: "Divergent" and "Hunger Games" are two examples that come to mind. Tris Prior and Katniss Everdeen don't need their boyfriends to save them. In fact, sometimes it's the other way around. I hope that one day, a lead character like Katniss is not surprising, but maybe even expected.

# Women [SEAL] the deal



CLARA MORSE  
Staff Writer

Since the beginning of the United States, women have been serving in the military. Women such as Deborah Samson Gannett cut their hair, dressed in men's clothes and fought in the American Revolution and Civil War. It wasn't until the 1970s that the first women legally attended military academies and enrolled in the army. But now, women are getting the opportunity to apply to become Navy SEALs. In December 2015, the Defense Secretary approved this controversial change to the SEAL program. This decision not only gives women a great opportunity, but it also contributes

significantly to the quest for full gender equality in the military.

The (SE)a, (A)ir, and (L)and operatives are the United States' premier special forces unit and a very elite and selective group. Training involves over a year's worth of boot camp, compared to the infantry's eight weeks, followed by a year and a half more of activity before the trainee SEALs are considered deployable. The brutal training has led to a program drop out rate of over 80 percent. The SEAL program is one of the last Navy programs to allow women to apply to join its ranks.

However, this decision did not come without controversy. Several members of the armed forces are worried about the physical standard being lowered in order to accommodate women. Some scholars agree. Anna Simons, a professor at the Naval Postgraduate School, has been a staunch defender of keeping military programs entirely male. Simons and other critics of the co-ed SEAL unit bring up two main counterpoints to the push to include women in the military: physical standards and social cohesion. These critics, although they bring up good points, are incorrect. The addition of women to military programs such as the SEAL program is an excellent idea, and the physical and social standards will not be hurt by this addition.

Many points have been raised about women's physical capabilities. Women have inherently less strength than men and will therefore be a liability to the team, opponents to full military integration say. Firstly, the physical standards of the different military branches, especially the punishing ones of the Rangers, have been called into question—20 pull ups is a requirement that many men in the field can't meet, for example, and therefore may not be a valid reason to keep women from the front lines.

But barring that, there is no reason why women should not be allowed to try to meet these physical standards. Every woman who is allowed to enter into boot camp must first meet the physical standards required for entry and also go through the grueling year of boot camp after making it into the program. The physical standards will

not be lowered for women, so there is no reason why qualified, fit women do not deserve a chance to become a SEAL.

Also, the meeting of physical standards is an important criterion but not the only one. And having the capability to meet those standards is something that does not need to have a gender attached. As Admiral John Greenert said, "Why shouldn't anybody who can meet these [standards] be accepted? And the answer is, there is no reason."

However, setting aside physical fitness, social cohesion is another concern raised by opponents. One argument they make is that if women and men are mixed in units, couples will form, and in intense conditions the soldiers will be unable to stay professional.

First off, if gay men can avoid any displays of sexuality when working and training in close quarters with other men, as they have needed to do since the advent of the army, the task to not become intimately involved with a woman should really not be that hard for straight men in the army. And furthermore, it is each SEAL's responsibility to avoid romance while serving—women should not be denied entry to the program just because men cannot control their emotions. Also, in other critical workplaces such as the EMS and firefighting, women and men work together. This proves that co-ed units would work similarly well in the SEAL program. Not to mention Iraq and Afghanistan, where co-ed regiments served with minimal negative impact.

Other bloggers and military members argue that women being involved in the military would inevitably destroy team spirit of the unit and that men would not be able to adjust to women working with them. Once more, in Afghanistan and Iraq, this was not an issue. This argument also takes a lot of responsibility off of the men. Is the possibility of men being unable to prioritize their duties towards their country over their romantic interest in a woman so high that it should entirely preclude the involvement of women in the military? It is not. And moreover, women should not take the fall for men's supposed inability to control their romantic urges.

Obviously, if you are making a change such as adding women to the military, it will take all parties some time to adjust. But that adjusting time should not be used as a reason to exclude women.



art by Grace Bodine

# Oh, how the times have changed; new house bill changes attendance requirements from days to minutes spent in class

CLARA MORSE  
Staff Writer

A new Texas law may lead to earlier starts, later ends and reinvented calendars for schools all across Texas, including LASA and LBJ. House Bill 2610, which changed the required time for students to be in school from 180 days to 75,600 minutes, was passed in summer 2015. According to LASA Principal Stacia Crescenzi, the origin of this bill may have something to do with the increase in bad weather days, such as the Memorial Day floods of 2015 and the blackout this past October.

"For about the last four or five years, Central Texas has had really bizarre weather late in the spring, and so there have been a number of times where we have had bad weather days called after we've passed [all] of our [bad weather makeup] days," Crescenzi said. "What ended up happening was school districts all across Texas were petitioning TEA [Texas Education Agency] for a waiver for some of that time...So the state got tired of doing those waivers, and it's moving from a day system to a minute system, with the idea that they're not going to do waivers unless it's a catastrophic event."

Crescenzi, who is working to design LASA's bell schedule for next year, said that this law will help schools avoid waivers by letting them build more minutes into the day throughout the school year, so that if there is bad weather late in the school year there are extra minutes to cover that school day. Although this bill was passed before this school year, it will be going into effect for most school districts in 2016-17. TEA released information late this September on the technicalities of the bill, such as whether lunch and recess time would be counted.

"House Bill 2610 was passed by the Texas Legislature in the legislative session that ended in May 2015," TEA Education Commissioner Mike Morath said. "However, the bill did not become effective—officially become law—until Sept. 1, 2015. By that date, 2015-16 school calendars had already been approved by local school boards, who are responsible for setting the calendars."

Some school districts, such as nearby Westlake, have already begun to add minutes to their day. Westlake schools have pushed back their end times by five to 15

minutes this semester. However, AISD is still working on designing their new calendar.

"I must come up with a start and end time to meet the number of minutes given to me by the district," Crescenzi said. "I have a couple of goals in doing this: [to] maximize instruction time [and create] no hit on the hour lunch—everyone loves the hour lunch, it's great."

LASA, which starts 45 minutes before most other high schools in AISD, is one of a few schools with the freedom to design its own bell schedule. Crescenzi said that traffic is one of the main reasons for the early start.

"All of the traditional high schools are now required to run from 8:55 to 4:25

AISD Superintendent Paul Cruz is also designing bell schedules, but he designs for the entire district of AISD, which serves some 84,000 students. Cruz said he faces challenges designing the schedule in part because of constraints on transportation and the already early start times.

"The first bus for elementary school students starts at 5:20 in the morning, and...bus drivers who drive those buses start on their way to work [at] 3:30, 4 in the morning," Cruz said. "So if we move up start times...and we start elementary schools earlier than 7:45, then the first buses might have to start at 5 in the morning, and these kids would have to get up and get ready at 4 in the morning...and that's a hardship."

Cruz also talked about how every decision he makes has a ripple effect. AISD must design schedules for over 84 elementary schools, 19 middle schools and 15 high schools; all of these schools are served by a limited number of buses.

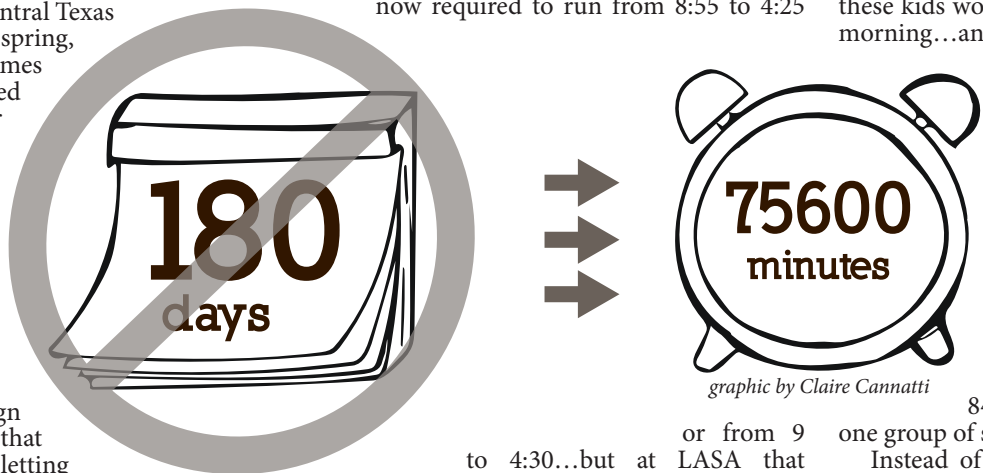
"Many times folks will say, 'Well if you start up high schools at 8:30, it's not that big of a deal,' and to a high school student it may not be a big deal, but it really would be to the first group of students who get on buses at 5:20 in the morning," Cruz said. "That affects all of our students, and we have 84,000 students, so I can't just think about one group of students, I have to think about everybody."

Instead of adding time onto the start of the school day, Cruz is also considering adding minutes to the end of the day. However, the late afternoon Austin traffic is a constraint.

"Take a school like LASA or Ann Richards or Fulmore or Kealing or Garza and a student travels, in some cases, significant distances to get to schools," Cruz said. "And Austin has a lot of traffic so those are some implications of making this type of decision."

However, he said adding time onto the end of the day may be the most realistic solution. Although it may be a tough task to design a bell schedule, Cruz also said other things are more important.

"There's seat time, and the minutes you actually are in a class for instruction, but there's also learning and I'm more after learning," Cruz said. "I think what's more important is really what happens in that time, and the size of the classroom is also important, the types of activities students do, that's really what's important."



graphic by Claire Cannatti

or from 9 to 4:30...but at LASA that doesn't work for us," Crescenzi said. "If you've ever been in traffic in Austin, it increases exponentially once you hit about 7 to 7:30. So if we would move to 9, students...would actually physically spend more time in the morning and in the afternoon in a bus going home, which is why it's not an option. If we get helicopters or something like that, we can talk about starting at 9."

Crescenzi is working ten to 15 minutes into LASA's school day. Buses arrive up to an hour before classes start, which she said is one reason why she wants to add more time to the start of the day.

"For me it started with transportation," Crescenzi said. "[I] want time for kids to get breakfast, so if the last bus gets here at 8, then 8:05 is probably too fast, but I might be able to get 8:10 [as a starting time]. We need about ten minutes for kids to get off the bus, get breakfast and get to class."

## Calendar to potentially change from six week to nine week system

JORGE VILLA  
Staff Writer

Austin Independent School District (AISD) asked every high school principal to vote for the new possible nine week grading system. That means that there will be a system in which there will be two sets of nine weeks per semester. AISD has not yet decided to officially implement this for next year's calendar. LASA assistant principal, Marc Hernandez, said that he had been on a nine week grading system all of his life until he came to Austin.

"With a nine week system, students have multiple opportunities to really improve their grades for that one specific cycle," Hernandez said. "Students might have more chances to take more exams and more time to improve their grades."

Hernandez said that with the nine week program the semester seems shorter because there are only two grading cycles. On the other hand, some students will feel anxious and stressed out because there will be more work during that specific grading cycle Hernandez said. This means that every cycle will count more towards their final grade and their final will be worth a smaller percent. Aly Hirani, a freshman at LASA, said that he doesn't want AISD to change the current grading cycle system.

"This new grading system will definitely throw some people off like me because we have been

on a six week grading cycle for most of our life," said Hirani

Hernandez said that AISD's final decision won't affect him as much as students because his job is to support his students no matter what is going on. LASA assistant principal San Czaplinski used to work in Pflugerville ISD, where she also was under a nine week grading cycle.

"I think that this is something we could try; there is nothing wrong with change and adapting to what is going to benefit your campus or students, and that's something that if you try and it doesn't work, it is okay to change back," Czaplinski said.

Czaplinski worked for a high school in Pflugerville ISD, where she was teaching on a nine week grading system. As a teacher, she had to give out progress reports every three weeks and report cards came out at the end of the nine weeks. According to Czaplinski, there were parents that were not satisfied because the progress reports were not accurate reflections of what their final grade was. Also she said that as a teacher there was just less time to entering grades as far as report cards go. Alan Ruiz, a freshman at LBJ High School said that he thinks that this possible change is a great opportunity to see what works best for the students.

"I wouldn't mind changing to a new grading system because I believe that you should always try new things, that's how you are able to find out what really works for you,"

said Ruiz "Plus this is an opportunity for people like me that are slow learners to catch up with our work and have more time to ask teachers to explain things again and just ask for help."

AUGUST						
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graphic by Claire Cannatti

## AISD calendar task force decides on 2016-17 school year calendar

CAROLINA GOKINGCO  
Staff Writer

Five teams sit in the hall of the Austin Independent School District (AISD) Baker Center. In front of each team there is a blank instructional calendar and the Texas Education Code, which states the criteria involving the calendar changes. After spending some time designing a calendar for the 2016-17 school year, each group presents their version to the rest of the committee. Finally, after accumulating votes and opinions from the entire Calendar Task Force, two versions out of five are submitted for the public to vote on.

Right before winter break, the AISD Calendar Task Force confirmed the calendar for the 2016-2017 school year. Gloria Williams, Ph.D., Director of the School, Family and Community Education at AISD, has been the chair of the Calendar Task Force for the past six years under two superintendents. As the director, she schedules meetings and helps make decisions within the deliberation of calendar alterations.

"We took the two calendars to the student advisory council, to the district advisory council, to each principal meeting level for elementary, middle and high school," Williams said. "We put it out on survey, we put information online for people to vote and give us feedback. We took it to [AISD Superintendent] Dr. Cruz and his cabinet, so that could give us input, and we left it online for close to two months."

Numerous groups recommended a full week of Thanksgiving break. The state of Texas requires students to attend school for 75,600 minutes, amounting to 180 days and teachers have an additional 10 days for staff development. Because of the state of Texas' attendance requirements (see "Oh, how the times have changed" above for more information), the two extra days (three for teachers) of Thanksgiving break had to be drawn from somewhere else. Unlike this school year, Veteran's Day will not be a student holiday but an

instructional day. Good Friday is a student holiday, but a staff development workday. Winter break is no longer 10, but nine days.

"Our surrounding districts have a week off for Thanksgiving, so most of our teachers who don't live in Austin and have children in surrounding districts would [ask us to] consider five days," Williams said. "Since most travel for Thanksgiving, their kids are out of school in Pflugerville, Round Rock and Eanes. And [because] they're coming in for work, it creates a daycare situation."

Though the majority of those surveyed favored the five-day Thanksgiving, there are many different groups to please. LASA Principal Stacia Crescenzi said that one calendar that makes everyone happy is a difficult thing to achieve.

"I know that there are a lot of people that are very happy with the changes; I can tell you that there are people who are frustrated," Crescenzi said. "That said, I don't think there is any perfect calendar—one that will make every parent and every staff member happy... [The Calendar Task Force] is a really hard committee to be on because if you're the parent of an elementary school student, or if you're a staff member and your child goes to a different school district, that's a lot of money to pay for three full days of childcare because your district is not off."

LBJ Academy Director Bradley Clark said he believes it'll help both students and staff who travel over Thanksgiving break since some students are out of town. Though winter break is shorter, he said the trade off is worth it.

"I think it's going to assist a lot of the students and families in AISD that travel over the Thanksgiving break because I do know that attendance would drop over the Thanksgiving break," Clark said. "It's going to be more convenient for families who have students in AISD just because it's one of the busiest travel times of the year, and so I think it's going to be nice to have that. As far as the shorter Christmas break, I'd rather start it on a Friday like we did this year, but it's definitely worth the trade off. I think it's going to make people happier."

*I think it's going to assist a lot of the students and families in AISD that travel.*

-LBJ Academy Director  
Bradley Clark

## New fingerprinting regulations may lead Uber and Lyft drivers to leave Austin

MAX RANDALL  
Staff Writer

A new city ordinance came into effect on Feb. 1 that imposes regulations on ride-sharing services such as Uber and Lyft—two businesses that offer alternative sources of transportation in metro areas.

One of the terms required by the regulations is that Uber and Lyft would have to provide fingerprints of drivers along with the background checks the services already provide, similar to what taxi services are currently required to conduct. Both Uber and Lyft promised they will leave the Austin area if fingerprints are required because, to them, they are unnecessary and would hinder growth by making the process of hiring new drivers more difficult. An Uber representative, who chose to stay anonymous, said that requiring fingerprints presents unnecessary complications and strains on the process of allowing new drivers to join.

"Fingerprinting background checks can cause a barrier for new drivers to sign up and can also produce unfair results based on fingerprinting completed during an

arrest," the Uber representative said.

The City of Austin said fingerprints would help provide more in-depth safety measures. Lyft user and LASA English teacher Caitlyn Palmer said that she didn't see any reason to halt the implementation of fingerprint background checks.

"Fingerprints, to me, seem like a very reasonable safety regulation that could lead to safer practices," Palmer said. "I don't really know how that would stop Uber drivers from joining."

Recently, an organization known as Ridesharing Works for Austin started a petition to halt the new regulations. Originally only needing 20,000 signatures, the petition gained over 65,000 signatures in 21 days as of Jan. 19. According to Uber, the petition is in effect to gain the attention of the local city council and other important Austin leaders.

"Our petition will hopefully show the local Austin government how many Austin residents are against some of these proposed regulations and encourage them to reconsider some of them," the Uber representative said.

If Uber left or were forced to comply with the fingerprint regulations, Uber argues it would be more

difficult to recruit new drivers, as well as it would deprive many citizens of their source of transportation. LASA sophomore Kyle O'Rourke said that Uber is something that he is reliant on for travel.

"Uber is really helpful because I can't always drive everywhere," O'Rourke said. "When I need to go somewhere, often I don't have a car and cabs are less reliable, less nice and they smell weird."

Even though Uber has said that they will leave Austin if the fingerprint regulations persist, similar regulations in Houston were passed and implemented in 2014. However, Uber did not leave the city, even after saying they would if they needed to comply with the fingerprint regulation. One of those regulations was the requirement to provide fingerprints, and although Uber didn't budge, Lyft pulled their services out of Houston. However, Uber said that they do not wish to leave and that they are still striving for a solution.

"We are still working with the city to come to a compromise," the Uber representative said. "Of course we want to stay in Austin and continue to provide reliable transportation."



graphic by Claire Cannatti

# THE SKINNY

## District awards teachers for academic excellence with coin

MATEEN KONTORAVDIS  
Staff Writer

AISD Superintendent Paul Cruz, Ph.D., created a new way to congratulate teachers and staff of AISD for their excellent work at schools—the SUPERintendent coin. Cruz said he is looking to award the SUPERintendent coin to teachers and staff who create positive learning experiences and environments which challenge students to learn more effectively.

“I plan on giving these out weekly, while visiting schools throughout the district,” Cruz said.

The SUPERintendent award was first introduced in January this year when Cruz presented it to Gorzycki Middle School family and consumer science teacher Cynthia Christensen. Staff members do not know ahead of time that they will be receiving the coin.

“I was honored to receive the SUPERintendent coin a couple of weeks ago,” Christensen said. “I had no idea that I would be receiving it. I was honored that the Superintendent saw that the work my students had completed was important.”

Christensen received the superintendent coin after giving what Cruz called an outstanding assignment to her students: turning pillowcases into dresses for orphans in Uganda. In Christensen’s fashion and interior design class, the students created 40 dresses to send to Uganda.

“I think this was beneficial as it recognized the importance of thinking beyond ourselves and using our skills to benefit others in need,” Christensen said. “I think that this was my favorite part, along with the opportunity for our students to get recognized for their work.”

Christensen said she had not expected the recognition she received from the district for her work with her students. She said receiving this sort of acknowledgment will keep teachers doing the things that they love because it lets them know that they are appreciated.

“I think that any recognition such as this is meaningful as a teacher,” Christensen said. “It means a lot that this is something that is seen as valuable. I hope that this type of project—sewing dresses for orphans—is something that we can continue to do in our school and other schools in the district.”

Christensen said she was very excited to be awarded for creating a positive learning experience. Cruz said he is looking forward to handing out more SUPERintendent Coins to staff members and teachers to recognize their outstanding work, and that he hopes the other teachers will be as excited as Christensen.

“I am looking to recognize employees who go above and beyond to create a positive, engaging environment that challenges students to learn more effectively,” Cruz said.



“The idea is to thank teachers and staff for all that they do,” Cruz said. AISD superintendent Dr. Paul Cruz said they are handing out these coins because students are often rewarded for their merit, but the staff is often forgotten.



“The SUPERintendent Coin was designed to recognize outstanding work by teachers and staff throughout the district,” Cruz said. Shown here is the coin given to Gorzycki Middle School teacher Cynthia Christensen.

## LBJ celebrates Black History Month with family film nights

EMILY KOLODNEY  
Staff Writer

In celebration of Black History Month, LBJ students and staff have some big plans to involve students and neighborhood families in immersive history programs. Principal Sheila Henry says the brand-new “Movie Nights with our Families” program began on Feb. 5, with a showing of Selma in the theater.

The staff will be showing movies every month. This month’s movie theme was in celebration of Black History Month, which spans the entire month of February. These showings will be open to everyone that would like to attend.

“I’m not sure what our next [movie] is yet,” Henry said. “We have a list that we select from and that we get the kids input on to see what they like and what their families like and would go and see at the movies.”

These monthly film showings are open to the whole campus, so anyone can participate. The attendance cost includes popcorn and a drink and all profits will go to the school. In addition to the movie nights, LBJ students will be putting on a talent show with some surprise teacher guests. The intent of these activities is to bring together families who want to embrace their heritage while enjoying wonderful entertainment.

“We’re gonna have a little fund raiser while we do it, so it’ll be like \$5 to see the movie,” Henry said. “You know, just trying to do something to get [families] together.”

LBJ Parent Support Specialist Karen Brown is the one organizing these monthly events. She said they will be community-wide, not just limited to LBJ families, to help build a sense of community within the neighborhood.

“It’s to draw the families together so we can all become a family again...,” Brown said. “It’s just all about bringing the families together in the community.”

The first showing, on Feb. 5th, attracted a total of 20 people from three families, although attendance is expected to be greater at upcoming showings. Brown said the program is expected to last all year and into future of the school, and hopefully encompass the community at large.

“We did have students [attend], so that was a good thing too, because we want everybody to be a part of it,” Brown said. “They gave us good suggestions on movies like Freedom Rider, things that kids will want to see and be interested in.”

Discussion of the next date has already started, with consultation to the district and the LBJ community. With the growth of LBJ and the neighborhood surrounding it, this showing of movies in the theater is only expected to get larger and larger.

“We’re hoping the next one to be even bigger,” Brown said. “So we’re just anticipating on it to grow.”



LASA sophomore Hayden Abrevaya (left) attaches a part to the LASA Robotics team’s FRC robot, continuing the FRC challenge rather than UIL. “So, the organization that runs robotics, FIRST, they had been talking to UIL in Texas so that they could get a more structured league to happen in Texas because we’re such a big state and schools sometimes...can’t compete because they don’t have money,” LASA senior James Asghar said. photo by Chelsea Banawis

## Robotics becomes UIL program, LASA opts out

SARAH LUCAS  
Staff Writer

Robotics was introduced to the University Interscholastic League (UIL) as a pilot program the 2015-16 school year. The program is split into two main categories: UIL Robotics: Boosting Engineering, Science and Technology (BEST) and UIL Robotics: For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology (FIRST) Division, which differ mainly in the format of the competition they are holding. Both of the UIL pilot program divisions are based upon the previously existing FIRST and BEST programs, which, according to the pilot overview released by UIL, were chosen due to their successful track record of inspiring students to pursue STEM fields. The UIL pilot program itself consists of both educational and competitive sections. LASA Robotics coach Tony Bertucci said this program aims to create a more substantial and inclusive FIRST league in Texas.

“Robotics was added as a UIL [competition] because US FIRST wants to expand robotics in the state of Texas and believes that, by partnering with the UIL, it will allow school districts that only allow UIL [competitions] to participate,” Bertucci said.

Although the addition of robotics as an official UIL event could potentially benefit many schools across Texas, LASA Robotics has chosen to not participate in this year’s pilot program, and instead continues to concentrate upon competing in the regular FIRST Robotics Challenges (FRC) and FIRST Tech Challenges (FTC).

“I honestly do not know what the benefits of robotics being a UIL activity are,” Bertucci said. “The UIL brings nothing to the table except another layer of bureaucracy

that robotics community and the volunteer coaches and mentors do not need. They bring no money to the table. They do not simplify any processes, they do not benefit any of the current teams on a local level.”

LASA senior and robotics business director James Asghar said that the reason UIL has been introduced as a pilot program is to allow for a gradual transition to see its effectiveness as well as to allow previously ineligible teams to enter into US FIRST challenges. Asghar said that LASA Robotics has come to the consensus that they are okay competing in the non-UIL FRC events, as they have been, and that there’s no reason to add extra work that the teams don’t have to do.

“A lot of teams are being grandfathered in,” Asghar said. “We, at LASA, are not, because LASA’s not a UIL school... [but] this brings in other schools that couldn’t necessarily join in the first place. Because for FRC, which is the big competition, it costs \$5,000 to start up a team, and then you have to pay an extra \$10,000 for your actual robot.”

Bertucci said that another reason he chose to opt LASA Robotics out of the UIL pilot was that LASA competes exclusively in FIRST challenges and there will only be a single UIL FIRST competition this year. The sole FIRST competition will be during the summer at the Texas Robot Roundup; the other competitions will be BEST competitions. After the sole FIRST competition, the highest ranked UIL team will then be declared state champion at this competition, which is a selection method Bertucci doesn’t agree with.

“I have chosen not to have LASA Robotics participate because I do not believe that a one shot, one outing contest should be the way to determine a ‘state champion,’” Bertucci said.

## District equity

continued from page 1

Equity has long been a topic of conversation in the district. In 2012 and 2014, the Texas Civil Rights Project (TCRP), a group whose stated mission is to promote racial, social and economic justice through litigation, education and social services for low- to moderate-income persons least able to defend themselves, issued a report concerning equity in the Austin Independent School District (AISD).

According to TCRP staff attorney Abby Frank, the findings were less than stellar.

“We did find pretty big disparities in funding,” Frank said. “A lot of them came from what we call private funding, whether it’s donations to schools by parents or outside organizations or fundraising efforts at individual schools, and those tended to create pretty big disparities. And I think a really good thing to look at is what course and what programs are offered at different schools.”

The disparity Frank discusses is shown in TCRP data comparing the amount of private subsidy funds per student per year at each of AISD’s elementary schools. These private subsidy funds are generated by schools, whether through donations, special events, vending machines or other methods. This money, which is often used for extra enrichment activities like field trips and clubs, is often available in higher amounts per student in the schools in wealthier neighborhoods. Of the 74 AISD elementary schools with private subsidy fund data available in 2012, the seven LBJ feeder schools were ranked between 33rd and 69th in private subsidy funding per student.

## Acclaimed Austin educator passes away, leaves behind legacy

GRANT MCCASLAND  
Staff Writer

After living a life focused on educational excellence, Austin-based educator Timy Baranoff, Ph.D., passed on Dec. 18, 2015. Baranoff was 89, and leaves behind Baranoff Elementary, a South Austin school named for her in 1999.

Baranoff’s numerous accomplishments in Austin education include 12 years of teaching kindergarten at Casis Elementary and holding multiple positions for Austin Independent School District (AISD) from 1975-1993. Baranoff was the Primary Instructional Coordinator for AISD, and also became the District’s Early Childhood Coordinator. After holding those positions, she was appointed Director of Curriculum for Elementary Education. Throughout Baranoff Elementary’s existence, Baranoff has been involved in the school.

Baranoff Elementary interim principal Megan Counihan said when she first met Baranoff, she had a very positive feeling. Counihan said Baranoff was devoted to educating children and felt honored to have a school in her name.

“The first time I met Timy, she gave me a warm hug,” Counihan said. “She was welcoming, shared her opinions, freely gave advice and was passionate about early childhood [education]. We had our 10 year anniversary in 2009 to celebrate Baranoff being open for 10 years. We had a big popcele party outside and Timy came. We took her around the school in a golf cart and she thoroughly enjoyed the day. She was proud of our school.”

Counihan also said she felt mournful after hearing

“I think a really good thing to look at is what course and what programs are offered at different schools.”

- TCRP staff attorney Abby Frank

“In one part of our report, I think you can see particularly at the elementary school level, there are some pretty big differences that you have-- schools that have chess clubs and robotics clubs and photography classes and other elementary schools where their only extracurricular program is the safety patrol or something like that,” Frank said. “Those sort of offerings make a difference in the quality of education that kids receive at different schools.”

In response to the TCRP’s report, the district issued a letter disputing many of the TCRP’s claims and formed the AISD Board Oversight Committee on Excellence through Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. Saldana said that the Board

of Trustees decided of their own accord to pursue equity self-assessments within the district, not just as a reaction to the TCRP’s claims.

Saldana said regardless of whether or not the TCRP released the report, equity in the district is

something he personally wants to address.

“One thing I want to make clear is our board made a decision to move forward with equity self assessments on our own accord,” Saldana said. “We are not doing this because the Texas Civil Rights Project is telling us to do it.”

The next step in AISD’s equity self assessment timeline involves the formation of an Equity Assessment Committee and refining the methods by which equity will be assessed. This process, according to Saldana, will help build trust with the community, rather than blame.

“I’m hoping that by moving forward with this self assessment, we’ll be able to put some of those issues to bed, but more importantly really work to bring everybody together to truly try and develop an urban school district that serves everybody equally, so I’m just looking forward to the process,” Saldana said. “It’s long overdue and I’m looking forward to it.”

of her passing, but found comfort in the affection that others had for Baranoff. She is glad that Baranoff will be recognized for her accomplishments and hard work.

“I was very sad to find out that she had passed away,” Counihan said. “I attended her funeral on Dec. 21. It was nice to hear her children and grandchildren speak about the wonderful and vibrant life she lived. The school board will recognize her at a February board meeting and Baranoff Elementary will have a memorial service on campus in March to celebrate her.”

LASA senior and former Baranoff Elementary student Anwen Pope said that when she went to Baranoff, she wanted to understand who the school was named after. Pope was glad that there was information provided about

Baranoff when she attended the school.

“I really cared about knowing who the school was named after; I do feel like it’s important to at least know a little bit about who your school is named after,” Pope said. “Baranoff, the school, obviously thought so, too, because I remember there being a display right in the front of the school that had a picture of Timy Baranoff and some information about her.”

Cat Llamas, LASA senior and former Baranoff Elementary student, said that she feels that a piece of the South Austin community is missing now that Baranoff has passed.

“I’m sad, I feel like an integral part of the South Austin community is gone,” Llamas said. “Baranoff Elementary is sort of the foundation of Shady Hollow, and to know the founder has passed leaves a hole where she was.”

“[Baranoff] was welcoming, shared her opinions, freely gave advice and was passionate about early childhood [education].”

- Baranoff Elementary interim principal Megan Counihan

# New south magnet proposal attracts attention of AISD Planning Committee and Board of Trustees

QUINN SIMPSON  
Staff Writer

The Austin Independent School District (AISD) Planning Committee tasked with establishing proposals for a potential magnet program in south Austin met for the first time on Jan. 14. The committee was convened by the AISD Board of Trustees late last year as a result of persistent calls throughout the school district and the Austin community at large for increased access to advanced academics at the high school level.

According to committee member and former LASA parent LaDonna Almaguer Massad, this committee is distinct from previous district-level discussions about south Austin advanced academic options in that its specific charge is to create proposals for a magnet program to be opened in the 2017-18 school year.

"It was clear: we want proposals," Massad said. "Think outside the box; we don't have to do things the way we've always done things, but your very specific charge is that we want this committee to give us multiple proposals of what a magnet down south could look like, and that was great."

Massad was also a member of the board's previous committee regarding advanced academics in south Austin, which met throughout the spring and fall of 2015. The committee ultimately returned to the board without an agreement about the best path forward for advanced academics in the city's southern region, which is why the current committee has a focus that is more closely aligned with the board's vision for future magnet programming in the south.

"I feel like there wasn't unanimity among the previous committee members that a second, south magnet was needed," Massad said. "Consequently, I think the proposals we put forward were not ambitious enough and, therefore, not what the board was seeking. I'm encouraged that, this time around, the committee was clearly charged with developing multiple magnet proposals, which not only gives us a clear direction but also the leeway to come up with a variety of ideas to bring forward to the board."

The committee will be working in bimonthly meetings through April to discuss ideas about education, feedback from the community and a wide range of other district data with the goal of creating at least three unique magnet proposals to present to the board for consideration in the final months of the school year. According to committee member and current LASA junior Oscar Newman, drafting proposals encompasses a wide range of considerations.

"The committee has been tasked with developing a range of new magnet proposals for South Austin, although within that overarching directive are many varying goals," Newman said. "On one hand the committee has to consider the application process—how to fairly admit students from all backgrounds and, on an even more basic level, how to determine what even determines 'eligibility' in whatever this new program would be. Yet another consideration that has to be made is what the niche the school should occupy, if it should even have a niche focus. The committee really has been given a fairly open ended set of instructions, and a list of problems that exist currently."

At the most basic level, according to Massad, AISD's existing magnet programs have become increasingly overcrowded as their growth in repute has paralleled Austin's population explosion. She said the new south magnet should alleviate the worst of these pressures.

"I would say that clearly, for a while now, our magnet programs have been oversubscribed and more people want into them than there are seats available the way it's currently configured," Massad said. "Of course, the middle school magnets are Fulmore and Kealing, [and] they're kind of central. With LASA being the only true magnet high school—and that's in far northeast Austin."

Underlying this push for increased access to advanced academics is a passionate debate about what types of students should be filling the seats that are ultimately created. With its population skewed white, Asian, and better-off economically than the average AISD student, LASA and its blind admissions model have been criticized by many involved with the district for its failure to represent the actual ethnic and economic makeup of AISD. Massad said that another key consideration in drafting the magnet proposals is addressing this concern about equity in education for advanced students with diverse backgrounds and drastically varying resources.

"People think LASA is the three Ws—white, wealthy, west Austin, and it's much more complex than that, and I think it's just this education of people understanding what LASA really does look like," Massad said. "Now, could we improve? Of course. Do we want an advanced academic program that mirrors the city? Do we want an advanced academic program that mirrors the AISD population? Those are decisions to be made, but I don't have a problem with having an advanced academic program that has criteria, and that's part of why LASA is so successful."

The committee itself is composed of AISD employees, parents and community stakeholders in addition to Newman, who is the sole student representative. According to Newman, the committee is well-equipped to tackle the challenges it has been presented because its members have similar values and are all working towards the same goal, even as they approach the task at hand with their own unique viewpoints.

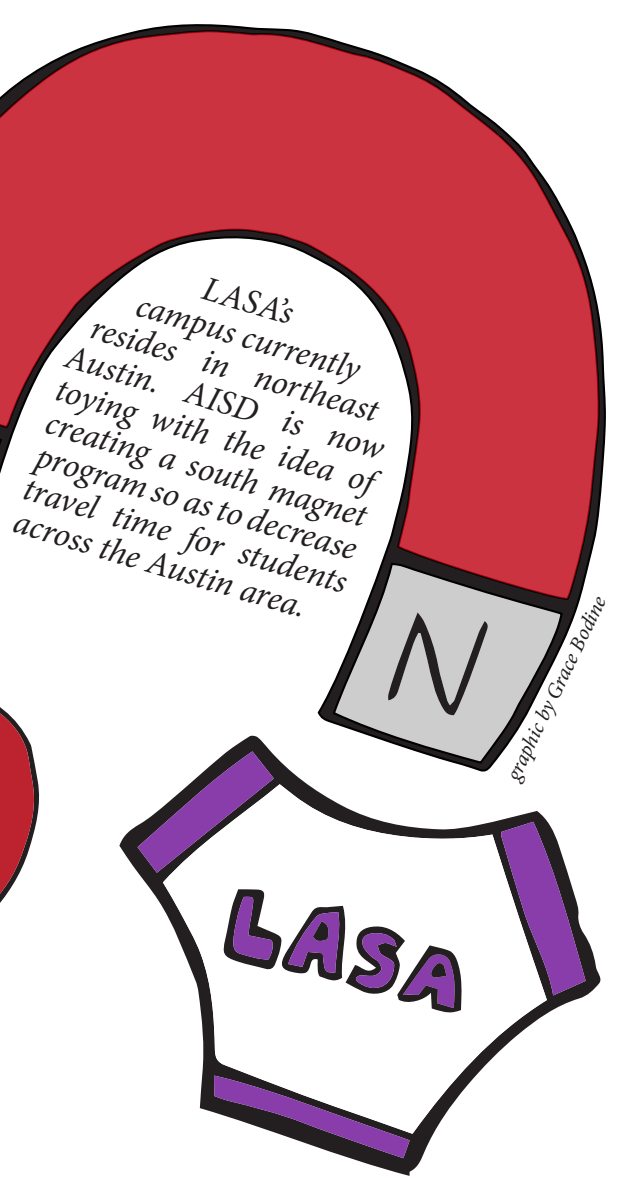
"The committee is overwhelmingly composed of local parents and community members—parents of current and former LASA students hoping to give input from experience, south Austin parents who want closer advanced academics and especially parents with young children wanting to ensure they have the best optionality possible in the future," Newman said.

Even though it's still early on in the process, new ideas about educating advanced students in AISD have already begun to coalesce out of the discussions between committee members. According to Newman, nobody seems particularly interested in simply replicating LASA's methodologies.

"One of the strongest themes from my discussions with other members of the committee so far is that maybe 'LASA South' isn't what the district needs," Newman said. "Maybe an advanced academic school doesn't need to devote every last resource to AP classes and padding students' college applications."

Massad similarly said the options discussed will not be limited to LASA-like academies and may depart significantly from LASA's comprehensive college-prep agenda. At the Jan. 14 meeting, she and other committee members cited Crockett's entrepreneurship program as a valuable example of alternative and unique programming that can be a draw for advanced students.

"While there's some level of criteria, it's mainly based on initiative and creativity and is less schoolwork-driven,"



Massad said. "But, they're doing things in this really interesting way that I'd like to see. On the last committee, I worked on the Crockett proposal because I really think that the entrepreneurship program combined with what they call the Einstein program, which is that grouping with high academics...could be a draw and could attract students and families into Crockett because it's under-enrolled by about 400 students. I really feel like that could be a strong option for south families."

Even as the group discusses a variety of visions for advanced academics to be implemented for the 2017-18 school year, Massad said that in reality there's no space within the district's existing southern facilities to accommodate an entirely new high school program so soon. According to Massad, answering this question is important but should be addressed after a set of strong proposals have been assembled by the committee.

"My feeling at this point is, let's just come up with a great program and if everyone agrees it's great, we'll find a way to make it happen," Massad said. "And the thing that I noticed was that [Chief Schools Officer Edmund Oropez] wasn't talking about implementation for the coming school year but rather for 2018, so realistically there's no way to get a new south high school built in 18 months. We don't have the bond money. I think overwhelmingly I just feel optimistic that this group is going to be given the freedom to come up with lots of ideas and not feel constrained, perhaps unrealistically."

In the end, Massad said, it'll ultimately be up to the board to determine what to do with the group's proposals. Like the other committee members, she has hope that her work today will help chart a path forward for advanced academics in AISD.

"I think it'll be interesting to see what we come up with and what the board wants to do and how they might accept or not accept or tinker with our ideas," Massad said. "But I really feel hopeful."

*My feeling at this point is, let's just come up with a great program and...we'll find a way to make it happen.*

-LASA parent LaDonna Massad



## competition draws LASA students to test their skills

GRACE BODINE  
Staff Writer

While most students were still preparing for school during another late start, 40 LASA students anxiously completed their last minute preparations as they waited outside the theater to begin the competition. The North American Computational Linguistics Olympiad (NACLO) open round was in progress all around North America on Jan. 28. For the first time, LASA Spanish and French teacher Tania Shebaro organized the NACLO event at the LBJ/LASA campus. She said that she finds the exposure to languages and linguistics to be one of the most important aspects of the competition.

"We have a lot of students who I would call natural linguists because they not only like to learn the languages we offer, but also learn about the languages and why things are said the way they are said," Shebaro said. "These kids are curious about language, and they're great problem-solvers, so this is the perfect way to bring the two together."

Since 2006, students under the age of 21 can enter in the pen and paper competition in which they exercise logic skills by analyzing languages to solve creative linguistics puzzles. Participants are not required to have any prior knowledge about linguistics or a secondary language. According to Shebaro, NACLO is not new to LASA, it has just been happening on a smaller scale.

"A few years back I believe there was a LASA student who made it to the international competition," Shebaro said. "I know last year a few students signed up on their own and the test was hosted on campus for those few students."

In 2012, LASA graduate Allan Sadun

traveled to Ljubljana, Slovenia to compete against other students from all across the world in the International Linguistics Olympiad (IOL). According to the IOL website, Sadun received a silver medal as an individual contest medalist with a score of 69 and his team, USA 1, received second place for individual contest team with an average score of 66.75. Though LASA hasn't yet had a success as large as Sadun's, NACLO has grown with the surge of new participants this year.

LASA junior Gina Chen's first experience with NACLO was when she

a flyer for it on LASA Spanish teacher Adriana Lacera's door. Both Chen and Hochstein found the exposure to various languages such as ancient Babylonian to be the most exciting part of the competition.

"The first problem had us writing in Indonesian," Hochstein said. "That was pretty cool, but it was also really hard at some points."

Shebaro also thought one of the best parts of the competition was the diversity of languages the students were able to analyze. As a self-proclaimed linguistics and language nerd, Shebaro can speak Spanish,

because it is versatile and can be applied to multiple patterns and forms of communication. He also said he likes how you can see linguistic patterns across different languages and see how they evolve over time. Chen finds it interesting that she can read segments of another language by viewing similarities between a few untranslated and translated phrases.

"You probably have no idea how to pronounce any of it, or what individual words might mean, but you can get a general idea about what [a phrase] means," Chen said. "I know that's only a small part of linguistics, but it's so much fun and exciting to be able to say that you've correctly translated something into or from like, Swedish or something with no prior knowledge of the language."

Chen and Hochstein said they are both planning on participating next year in the competition. Shebaro said she is eager to see which students, if any, go onto the next round and hopes the amount of students increases.

"Seeing the interest this year, I can only see it growing in the future," Shebaro said. "It also makes me think that maybe one day we should consider adding Linguistics as an elective to add to the diverse LASA curriculum."

The students will receive their scores of the open round around late Feb. to early March. According to Shebaro, students who did well in the open round have an opportunity to participate in the invitational round in March.

"From there, a few of the top-scoring students nationally get invited to join the US team in the international competition, which will be in [Mysore,] India in July," Shebaro said. "But again, the exposure to linguistics is a huge takeaway from participating in NACLO."

*These kids are curious about language, and they're great problem-solvers, so [NACLO] is the perfect way to bring the two together.*

-LASA Spanish and French teacher Tania Shebaro

completed a practice sheet with a friend during computer science for fun. She was prompted by another friend in her math class to sign up for the competition.

"[It] looked interesting, and we've both been pretty interested in linguistics," Chen said. "And then I found out what NACLO was from another friend in math and I was kind of like, 'There's an entire competition for this?' I was so excited about it."

Also interested in linguistics, LASA freshman Evan Hochstein signed up for the open round of NACLO after seeing

English and French fluently, and has also studied Arabic, Italian and Russian. She said she was happy that students are able to experience this competition and hoped they had fun trying to figure out in a language they had never heard of.

"After I read up on the competition and tried a couple of problems, I was excited by it," Shebaro said. "I'm happy to help out with anything that promotes languages [and] linguistics."

Hochstein said he enjoys linguistics

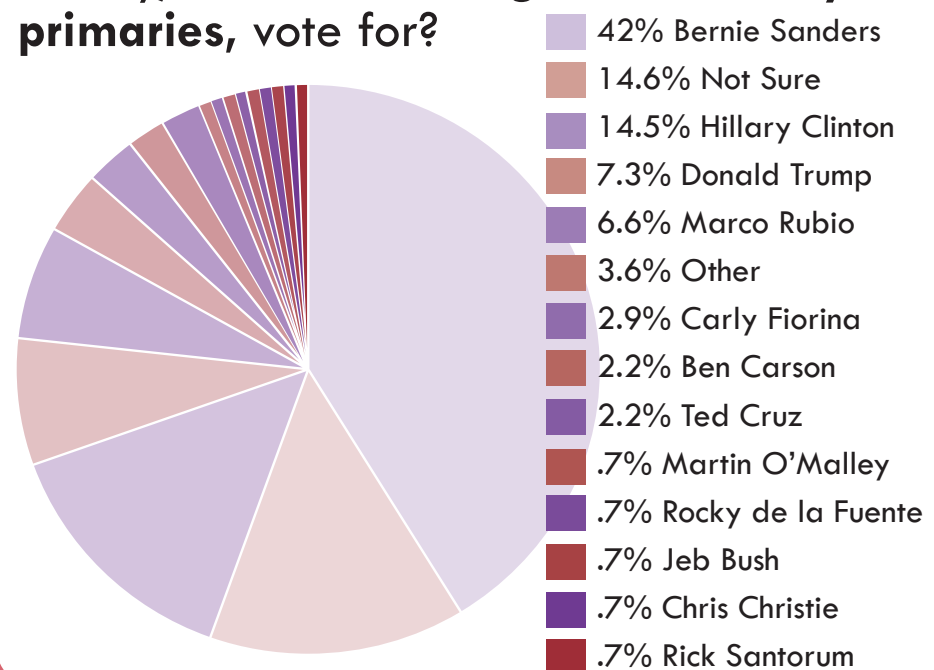
# STUDENTS AND CANDIDATES KEEP UP WITH POLITICS

## THE PRIMARIES: PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES

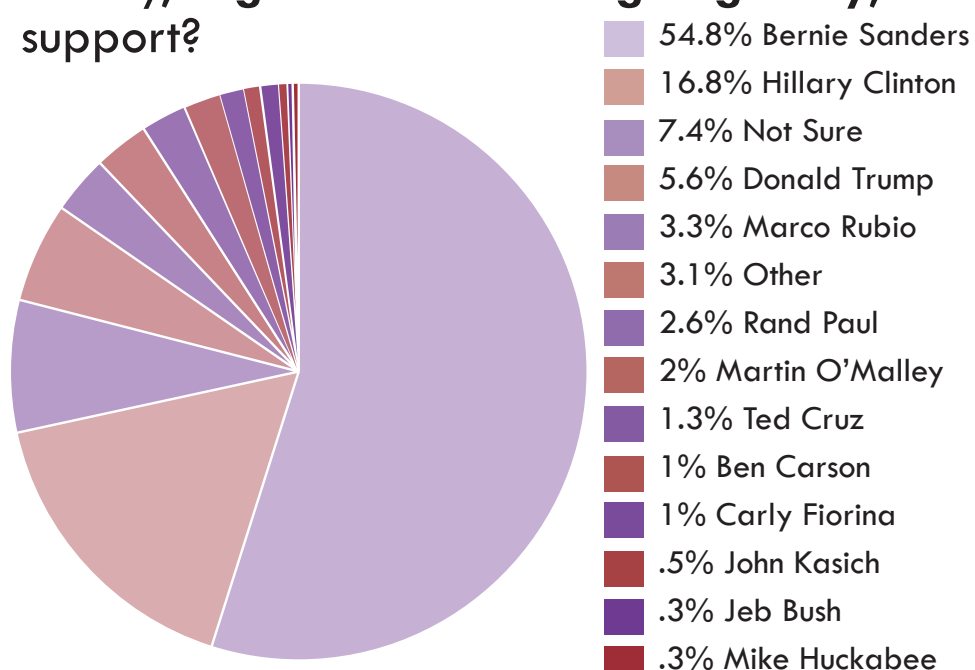
On March 1st, Texans will vote in the primary presidential election. Swing states Iowa and New Hampshire kicked off the 2016 election season with party caucuses and primaries, respectively. Here are the results:

	SANDERS	CLINTON	TRUMP	CRUZ	RUBIO	KASICH
<b>IOWA</b> FEBRUARY 1	#2 49.6% - 21 DELEGATES	#1 49.9% - 23 DELEGATES	#2 24.3% - 7 DELEGATES	#1 27.6% - 8 DELEGATES	#3 24.3% - 7 DELEGATES	#8 1.9% - 1 DELEGATE
<b>NEW HAMPSHIRE</b> FEBRUARY 9	#1 60.4% - 15 DELEGATES	#2 38.0% - 9 DELEGATES	#1 35.3% - 10 DELEGATES	#3 11.7% - 3 DELEGATES	#6 24.3% - 7 DELEGATES	#2 15.8% - 4 DELEGATES

Which candidate will LASA students and faculty, who will be eligible to vote by the primaries, vote for?



Which candidate do LASA students and faculty, regardless of voting eligibility, support?



## PARTY AFFILIATIONS IN U.S., AT LASA

The United States operates on a two-party system. Since the mainstream third party, the Whig Party, self-destructed in the mid 1850s, every single president has either been a Democrat or Republican. As such, no candidate has ever won when running as an Independent.

When forced to choose between Democrat, Republican, other, or undecided, 78.3 percent of LASA students and faculty chose Democrat or Republican (see figure 1). Responses were much more diverse when those surveyed were provided with more political philosophies to choose from (see figure 2).

Accordingly, Americans' political philosophies are spread on a spectrum, and it's impossible for all political ideologies to be adequately represented in the simplified systemic political dichotomy.

In the 2016 presidential election, many candidates represent extremes of binary Democrat-Republican politics. In our poll of LASA students and faculty, we received three write-in votes for moderate potential candidate Michael Bloomberg, who affiliates with the Independent Party. Among LASA Bloomberg supporters is **Meris McHaney**.

### A plea for an independent candidate

MERIS MCHANEY  
Entertainment Editor

I'm sure most of you are aware of the Hillary-ousness that is this year's presidential campaign. With Bernie Sanders' impractical socialist beliefs that take everyone's money and launch universal, government-provided health care and Hillary's, well, actually I think I'm just going to hold back my comments. And while Donald Trump does make some valid points such as that the government must cut more spending and reduce tax rates, he has gone about other things rather incorrectly.

And since all these political parties are more sensitive than a teenage girl with acne and frizzy hair, it's unlikely one will ever run in the Democratic Party. Thus, we, the practical people of the world, are left out in the open, without any party affiliation. For this year of 2016 if you find yourself wandering in between unrealistic Democrats and jacked up (let's hope just on Mountain Dew) Republicans, allow me to propose another possible option.

Ladies and gentlemen, the man that could save us all: Michael Bloomberg. A man that believes in a woman's choice, same-sex marriage, legal and safe gun use and a limited government. I know what you're thinking: there's no way this is true, she must be lying. Fear not, I do not kid, this multibillionaire New Yorker could have the brains to sink our current primary candidates, although I bet they'll do that all by themselves if we give them long enough.

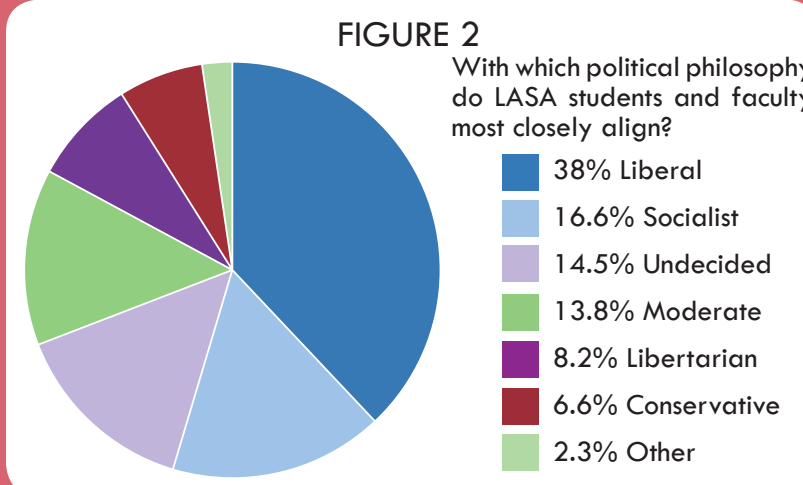
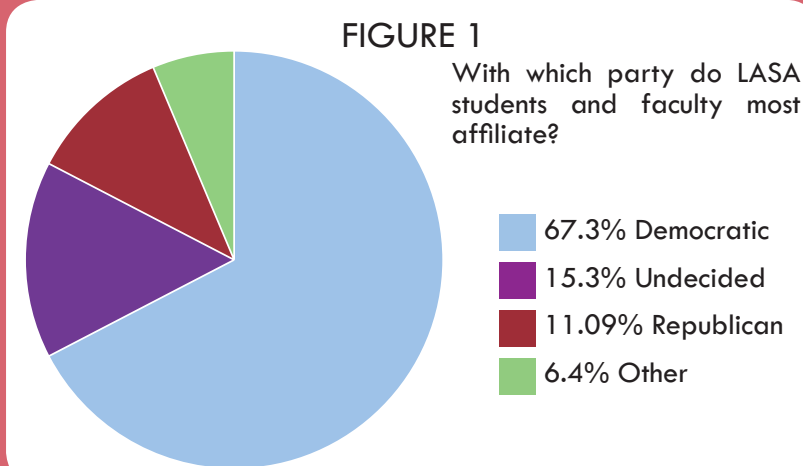
Bloomberg was a Democrat up until 2001 when he switched to the Republican Party to run for the mayor of New York City. While mayor, Bloomberg raised teacher salaries by 15 percent, making test scores and graduation rates rise greatly. The fiscal conservative turned New York City's \$6 billion deficit into a \$3 billion surplus. Right now I have a great opportunity to neglect some information that would make the previous statement sound worse than it does, but since I'm not FOX News or CNN, so I'll tell you: while turning the large deficit in NYC Bloomberg was criticized for increasing property taxes and spending. While I strongly disagree with raising taxes, especially on people who work hard for their money, raising

property taxes a bit is definitely better than the outrageous percentages Bernie has suggested. But if you're down to give the government all of your money you earned and worked so hard for, by all means be my guest; the world's full of nitwits.

Continuing onward with my list of Bloomberg's achievements while in office, he banned smoking inside all NYC restaurants and bars to protect people from secondhand smoke. In a speech to the UK Conservative Party in 2007, Bloomberg stated that "being a fiscal conservative is not about slashing programs that help the poor, or improve health care or ensure a social safety net. It's about insisting services are provided efficiently, get to only the people that need them and achieve the desired results. Fiscal conservatives have hearts too - but we also insist on using our brains, and that means demanding results and holding government accountable for producing them." Hallelujah! Ahhhmen! Praise the Lord! Get this man a freaking scotch or a trophy! Hell, this is the guy that deserves the freaking Nobel Peace Prize, not Mr. I-don't-follow-through-with-my-promises.

I identify with the party of practicality. Michael Bloomberg is a Republican with a heart, but also a brain. Standing strong on making sure people who truly need social services are the only ones that receive them will be one of the best things for this country. In 2011, the Census Bureau reported 49.2 percent of Americans receive some sort of benefit from the government. While I know it's important to help those who cannot truly provide for themselves, it is also important for those who have two working legs to use them. I believe that social issues should not be decided by the government. I stand firm with a limited government that keeps a very small part in economic activity, and I believe in individualism because I am an American.

I feel I've presented enough evidence of this man's character and ability to get things done. While every candidate has their faults, I believe Michael Bloomberg, were he to run after the primaries as an Independent, would be an admirable and superb candidate and president of the United States.



## TURNOUT FOR WHAT? LASA STUDENTS AND FACULTY GET INVOLVED IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS



Three times a week two summers ago, LASA junior Ezra Serrins took a bus to the headquarters of Battleground Texas, an organization dedicated to registering Texan voters and engaging registered voters in the democratic process. Serrins spent much of his summer in 2014 phone banking and organizing volunteers for Battleground Texas in an effort to reach out to areas in Austin with low voter registration.

"[It] was all part of this idea that there are lots of people that aren't voting now in Texas and that a lot of those people would vote Democratic," Serrins said. "It is a partisan effort of getting more people to vote, but also with the end point of helping Democrats win elections."

Serrins hasn't worked with Battleground Texas recently, but he is considering getting involved in the 2016 presidential race. A supporter of Bernie Sanders, Serrins is interested in doing what he can to help the campaign.

"[It] probably [be] calling people again, because there's lots of undecided voters in the Democratic Party right now, wondering who they're going to support in the primary, and Texas is a big Super Tuesday state," Serrins said. "So it will probably be largely a question of canvassing or calling people on the phone

to turn out the voters that Bernie Sanders needs to win in the primary."

According to Serrins, everything from attending local city council meetings to voting in the general election gives individuals and groups a stronger voice and a greater influence in the democratic process. He noted that the United States has low voter turnout among minority groups, which has the effect of alienating their interests from political discourse.

"If people aren't mobilized to vote then obviously they don't show up and vote, and that's a fundamental part of how society functions," Serrins said. "For example, laws can't be made to benefit people that don't ever participate in how those laws are formulated."

When Serrins volunteered for Battleground Texas in 2014, it was because he wanted to see Wendy Davis get elected as the governor. Although Davis was defeated by her opponent, now Governor Greg Abbott, Serrins said he found value not necessarily in the final result of the election, but in the opportunity to contribute to a greater cause.

"Regardless of how it goes up to the election, it's [about] being a part of something larger," Serrins said. "Especially when you think of everything as long-term to some extent, that every single person that you reach out to and you contact is someone that maybe will go on to be more involved in democratic process, even if you don't win this election."



In March 2015, LASA junior Jake Atlas began interning with Austin's District 3 city council member Sabino "Pio" Renteria. Though he's attended political rallies and donated money to campaigns for this year's presidential election, he spends most of his time working at the municipal level of politics. As a high schooler, Atlas said city government is the best place to start.

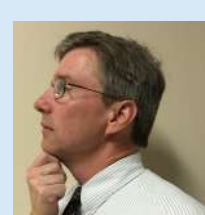
"It's obviously not just policy; it's intern [type] stuff, talking with constituents, there's some research involved and that's all fun," Atlas said. "[Part of the job is] also just watching what's going on in the different committees, writing up what's going on."

As a city council intern, Atlas is involved with municipal issues such as the recent debate over more stringent background checks for drivers of Transportation Network Company (TNC) ride-sharing services like Uber and Lyft (see more about this issue in "New fingerprinting regulations may lead Uber and Lyft drivers to leave Austin" on pg. 5).

"[There are] TNC regulations that are coming out with Uber and Lyft," Atlas said. "...People are saying they're going to ban Uber and Lyft. But that's obviously not the intention."

As the discussion of new legislation continues within Austin City Council, Atlas aids city council member Renteria in the office assistance he needs. Though Atlas started the job as an unpaid internship when he was 15, the job has now advanced to a paid internship. Though he's interested in higher level government, Atlas said he enjoys the different type of work that municipal government involves.

"Congressmen don't really want high schoolers, so municipal government is the next thing down," Atlas said. "But it is very interesting because it's a completely different type of thing that you're dealing with when you're dealing with municipal stuff, [like] zoning and planning."



Only 538 people in the United States have the unique opportunity to be a part of the Electoral College each presidential election year. In 2008, LASA government teacher Ronny Risinger was one of them. Ten years earlier, Risinger had become chairman of the Republican Williamson County precinct after attending his first precinct convention. He went on to become an election judge before being selected as a member of the Electoral College. In the eight years since, he has proudly told each

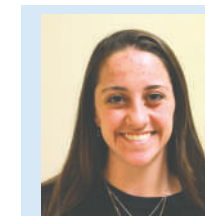
one of his AP Government classes about this accomplishment. "I have continued on since 2008 to be very active in the party and going to state conventions, such that at this summer state convention, in Dallas, I will seek to be a delegate for the Republican Party from the national convention," Risinger said. "There are only 155 delegates from Texas, and I aim to be one."

Risinger has become actively involved in the democratic process on a national scale and facilitates the same political interest in LASA students, sponsoring clubs like Youth and Government, Gun Club and Young Republicans of LASA that encourage students to explore the legislative process and their own political ideologies. He said he believes that gaining practical experience is the best way to legitimately understand an issue.

"I think that you should not talk about things that you don't generally know about," Risinger said. "So the best way to know about it is to do it." Risinger attributes Barack Obama's victory in 2008 and the recent success of the Bernie Sanders campaign to a more engaged and interconnected American youth. He argues that while LASA students are unusually active, voter turnout and political involvement in young people has increased on a national scale as well.

"The more educated you are, the more engaged you are, so I think the LASA population is very atypical of young people; you're disproportionately engaged," Risinger said. "It used to be that young people were not engaged in politics, and you're still not engaged to the levels of middle-aged people who have a lot of money and stuff at stake. But once social media took over and young people had a phone in [their] pocket, your level of engagement has really skyrocketed."

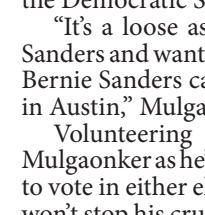
LASA's student body is highly politically invested and overwhelming liberal: a survey conducted by The Liberator found that 67 percent of LASA students and staff polled consider themselves most affiliated with the Democratic Party. This environment can be unwelcoming toward differing opinions, according to the 72 percent of students and faculty surveyed who reportedly believe the LASA community is hostile toward conservative views. Risinger said he is a strong advocate of earning respect for one's opinions, whatever they may be, by backing them up with facts instead of blindly forcing them on others. "I have for the last few years tried to start my class with a discussion about [how] you can have total disagreement about ideology, liberal and conservative values, but you do not have to be hateful about it," Risinger said. "I just don't think that [makes] us a productive society, to express ourselves that way. So yes I feel a lot of hostility, but I try to educate people about [how] there is a different side."



On June 25, 2013 LASA junior Mathilda Nicot-Carsonis stood, sat and cheered in the Texas State Capitol with thousands of others outside of the Senate chamber where Wendy Davis was filibustering a bill that would restrict abortion access in Texas. Since then, Nicot-Carsonis has attended Bernie Sanders rallies and volunteered for the Sanders campaign at phone banks, but she said supporting Davis' filibuster was her first plunge into politics.

"I went to this [filibuster] and realized that they're trying to take away human rights," Nicot-Carsonis said. "The UN just declared abortion is a human right... [They're] trying to take a human right away from us. So that really pissed me off, and I was like, 'I need to get involved.'"

Nicot-Carsonis said she listened to politics on the radio when she was younger, but none of it made sense to her until she began learning more about politics. She said Wendy Davis' filibuster, delivered the summer before her freshman year at LASA, opened her eyes to the issues plaguing America and motivated her to become more actively involved in supporting the campaigns of politicians who represented her concerns. When Wendy Davis ran for governor in the election of 2014, Nicot-Carsonis went door to door encouraging people to vote for her. Now, through



In August 2015, LASA junior Akhil Mulgaonker was invited by LASA alumni - who are now UT students - to a local Bernie Sanders organization meeting. The goal at the time was to garner enough signatures to get Sanders on the ballot. As part of the group, Mulgaonker headed media campaigns for Austin, and more locally, LASA. Mulgaonker also founded the Democratic Socialists of LASA club.

"It's a loose association of people who care about Bernie Sanders and want to volunteer in different ways, not just for the Bernie Sanders campaign, but for other activist organizations in Austin," Mulgaonker said. Volunteering for the campaign is especially crucial for Mulgaonker as he's currently 16 years old and will not be eligible to vote in either election, primary or general. Nonetheless, age won't stop his crusade. According to Mulgaonker, Sanders will bring a much needed change to America. "We're really on a sprint towards destruction," Mulgaonker said. "We're not going to stop until there is actually revolutionary change in our system of government because there is such a deviousness, such a close-mindedness in politics, including Democrats and everyone involved, that nothing will ever get done."

In fact, when Mulgaonker fortuitously met Sanders at the John F. Kennedy International Airport on his way back from a family trip to India, he did not hesitate to tell the politician precisely why he believes he should be president. "I was just walking down the hall, and I glanced sideways and saw some old dude," Mulgaonker said. "I said, 'Wait, is

campaign phone banks, she is volunteering for Bernie Sanders' presidential campaign. She says Sanders is inspiring a much needed political revolution in America.

"He speaks to me on a bunch of different levels. He speaks to me primarily on the gap between the rich and the poor, the fact that the top tenth of the top one percent of America owns more money than the bottom 90% of America. That to me is so scary," Nicot-Carsonis said. "The fact that we have a 33.9 percent child poverty rate in America, the highest in any developed country in the world, and we call ourselves one of the greatest nations in the world—that's ridiculous to me."

According to Nicot-Carsonis, the existing political processes in America are incredibly distorted. Among these processes Nicot-Carsonis names gerrymandering, when the government manipulates the boundaries of their constituents to favor one party, and the absurdly huge monetary requirement that comes with campaigning for office.

"There's all this gerrymandering going on so that only Republicans win in Texas," Nicot-Carsonis said. "Hillary [is] being funded by huge corporations that give billions of dollars. That's also what I love about Bernie. The donations to his campaign averaged \$27.16, which to me says it's people just like me giving all that they can to someone they believe can make a change."

That Bernie Sanders? And I walked back and said, 'That's Bernie Sanders.' And we were just standing there staring at him for a few minutes... We were talking about whether or not we should go say hi to him. I said 'Screw this, I'm going to go in and talk to Bernie Sanders,' because you only get a certain amount of chances like this. So I talked to him. They were in some fancy restaurant, which is kind of ironic considering his one percent thing."

With his wife and a few of his campaign aids, Sanders sat in the otherwise mostly vacant restaurant. Mulgaonker said he approached him and promptly told him about the vital change he represents for America.

"I walked to his table and said 'Sorry to disturb you, but I'm going to have to do this. Because you're Bernie Sanders,'" Mulgaonker said. "I don't know what's wrong with Bernie Sanders. He reminds me of [LASA science teacher] Mr. Journey, because Mr. Journey doesn't show any emotion or expression. So you don't know if he's pissed or he's happy. He was just sitting there with a blank face when I was talking."

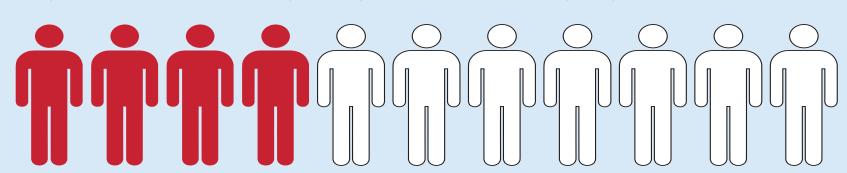
An exchange with such an iconic figure was nerve wracking, Mulgaonker said, as he has dedicated so much time and energy to supporting the politician. Politics is going nowhere fast according to Mulgaonker, and without the revolution that Sanders brings, it will continue to do so.

"At the end of the day, it's less about the amount of laws that he passes and more about the type of political culture change he brings to the United States, because right now, we're really on a sprint towards destruction," Mulgaonker said. "The message that he brings by being elected would do a lot to change the political landscape."

87.8% OF ELIGIBLE LASA STUDENTS PLAN TO VOTE IN THE 2016 GENERAL ELECTION



38% OF 18-24 YEAR OLDS ACROSS AMERICA VOTED IN THE 2012 GENERAL ELECTION



# A (Wand)erful Show

ISABEL SARALEGUI  
Staff Writer

Melissa Alexander-Driscoll (known to her students and around campus as Ms. A) stands at the helm of a section of seats in the Don T. Haynes theater, a battered notebook cradled in her hands. She runs through the show note by note, her cast, the Alley Cat Players (ACP), laughing, smiling and taking her advice. They were getting ready for the premiere of their musical, A Very Potter Musical (AVPM). This show will be the second time ACP has performed AVPM, in honor of their tenth year as a troupe.

However, for some of the cast and crew of AVPM, the production didn't start in the fall semester, but back in June 2015. LASA senior Isaac Metcalf said he sat at his piano, looking over the piano music that Ms. A gave him to orchestrate sheet music for other instruments to be played by orchestra members who would perch in giant book shelves, and play in January in teal T-shirts with their AVPM band name, Lockhart and The Pixies written on the front.

"I really hope that my music helped the funny moments, the happy moments and the emotional moments in this play reach the audience more powerfully than they would have otherwise," Metcalf said. "The musicians performed it amazingly and added in lots of little tweaks of their own to make it sound better, and by opening night it was sounding better than I had ever imagined."

Metcalf wasn't the only student with a hand in modifying AVPM, originally a YouTube series based upon the Harry Potter story. LASA junior Isabelle Dickey and several other students took part in rewriting the script, making their own jokes, organizing improv and choreographing dance numbers. Dickey, along with her role as a Dementor and Death Eater member in the Three Broomsticks Cast and Draco Malfoy in the Leaky Cauldron Cast, was also lead choreographer for the entire production, playing a large part in bringing Hogwarts, Dumbledore's Army and the rest of the magical universe, to life. The fact that the production is double cast added another unique challenge for ACP, Dickey said.

"The characters are so based in the actors, and both casts are so different that it is basically two different shows," Dickey said. "Same script, same music, but quite

different characters, voices and even jokes. I spent a very long time trying to connect with Malfoy while at the same time finding the parts I could poke a bit of fun at. I am proud of the choreography I did, though."

Dickey said the musical was a challenge and great chance to step away from her comfort zone. As one of the leads in the Leaky Cauldron Cast, Dickey played a highly comedic role that was open for many of her own interpretations and addition impromptu lines.

*"This show was a really great chance to step out of my comfort zone and tackle something new."*

-LASA junior Isabelle Dickey

"We really get to add a bit of ourselves into the characters and we have quite a bit of freedom when it comes to ad libs," Dickey said. "We've tried very hard to make the parody work while staying true to the core of the story that is Harry Potter. It's such a beloved story and we were very careful to make it clear that we're not making fun of it, but instead doing this show from our love of it."

Using dance moves based on spell casting movements and fan-based dance moves, Dickey said that she was able to piece together how Hogwarts students dance.

Dickey said that her dancing

even see me on someone's back waving a "flag" [which was actually] my robe."

According to Dickey, these dance moves created an understanding in the crowd so that people obsessed with the Harry Potter universe could see the nods Dickey said she subtly worked in, but they weren't alienating to audience members less familiar with the Harry Potter universe. Dickey shared the same experience as many AVPM cast members when she said that this production was completely different and unique when compared to anything else she had done.

"This show was a really great chance to step out of my comfort zone and tackle something new," Dickey said. "I have done very few comedies in my life, and don't generally consider myself a huge fan of performing improv, and my role in this show was highly comedic and left a lot of room for my own interpretations and ad libs. Ultimately, I feel like I've been able to get there, and it's been an exhilarating experience. It's been so much fun to use that creative freedom to add subtle things such as changing the way your scarf is tied every scene, or using a really bad British accent that often slips into Irish, among others."

The theater techs were disguised as the 'magic of Hogwarts,' running around backstage in morphsuits, moving set pieces and playing chess on stage with cast members. Some of the techs controlled lowering and raising set pieces, like LASA senior and theater tech member Rita Kalar. She said she had a lot of fun contributing to the production.

"My favorite thing about the show is all of the references and subtle details we have added into the play," Kalar said. "It is a really fun show full of magic and shenanigans and just getting to be a part of creating things that you grew up reading and fantasizing about is really cool."

Like Kalar, many in the AVPM cast and crew said that it was exciting to be able to bring to life the Harry Potter story they'd read and

watched throughout their childhoods. Metcalf said that Ms. A gave ACP a lot of freedom with the performance and that made it a more enjoyable experience.

"[Since] this was the second performance of an already fun musical, we decided to just go crazy, and have as much fun as we wanted," Metcalf said. "Enjoy the hell out of it" was Mrs. MAD's slogan for this musical. Sometimes enjoying it meant a lot of hard work, but nobody regretted anything in the end."

graphic by Claire Cannatti

## Mr. Jag: getting prepped for the performance

Annual student organized event between LBJ/LASA in preparation by the schools' student councils in hope to bring unity and companionship

MARLEN AVILA  
Staff Writer

Students are rushing backstage with props and dancing shoes. It's five minutes until showtime and everyone is buzzing like bees as the curtain is about to reveal the first contestants of this year's Mr. Jag. The year's long-awaited event at both LASA and LBJ is in preparation, all thanks to the combined teamwork of student council. From choosing the decorations in the theater to overseeing group dance numbers, student council members such as LASA freshmen and class representative Sarah Chieng, has been with Mr. Jag every step of the way.

"Mr. Jag is one of the few opportunities where the LASA school and the LBJ school both get to do an event together, on top of the dances like homecoming and prom," Chieng said. "Mr. Jag is pretty much just a male pageant and it's supposed to be a really fun social activity that lets the two different schools interact."

According to Chieng, the rare opportunity that Mr. Jag presents allows the schools' student councils to meet and discuss preparations for Mr. Jag, whereas in most student council events it is mostly centered around LASA or LBJ. Essentially, Mr. Jag is a male pageant where the contestants have to do the traditional swimsuit walk, perform an individual talent, participate in a group performance and answer questions from a panel similar to the Miss America pageant, according to LASA senior student council vice president Elizabeth Frey. In the past, individual talent acts have included original song performances, live fruit ninja on stage and stand-up comedy while group performances required the contestants to learn a choreographed number made by an LBJ First Lady. Whether alone on stage or performing with their fellow classmates, the pageant lets the contestants showcase their very best efforts and teamwork abilities. Frey said that the best talents in the past were ones that were well practiced, witty and exceptionally funny.

"The boys who put the most amount of thought and practice into their talents always do their best in this portion," Frey said. "I like the ones that are funny more than the serious talent portions but it is always fantastic when someone comes out and sings a song really beautifully when you had no clue they even knew how to hit a note."

While Mr. Jag includes the talent performances, choreographed group number and cat walk from contestants, Mr. Jag's main goal as a pageant is to raise spirits within the student body and be an overall fun social activity at LBJ

and LASA. According to Chieng, unlike most traditional pageants, Mr. Jag is not about beauty.

"The whole point of this event is to have an entertaining and fun night for the student body," LASA sophomore class president Joanna Ma said. "Seeing as how we have a group of really good contestants this year I'm expecting some great talents. If anything, I hope to see creative and unique talents or just something that will make someone laugh."

For equal representation between the school's, student council worked to find candidates from each who wanted to participate, including LBJ freshmen Rodrige Mumbili. Mumbili said he felt like he had to work hard for his position as a contestant.

"I think it's going to be great to just learn new things about myself and put it out there to other people," Mumbili said.

Judges for the event will not only be deciding based on individual talents but also on group performances and responses to personal interview questions. The judges, LBJ teachers Kerrie Carter and Nicholas Dellas and LASA teachers Yasmin Florey and William Kiker were hand-chosen by student council from the LASA and LBJ faculty, and will decide at the end of the night who should be crowned for various awards such as Mr. Jag, Mr. Meerkat, Mr. Cub and Mr. Congeniality.

"I'm looking forward to see[ing] how the outcome will be, who gets nominated because it shows you what people think about you as a whole whether it be you're a funny person or you're headed in the right direction," Carter said. "I'm excited to see acts from both schools and also to see a connection and a bond being built between LBJ and LASA."

According to Ma, student council has worked to oversee and lead afterschool rehearsals and do everything they can to make sure the event goes smoothly. Student council members such as Ma and Frey said they are hopeful about this year's turnout when the event takes place later in the year for free admission.

"I am excited for this year's Mr. Jaguar because we made a really big effort to incorporate both LBJ and LASA contestants," said Frey. "It will be fun to see people from both schools on stage together, in the group dance [especially]. It will be especially exciting because I don't know all of these boys as well as I have in the past so it will be hilarious to see this side of them."



graphic by Claire Cannatti

# MEDIA REVIEWS

## Revisiting old & new muses for music, Panic! creates an exciting fresh record

*A review of Panic! at the Disco's latest album*

CLARA MORRIS  
Staff Writer

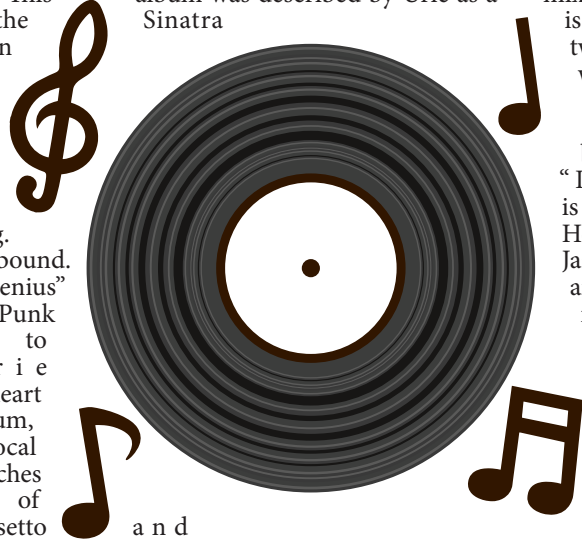
It may be more accurate to describe "Death of a Bachelor" as a solo work by the only remaining member of Panic! at the Disco, Brendon Urie, than as a collaborative effort. Urie is the sole member of the band, having survived the departure of primary songwriter Ryan Ross and bassist Jon Walker in 2009 and that of Spencer Smith in 2015. This album is the sixth studio one from Panic! and although parts of the album try to do too much, and the connections between some songs are choppy, it is overall a great record.

As the first solo Urie album, it's especially appropriate that one of the main themes is transition-- namely the transition from the Bachelor's crazy party life to a settled down one. This album was described by Urie as a mix of Sinatra and Queen, and the present on title track, style lyrics are a lively final track, "Year", which piano song, influences abound. "Crazy = Genius" some Daft Punk "Victorious", to Urie poured his heart this album, in his vocal He stretches lower part of uses his falsetto and swings his way through numbers like "Golden Days." This is supplemented by a ton of production work; Panic! at the Disco has never claimed to be a minimalist band, and this album certainly continues that trend with an overload of instrumentals, synth, vocal effects and more.

Even though individual songs can be slightly over-stuffed, most of the individual songs on this album are amazing. "Death of a Bachelor", "LA Devotee" and "Emperor's New Clothes" are all very different singles which combine instrumentals and vocal styles in fresh, new ways-- and they're all, individually, great songs. However, these unique songs are all shoved together onto one album, which makes the overall sound of the album somewhat choppy, and makes listening to the whole thing a bit of an endeavor.

Overall it's a great album, largely due to Urie's vocals and the stunning singles. I would definitely recommend listening to the singles, especially "Death of a Bachelor" and "LA Devotee", and if you have a spare hour and don't mind some overwhelming combinations, the album is an experience I would recommend for fans of the power pop and pop rock genres. However, if you're looking to get into Panic! at the Disco, or for a subtle record, this album may not be the best place to start.

graphic Claire Cannatti



## A fierce (slightly over-drawn out) tale about survival, revenge and DiCaprio

*Student reflects on Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu and Dicaprio's latest performance in award winning movie*

MAX RANDALL  
Staff Writer

Knowing prior that The Revenant was nominated for 12 Academy Awards, I expected a lot going into the movie theater. I was still blown away. The Revenant makes 127 Hours look like a kid lost in a supermarket. At its heart Inarritu's tale of survival and revenge is just that, but once I got past the sheer amount of blood and the merciless nature of the film's inhabitants, I found the film to be one of the most beautiful creations I had ever laid eyes upon.

Survival. Revenge. These simple, but powerful words are all that are needed to describe The Revenant's simple, yet beautiful plot. Director Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu somehow manages to make a potentially boring topic into an intense and brutally realistic depiction of the American frontier in the early 19th century. Complete with an array of bloody special effects and grimy, unwashed frontiersmen, the Revenant supplies scene after scene of "can it get any worse?" affirmatives. This is mainly fueled by Leonardo Dicaprio's hardcore performance as Hugh Glass. From surviving a ruthless encounter with a bear, to eating a raw bison liver (yes literally), to sleeping inside a gutted horse Luke Skywalker style, Leo has shown that he really wants that Oscar. However it's not just the shock factor of the performance, but the tenderness of Dicaprio's depiction that truly elevates the film. Having probably less than 50 spoken lines, it's Hugh Glass' will for survival through both intentional and unintentional silence that proves just how high the Oscar nominee's caliber rests. This is also paired with Tom Hardy's despicable John Fitzgerald, which makes Hitler look like a pissed off teenager.

By far however, it's the scope and the beauty of the film that makes it deserve its credibility. Despite a longer than necessary run time that consists of predominantly Leo wheezing, The Revenant's use of natural lighting for every scene and groundbreaking cinematography illustrates the beauty of nature in its primal state. Intertwined with a showcase of the rivalry between the brutality of human nature and the nondiscriminatory harshness of the natural world, The Revenant pulls off both a showcase reminiscent of a National Geographic documentary with tasteful Tarantino-esque violence that's both cringeworthy and enticing.

graphic Chelsea Banawis



## TOP 5 Ways to find a Significant Other

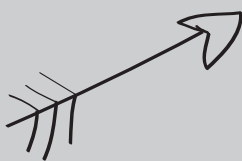
By Meris McHaney

### TINDER

For any of you who need help finding your way around this dating app please feel free to contact Chelsea Banawis at (777)-777-7777. If you can't reach her, I would go check the local coffee shops on campus; she's a fox this one.

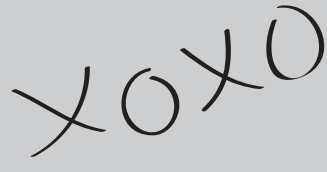
### XBOX LIVE

Considering my target audience, I feel I don't have to say much on this one.



### GENIUS BAR

You know what they say about bars, it's where you find your love... for the night. ;) Why not pick yourself up a khaki wearing, Sambas lover, Apple store employee and enjoy a life full of no technological problems.



### AT A COLLEGE INVESTMENT BANKING CLASS

I don't know about y'all, but rolling up to my Beverly Hills mansion in my matte white Mercedes G-Wagon sounds pretty good to me.

### CHIPOTLE

We all find out at some point or another that actually having a significant other means compromise, sharing, and caring, and who the heck wants that! Go buy yourself a true S.O. and devour it in a corner table with a bottle of Cholula.

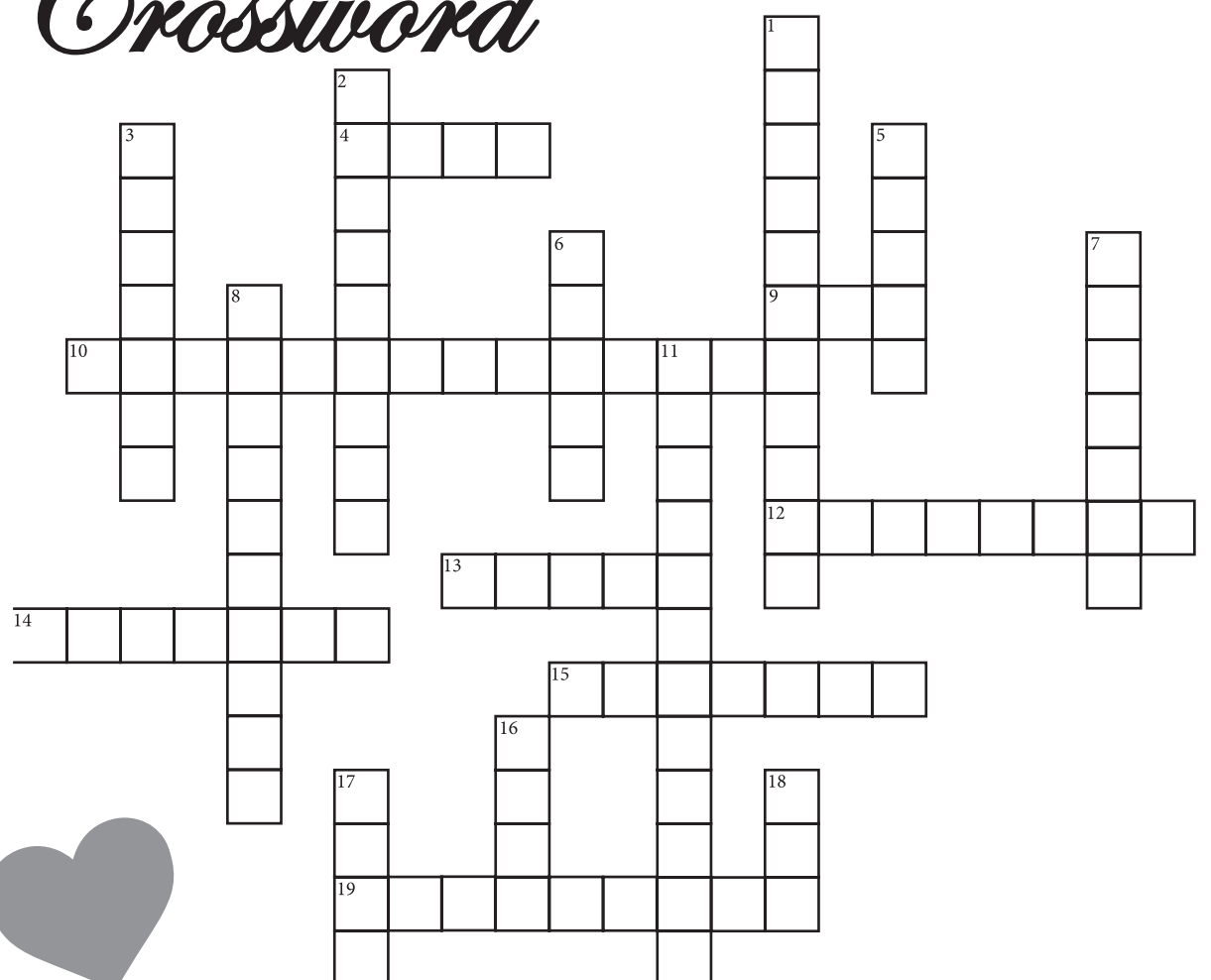
## Special Edition: Valentine's Day Crossword

Across:

- 4. You may \_\_\_\_\_ your teachers, but I hope you don't \_\_\_\_\_ you boo!
- 9. Loving him was \_\_\_\_\_
- 10. Watching all of his movies would require tissues and a Notebook to keep track of your tears
- 12. Snow and love used to be used to describe this month... Thanks, climate change,
- 13. "I love you with all my \_\_\_\_\_"
- 14. Your date if you find yourself single this year.
- 15. Hopefully your love will last longer than these live! Don't forget the plant food.
- 19. When you were younger you got one from everyone in your class, but now you're lucky if you get one... :(

Down:

- 1. If you breakup before Valentine's Day you'll be listening to her.
- 2. A heart shaped box of \_\_\_\_\_ would make any girl's day!
- 3. If your \_\_\_\_\_ is on V-day, you're probably prone to cliches.
- 5. We all know this is the best part about this holiday...
- 6. This baby sprouted wings!
- 7. When you were young it was plastic, now it's silver, and soon it'll be diamond-- and expensive as heck!
- 8. Clueless, Mean Girls, and Legally Blonde, if you're watching this kind of movie for your girl, you're whipped.
- 11. We all hope for a \_\_\_\_\_ like Brangelina's!
- 16. A fruit, a place on the calendar, and a special night with your boo.
- 17. Some say it's a myth, but some say it's Actually.
- 18. Is this term still hip with the kidz?



Written by Emma Jane Hopper and Leni Millikin  
Graphic by Hannah Marks

# LASA club mentors minority students

EVA STRELITZ-BLOCK  
Staff Writer

When LASA junior Vanlexus Franks was a student at Gus Garcia Middle School, before it became an all-boys middle school, she scoured the internet late into the night in search of a high school that would be right for her. As a minority student, it felt especially challenging to figure out which school would feel comfortable. Her high school future was a great unknown. The thought of taking this next important step was both exciting and scary.

"Few at my middle school really informed me of all my options," Franks said. "I had to go and figure it out myself which was a much more difficult and lonely process. I want the [Bertha Sadler Means] students to be confident in their choices about their future and know they didn't just follow the crowd but did what was best for them."

Now, every week a group of LASA juniors go to Bertha Sadler Means Middle School, a school with a majority population of minority students, as a part of the Supporting Minority Students Club (SMS). They introduce students to LASA and lead afterschool Boys and Girls Club classes around subjects ranging from organization and study tips to science and cooking.

"We have two different classes on Tuesdays," LASA junior Abby Bourgeois said. "We design the lesson plans and we go and we teach educational stuff on things like how to organize your binders, basic essay writing skills. And then I go on Wednesdays and teach general life skills... having fun with them and enjoying the learning."

Bourgeois and other SMS members recently taught the Bertha Sadler Means students a lesson about reflexes to spark their interest in science. One of the main goals of the SMS club is to make learning fun and interesting for middle schoolers.

"We had games that had to do with reflexes where you would turn off the lights and then turn them on and they would watch their pupils dilate and they found that very fun," Bourgeois said.

The idea for SMS came to LASA junior Caitlyn Wilson after discussing with her classmates what it was like to be a minority student at LASA in an environment in which there were so few other minority students.

"When I first came to LASA there was a very small pool of minorities and amongst friends we discussed, 'Why are there so few of us?'" Franks said. "Even our white friends noticed the gap and the only way we saw to fix the problem was to take initiative. That's when Caitlyn decided to form the club and we all joined and agreed to help out in addressing these things and bringing in more minorities."

One of the main goals for SMS is to recruit more minority students to come to LASA and increase racial, ethnic and socioeconomic diversity among students, Bourgeois said. But along with these concrete goals they have aspirations that are more abstract. The SMS club members want to be a source of support, encouragement and community for minority middle school students who might need someone to talk to or a shoulder to lean on as

they begin to contemplate their high school options.

"They can see a live example of someone like them from their neighborhood and background that chose a different path and not only survived but succeeded," Franks said. "That, along with the heads up on high school, is the best thing we can offer them."

Bertha Sadler Means' Boys and Girls Club representative Tiffany Orticke has said she has seen the positive impact that SMS has had on her students. According to Orticke, Sadler Means students typically attend Reagan and LBJ, and the SMS club has encouraged them to consider different schools.

"I've seen a positive impact in our students who interact with the LASA SMS program members," Orticke said. "Our students have a high need for positive role models in their own peer demographics, so they have been very willing to engage with SMS members. I found that this willingness to engage helps students participate more enthusiastically in other programming areas both in school and during extracurricular activities."

The SMS club not only teaches after school classes to middle school students, but also has a weekly club meeting during lunch at LASA. The SMS club aims to serve as a resource and a safe place to talk for LASA minority students.

"For the club in general I want it to be a safe haven for anyone, specifically minorities, to be able to openly discuss their experiences being at LASA and issues faced in the minority community," Franks said.

The club members have not only taught the students from Bertha Sadler Means academic subjects, but they have also demonstrated to them by example that it is possible to succeed even when taking the steps necessary to position oneself for success seems daunting. The SMS club hopes to continue making change in the community at LASA, whether that's through their outreach at Bertha Sadler Means or the work they're doing to create an inclusive environment during their club meetings.

"I've learned [that] if you want see a change, do it yourself," Franks said. "A group of people with the same goal can make an impact, whether big or small."

## Graphic Rescinded

## CARMACK

*continued from page 1*

Dickinson is working to change that. In a Texas State University news release, Dickinson said, "The new minister of education is working closely with the Royal University of Phnom Penh to introduce effective teaching methods and higher standards to the nation's teachers and professors. I will have the opportunity to influence science instruction at a national level."

Accordingly, Dickinson's prominent role in this change is one of national importance: her work will affect new legislation by Cambodia's Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. Through the Fulbright grant program, Dickinson is primarily working with the university to continue to develop lesson plans and implement them into existing classrooms. She also teaches future teachers at Khemarak University and other surrounding universities how to come up with their own lesson plans.

Dickinson and Carmack left Austin in July 2015 to go to Cambodia. Carmack stayed and assisted her mother with her work until January, when she moved back to Austin while her mother stayed in Cambodia. Consequently, she missed her first semester of her senior year. She said, however, that she kept up with her school work in Cambodia and will still graduate with her class this spring. She also adds that the work she did in Cambodia was well worth missing the semester.

According to Carmack, the students she worked with, who were training to become teachers, had never done "hands-on" work before. So when instructed to draw a theoretical diagram of the lightbulb system on paper, they could each do so perfectly and precisely. However, in practice, only one group could successfully execute the system.

"I would actually help [my mom] with the trainings [at the university], the physics ones in particular," Carmack said. "I remember we would do these really simple experiments with a wire, lightbulb and battery, and out of a room of 60 physics majors, only one group of four would be able to figure it out."

Carmack also spent her time in Cambodia spreading the importance of STEM education by giving lectures at the

Royal University of Phnom Penh. She also conducted daily outreaches using old LASA Robotics Club materials, such as Legos, to incorporate the skills students learned in lectures.

"[One time] I did a full day workshop that was mostly lectures at the university with the [college] students—hands-on and building," Carmack said. "It was so insane because they've never done any building before. They were just trying to build a robot with little Lego pieces and program it to go in a straight line, but they were having so much trouble with it. It took them 4 hours just to build the robot, and then another hour to program it"

On top of that, she also tutored the local middle and elementary school children in math and English and took local German classes. Most of the children she tutored were from the area she was living in, called Boeung Keng Kang (BKK1). According to Carmack, the majority of the kids living there were a part of an exchange embassy program, and

with their study abroad program coming to an end, Carmack was asked to tutor and help them refresh their English and math skills before they returned to their home country. While in Cambodia, Carmack was also involved in a program with the Gertrude Institute, an international institute in which students can learn German. She took

a German class with other students from her area.

"We'd have these weird exchanges because the class was really international," Carmack said. "We'd talk about what's good luck in your culture, but in German as practice, and it was really interesting to hear all the differences. For example, the Khmer people would talk about the white specks on your nails, [which in reality are] caused by malnutrition, as a symbol of good luck."

All things considered, Carmack said she cherishes her time in Cambodia, as she both finds meaning in her and her mom's work and loves the country and its people.

"Everyone thinks Cambodia is very sketchy because there's still landmines everywhere from the Vietnam War and the Khmer Rouge, but it's such a beautiful country," Carmack said. "All the people are just so resilient."

## Who wants to be a mathematician?

### LASA junior Sameer Pusapaty does!

ALIA SHAUKAT  
& MATEEN KONTORAVDIS  
Staff Writers

The room is silent. Aspiring mathematicians sit on stage staring at the new problem projected in front of them. The audience looks on, each person privately cheering on one of the participants. The buzzer sounds. The judge grins and awards the point to LASA junior Sameer Pusapaty, whose success in the final round of the 2016 national Who Wants to Be a Mathematician competition earned him a cash prize for himself and LASA.

"I chose to take part in it because I'm part of the Math Club and it's a free competition, so why not?" Pusapaty said. "I really enjoy solving these types of problems."

Who Wants to Be a Mathematician is an annual math competition that involves three rounds of qualifications. The first round is a test taken on a computer. Thousands participate in the first round and about 300 to 400 are accepted for a second computer test. The top scores from 10 regions around the country are then selected to attend the national competition; Pusapaty won in his region to qualify. LASA Math Club traditionally participates in the competition each year and hosts the first two computer rounds at LASA.

"I like that it includes questions like 'Who is your favorite mathematician?'" LASA math teacher and Math Club sponsor Sarah Harrelson said. "It gets away from the standard competitive math mode."

The national first place winner receives \$10,000. Pusapaty placed fourth in his group of five and won \$500 for himself and \$500 for LASA, which will go to the Math Club. His favorite part of Who Wants To Be A Mathematician was getting to visit a new city.

"The competition was in Seattle, Washington, and I got to see the city which was really cool," Pusapaty said. "It was also really fun to meet the other 10 contestants."

This is the second year Pusapaty has participated in the competition, but the first time he has advanced to the final round. Harrelson said she was proud of Pusapaty's performance and grateful for his contribution to the math club.

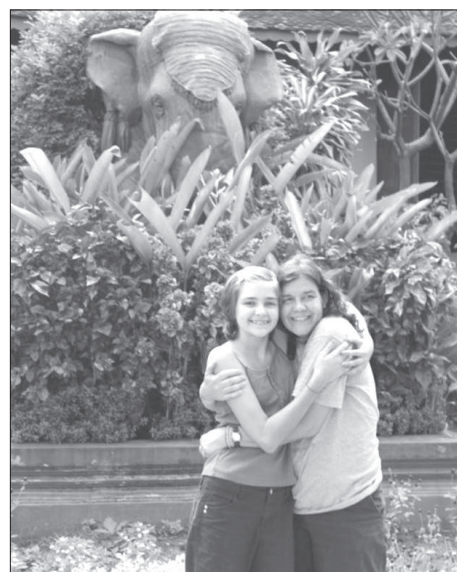
"Pusapaty does not seem to stress out under time pressure, an essential skill for success in competitive math," Harrelson said.

Pusapaty said he enjoyed the opportunity to meet professional mathematicians and make new friends as well as compete. He plans on participating in Who Wants to Be a Mathematician next year as well.

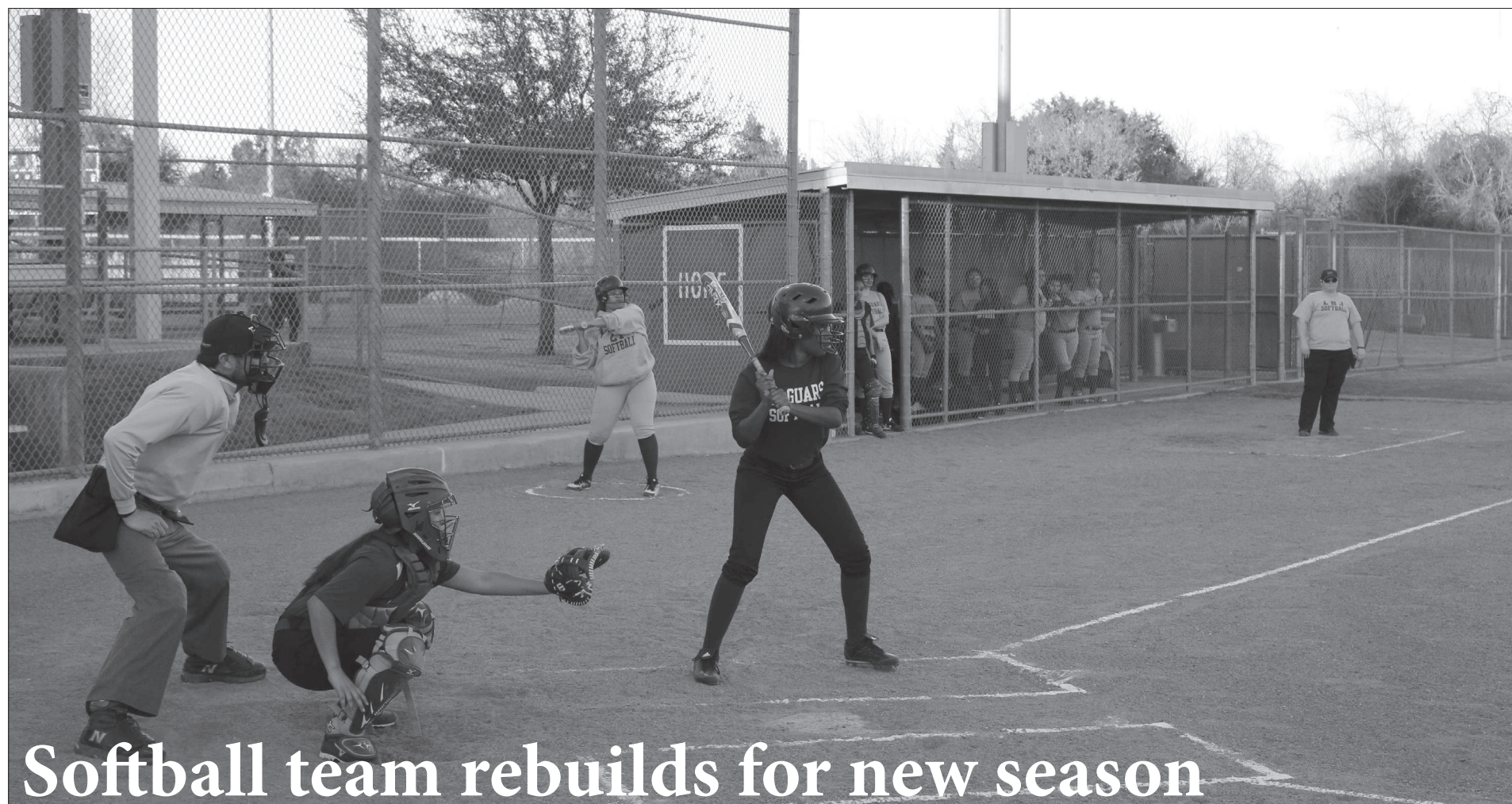
"It felt surreal to make it to the final round," Pusapaty said. "I never imagined it. But once the news sunk in, I felt pretty good."

*"[We] would do these really simple experiments... and out of a room of 60 physics majors, only one group of four would be able to figure it out."*

-LASA senior Becky Carmack



Left: Carmack and Dickinson in December of 2011, their first time in Cambodia. Right: Carmack leads a STEM workshop using NXT kits donated by LASA robotics at the Royal University of Phnom Penh. photo courtesy of Becky Carmack



## Softball team rebuilds for new season

LASA senior and softball co-captain Ify Ezekoye stands ready to face the pitch against Taylor High School in a pre-season scrimmage on Feb. 9. "The new players, although nervous at first, did a great job of stepping up and filling the roles that were left open after last season. We were so glad to have them yesterday for the scrimmage and I am looking forward to the rest of the season when we take on the rest of our district," Ezekoye said. photo by Oliver Powers.

**ASHLEY THOMAS**  
Staff Writer

LASA senior Ify Ezekoye keeps her head up in anticipation, waiting for her opponent to swing. The ball soars through the air and she backs up to the plate. With her hand in the hair and foot on the mat, the ball lands in her hand and the player is out. Softball tryouts began in late January and the new season will consist of fresh faces on the varsity team after the majority left for college last season--including two of their star players. According to Ezekoye, it's been an adjustment assembling the new team.

"This is going to be an interesting year," Ezekoye said. "We have a lot of players on varsity, so right now it's kind of getting everyone to know each other a little better... If anyone has a problem with anyone else we solve it really fast. It's just kind of hard because we don't really know each other right now, but after a couple of practices, and just learning about the girls, and how they work and what their goals are, it's going to be a lot easier."

Ezekoye worked with her co-captains, LASA senior Cat Llamas and LASA junior Madeline Lee, to lead team building exercises in order to bring the team closer together. The girls held a lock-in at the beginning of the year and reached out to the younger players, who were in need of advice, hoping to connect with them. Llamas said the saving grace of the team is how well all the players have been getting along so far.

"We've had to start over in a sense, we lost almost our entire infield last year," Llamas said. "Four of our starters graduated, so to have to go through the developmental process again is tough. Everyone plays differently so we're currently trying to figure out how the team works best: which player [and] where [they go] on the field or in the

batting lineup. But we're working through it, I think we'll be pretty successful this year, we have lots of talent and I can't wait to see what happens."

The team dynamic between the coaches and players is what Ezekoye said has really improved the team as a whole. Both coach- and captain-led practices are being held on a daily basis, along with the captains encouraging players to go out on their own and really study the game in anticipation for practice and games.

"We've started practices out and they've been pretty basic because it's just trying to teach people how the game works," Ezekoye said. "People are going to have to step up into a lot of new positions this year that they haven't tried before just because we need to fill a lot of those holes. People are going home on their own time and researching softball, watching softball videos just to see how the game works, and we've really tried to encourage that to let people do what they feel like is going to help prepare them for the season. A lot of it is that is just if you want to get better you can do it, but we can't force you to get better. It's something you just [have to] do on your own time if you want to."

Llamas said the team is only as strong as their weakest link, and as such the team is hoping not only to improve themselves individually, but to help their fellow

teammates as well. She's been on the field since the age of seven, playing the sport over half of her life. According to Llamas, she has set goals for herself and the team for the upcoming season.

"As team captain I have goals not only for the team, but for myself," Llamas said. "My goal for the team this year is to create a bond between the players that will last for years to come. We spend hundreds of hours together both on and off the field, and to be able to have lasting relationships is crucial. On a personal level, my goal for myself is to be committed and signed to a college softball team."

Ezekoye said what initially pulled her into softball was how accepting everyone on the team was, saying it gave her something to look forward to after school. Both Llamas and Ezekoye said as captains their main goals is to keep the spirit of the team alive and make sure people enjoy softball enough to come back and join the team next year. The team started off the new year anticipating the season that's to come. Even with the loss of two of their star players last year, Ezekoye said she believes the team can pull through the season, and may even end up competing in district with tough teams like Cedar Creek and Bastrop.

"I think every game is a new game and you can't really base things off of the past," Ezekoye said. "As long as we're super excited about playing and everybody does their job I think we can beat anybody we want."

**"We've had to start over in a sense."**  
-LASA senior Cat Llamas

## LBJ baseball gets back into swing of things

**ASHLEY THOMAS**  
Staff Writer

After a loud crack and a swing, LASA junior Neel Rao is down the field, sprinting in anticipation to reach first base. The game is almost over and the team is waiting for the final score to be up on the board. The Jags win 6 to 1 against Bastrop. This was yet another success for the LBJ 2014-2015 season, whose baseball team finished strong with a record of 12- 4. The new season for baseball starts in early February with their first game taking place on Tuesday Feb. 23 against Bastrop, last year's biggest win for the Jags, according to Rao.

"The most memorable event from last year would be when we beat Bastrop in 12 innings," Rao said. "It was a really dramatic game and we were very fortunate to be able to come out with the win."

Baseball tryouts commenced the first few weeks of the new semester, offering a spot to anyone who wanted to try out for the team. Team captains, LBJ senior Jose Rodriguez and LASA junior Seamus Quinn, held captain-led practices along with weekend batting practices at

Quinn's house every day until coach Ruben Covarrubias was eligible to take the reigns in early February, when the official season started.

"The way that coach leads the program, whoever tries

**"We have a great team camaraderie, and overall we have a lot of fun together."**  
-LASA junior Seamus Quinn

out gets to play," Quinn said. "There's enough people to sort into the three teams we have and make sure each player gets to play on the team they're best suited for."

Quinn emphasized the strong bond between teammates

in past season, something he is hoping to again establish within the team. Quinn said he believes this camaraderie between teammates is what has led to their past victories, and what he thinks will lead to more.

"Baseball team is awesome," Quinn said. "We have a great team camaraderie, and overall we have a lot of fun together. We also get to go to San Antonio for a few days and skip school while hanging out with friends so that's pretty great."

Quinn's confidence in the team is stronger than from previous years, as he said he knows the team is able to achieve victory based on the work they've been doing in practice. Quinn said he thinks this year's team is one of the strongest in district.

"We're definitely strong enough to compete against the best in district," Quinn said. "I'm not saying we're going to win all the games against the best in district, but we certainly have a shot if we keep working."

## Soccer Coach

*continued from page 1*

"The thing I love about his philosophies is that we only know one number, the number one, and I think that philosophy is great because we always have to aim for that #1 spot," Guzman said. "He also thinks of soccer as more of a job than a game, which I believe is probably the best way to think about the sport."

The LBJ soccer team doesn't have a class, and therefore has less practice time than other schools. True Pham, a LASA freshman on the LBJ soccer team, commented on Martinez's professional attitude that helps use time more effectively.

"He seems like a fun coach, but when it comes down to playing soccer he is a no-nonsense type of person," Pham said.

After coaching for almost 30 years, Coach Martinez has more experience than others in his field, and that shows through in his coaching, according to Guzman.

"He definitely has a lot more experience in the sport from a coaching standpoint," Guzman said. "He really knows how to get us riled up, he is constantly paying attention to what the team needs, and always comes out and helps us. He also listens to our opinions and integrates that into what he does. That really helps us as a team."

Pham said that himself and other players on the team appreciate Martinez's professional and serious attitude towards coaching the soccer team.

"He is a great leader, and helps organize the team," Pham said. "He makes it more professional when he is coaching, which brings the team together and makes us take playing more seriously."

Martinez said his main goals for the season include maintaining a winning record, which may prove hard after tough losses to Cedar Creek and Travis.

"I want to bring back the LBJ soccer winning tradition

that I left behind when I retired," Martinez said.

A new soccer season always presents a new challenge to coaches. Freshman players join the team and seniors leave, creating a constant cycle of talent to choose from as a coach. Guzman said that he feels good about how Martinez deals with the new season and builds the team as a whole.

"I feel really confident about the new season, more so than I did last year," Guzman said. "I think he will do a great job of making sure that the new and old players are able to work together. Most of the drills we do during practice are made to help us understand each other, which I think will help us improve a lot."

To Martinez, he said coaching boys soccer is about more than just practicing and playing a game. It's what he truly enjoys doing.

"When I coach, I want to teach young men the values of responsibility and discipline that they will need for employment," he said. "I think of soccer like it's a job, and strive to prepare my players for the real world."

## SUPER BOWL 50 Commercials

A commentary by Emma Jane Hopper

Doritos: Ultrasound

There are so many things wrong with this commercial. The only thing that would've made a baby shooting out of his mom for Doritos worse would have been making them Cool Ranch flavored. Luckily Doritos isn't that delusional-- they were Nacho Cheese.

Skittles: Dream On

I would pay to see Steven Tyler get into a burn battle with himself after that little taste of his versus his candy doppelganger. If Skittles can really make paintings anthropomorphic (with great pipes), I'd invest soon. It may be too late though-- guess I'll just Dream On.

Mtn Dew Kickstart: Puppymonkeybaby

The point of this commercial is that hybrids are great, but I came away thinking hybrids are creepy weird. A puppy monkey baby does not need to exist. I don't ever plan on drinking Mountain Dew Kickstart if it means one of those is going to show up.

Hyundai: Ryanville

I was too distracted by Ryan Reynolds' face to understand what this commercial was about, which may have been the point. Who wouldn't watch a commercial about Ryan Reynolds' face?

MINI USA: #DefyLabels

This car doesn't care what you call it. Go all out. It won't care, it's a Mini Cooper. It also probably won't care because cars don't have feelings, but Mini Coopers particularly don't, apparently.

Trophies Awarded  
(out of five):

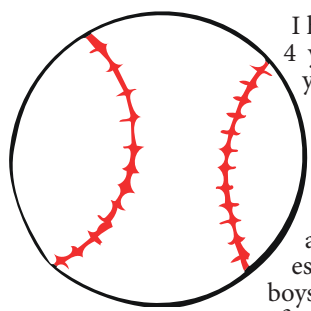


# HOW TO SUCCEED IN LBJ SPORTS WITHOUT REALLY DYING

Stories collected by Elan McMinn, Chloe Edmiston and Oliver Powers

LASA and LBJ seniors chronicle their ups and downs in LBJ sports and the lessons they've learned along the way. From learning to manage their time to discovering a new sport they can't live without, these seniors are a wealth of knowledge for new freshmen attempting to play LBJ sports. The LBJ sports world can be difficult to maneuver without knowing what to look for, and these well-worn seniors, who all earned their starting varsity positions with hard work and dedication, shed insight into the ins and outs of succeeding at playing sports and being a good team member at LBJ.

Mark Moreno, LASA, Baseball



I have been playing sports at LBJ for 4 years now. I came into freshmen year playing football and baseball. I honestly did not think there would be much of a competition difference from middle school to high school but I was wrong. All the kids were bigger, stronger and faster at the high school level especially in football, and in baseball boys were throwing the ball significantly faster. High school made me discover that raw talent was not enough in order to be successful in these sports.

Learning from the experiences I had over these four years, I think the biggest advice I have is to workout a lot. Most people are afraid to lift weights, because they think it will cause an injury, but as long as you are taught the proper technique it is not dangerous at all. Also, stay after practices and do a little bit more. Whether it's tennis and you work on serves, or taking extra cuts for baseball. All of this will make you a more successful athlete.

Carter Pace, LASA, Golf

Anyone should know that being a golfer takes both patience and practice. Lots of practice. To be a good golfer you need to get out on the course as often as possible. When I played a lot, I tried to play at least 3 rounds in a week. When you're not on the course, you need to be hitting the range as often as possible. You may have heard the phrase "drive for show, putt for dough" but we all know that's bull. You need to be crushing your drives, anywhere from 250 to 300 yards. If you can drive the ball far, the rest of your game will fall into place, and you'll be easily shooting in the low 80s or even 70s. As for attire, you should always be wearing country club-appropriate clothes, like button downs, polos or any vineyard vines. A lot of people underestimate the power of lucky socks but I can tell you time and time again, that having a good pair of lucky socks is essential.

For me, it's my turquoise pair of pancake socks that I don every morning before tournament play. For headwear, a visor is preferable but any snapback will do. Because, if even if you aren't good, dressing the part is half the battle in becoming a decent golfer.

Roberto Guzman, LASA, Boys Soccer

First of all, before you even step on the field, coaches check your grades, and they do so throughout the season. The thing you have to most worry about is your grades, making sure you come out on top in the classroom, as well as being disciplined in and out of the classroom. This is what coaches like the most about players, the discipline and hard work.

Teamwork is also a big aspect of it, since we are two schools coming together to play on the same team. It's difficult because you don't normally see these kids, so you don't have that same chemistry with them. Being able to adapt to environments and work with new people is key.

Cat Llamas, LASA, Softball

Advice I'd give to a freshman is to relax. Breathe. It's going to be more difficult than you expect but don't be afraid to ask for help. I know that when I was a freshman, one thing I struggled with was how to manage my time properly and also play softball, especially as a varsity starter. What it really comes down to is not being afraid to ask for help, since you will always need it.

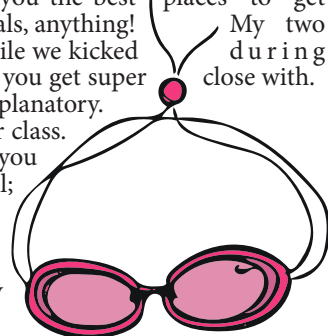
Jalen Spivey, LBJ, Boys Basketball



Work hard and be prepared for anything. During the summertime, play for AAU basketball and join any leagues you can. Any basketball that you can play is what you need. Run as much as you can. Get your stamina up, and just work hard. That's it.

Maisie Sajbel, LASA, Swimming

1. Be on time. I know it's early, but honestly you didn't have to stay up that late doing your homework and your parents still drive you so you don't have the "I woke up late but I'm still here!!!" excuse. Let the seniors be late. We've been doing this for four years. You can be late when you're a senior (but even then don't be late).
2. Go to practice. Self explanatory.
3. Get to know the upperclassmen! We started the big-little thing so that y'all could know at least one older member on the team, but honestly we're the most fun part! Plus we can show you the best places to get doughnuts/tacos/etc!!! Ask juniors/seniors for rides, talk to them during rest intervals, anything! My two best friends are older than me and I met them through swim team and talking while we kicked during close with.
4. Keep extra underwear in your swim bag and also probably locker. Again, self explanatory.
5. Figure out which teachers are okay with you eating and sleeping in their class. Plan accordingly. Also bring enough food to last you through the day and if you don't bring enough ask an older member to get you more food. We will, we understand.
6. Try your hardest! You never ever have to be super fast, but you should push yourself to be better.
7. Honestly, taco truck meat is kind of iffy and I would definitely opt for something vegetarian.



Ashley Knight, LBJ, Girls Basketball

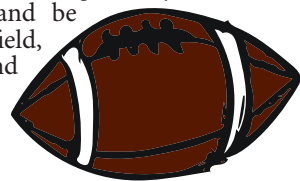


Work hard and stay focused because it is really easy to lose focus at LBJ, so just keep your mind right. You have to take it seriously. You have to work hard at it everyday, no slacking.

Ashton Williams, LBJ, Football

I've had a blast these past four years. I've met people that I'm probably going to know the rest of my life. The friends you meet, seeing them after school and playing with them, are like family.

My advice to freshmen is to always be working out. Make your grades, too. That's the first thing, you have to make your grades, especially if you want to play football in college. You have to have the grades. The second thing is that you have to work out and be strong on the field, mentally and physically.



Sam Pastor, LASA, Ultimate Frisbee



Work hard, especially when coaches aren't watching or aren't there, because even if they don't notice you working hard (they'll know if you are) you will be improving yourself and getting better. Don't be afraid to try a new sport and look dumb doing it at first. I've lettered in 3 sports, two of which I never played before high school. If you feel like quitting a sport during the season, don't. Wait until the season is over, you never know how far the team will go in playoffs or how much you will eventually enjoy it. Have fun with your sport. If you aren't enjoying your time, playing the sport is probably not worth it.

Kylie Martinez, LBJ, Cheerleading



Claire Morrison, LASA, Girls Soccer

It's a really supportive group of girls, the soccer team. And LBJ isn't a really competitive school in soccer, so it means we have a chance to just play and enjoy ourselves.



Kisha Patel, LASA, Tennis

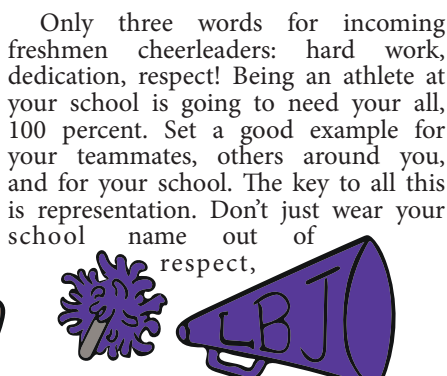


My main advice would be to stay involved with group activities. Sports is very collaborative; therefore your individual development is just as important as team collaboration. I would also say that it is a good idea to use your resources such as more experienced players to help you improve a short so that you can improve your game and make connections.

Chloe Edmiston, LASA, Volleyball

Always make sure you have a good support system, because there will be times that you think you can't manage all of the things going in your life. It will get absolutely crazy, especially with games twice a week. Try to make volleyball games as much as you can, since volleyball gets in the way of everything else.

Only three words for incoming freshmen cheerleaders: hard work, dedication, respect! Being an athlete at your school is going to need your all, 100 percent. Set a good example for your teammates, others around you, and for your school. The key to all this is representation. Don't just wear your school name out of respect,



REPRESENT it.

Always make sure you have a good support system, because there will be times that you think you can't manage all of the things going in your life. It will get absolutely crazy, especially with games twice a week. Try to make volleyball games as much as you can, since volleyball gets in the way of everything else.

Always make sure you have a good support system, because there will be times that you think you can't manage all of the things going in your life. It will get absolutely crazy, especially with games twice a week. Try to make volleyball games as much as you can, since volleyball gets in the way of everything else.

graphic by Meris McHoney



with Emma Jane Hopper

*The Paper Jag is an experiment in "participatory journalism" which was pioneered by George Pimpton. Pimpton wrote a book called The Paper Lion detailing his tryout with the Detroit Lions professional football team.*

*Inspired by the idea, intrepid former sports editor Jake Stewart practiced with a different LBJ athletic team each issue and catalogued his experience here. In this issue of the Liberator, Staff Writer Emma Jane Hopper practices with the LASA Ultimate Frisbee team, the Vertikills.*

As a recent green belt in TaeKwon-Do, I was feeling pretty confident in my athletic ability leading up to my experiment in Ultimate Frisbee. I don't really watch SportsCenter but I was pretty sure Frisbee wasn't covered on it, so I was pumped for a breezy day of throwing a disc around with some pals. I had no idea how the game worked when I signed up for this piece, and made sure no one told me until I was at practice. I was pretty sure it was less a game and more a casual social activity, like Jam Club or Cake Club. I don't know why I was thinking it would be like food-based clubs, since I had absolutely no reasoning behind these assumptions, but I did. I soon found out I was very wrong and just the littlest bit disappointed that food wasn't involved.

It turns out there's a reason TaeKwon-Do isn't really respected beyond Bruce Lee thrillers, and that reason is not just our outfits. During the Ultimate Frisbee warm up I already found myself out of breath with no excuses-- these guys were simply way more in shape than me. The tides didn't turn either. Most of the practice was the same, pitiful, "oh god I can't breathe" thought running through my brain, only occasionally interrupted by "Why are they all taking their shirts off it's not even 60 degrees out," and "oh thank god I'm being subbed out." As the only girl on the field I was a tad intimidated by a bunch of skinny white boys running around shirtless, fervently chasing a disc only to be stuck in place when they caught it. That's one of the rules that I learned out on the field: when you catch the disc, you throw it to your teammate, who's supposed to be running up and down the field really fast to confuse the person guarding them. At least I think that's what they're supposed to do. That's what I did, but it's very possible I was doing the wrong things, because I was so tired I was seeing spots at that time.

The most terrifying part was probably when the largest guy on the other team decided to guard me-- probably as a joke, which really only made it scarier. Lucky for me he made sure to narrate his every move, so I wasn't constantly trying to catch up, but I wasn't really blocking any of his shots, either. Plus it took away my excuse to take occasional on-field breaks under the ruse of having lost my mark. I found myself feeling like the kids I often teach at the children's museum where I work, struggling to even catch a disc the same way the toddlers struggle to paint a somewhat decent ducky. I tried my best not to gasp too much, and I think I did an okay job of keeping my breath shallow so I didn't seem like an asthmatic in immediate danger, but I may have just been hallucinating my performance due to no oxygen in the brain.

Id blame my horrible disc skills on my lack of lung capacity too, but there's nothing to back that up from my beginning of practice performance. After spending most of the practice scrimmaging, I had missed a solid 70 percent of discs thrown at me, sufficiently disrupted the drill/warm up part for anyone unlucky enough to be partnered with me, and made one goal. I think. Apparently I may have been doing something called straddling, but there was arguing over that, and I'm pretty sure they were just being nice but I got the point anyway. At one point I even got to throw the disc at the start of a match-thing (point start? I'm not sure.) and I managed to get it solidly halfway across the field. I'm not sure where I was meant to get it to, but one of the guys said I did a good job, and I took his word for it. I felt very coddled most of the time, but I guess that's better than general annoyance at my total and complete ineptitude. I walked away feeling mostly embarrassed by my athletic prowess and very humbled. It's hard not to feel humbled after a showing like that!

I mostly realized after the practice that throwing a disc straight without wobbling is actually way harder than it looks. Way, way harder. During warm-ups I was lucky if it stayed in the air long enough to go further than my arms could reach. I would have probably gotten it to go further in less time if I had picked it up and just ran it. Lucky for me, I didn't manage to catch it enough on the field to make that too obvious. It turns out Ultimate Frisbee is very hard and I am complete garbage at it, but lucky for me the players were nice enough to not point that out. Really, the most embarrassing aspect of this endeavor was the realization that my TaeKwon Do ability may actually be no more than self-aggrandizing illusion. In any case, Ultimate taught me that I am really, really out of shape.

# Academy play limits high school players

**KENZA MCKERRRIHAN**  
Staff Writer

LASA senior Sebastian Tanaka and LASA junior Antonio Lopez can't play soccer on a school team. It's not because they aren't able to head a ball or run warm-up laps. In fact, they've trained for years, mastering the game. But they can't play for LBJ because U.S. Soccer rules say that elite players, defined as members of United States Soccer Federation's academies, are not allowed to play on non-academy teams, including high school teams. Players who violate this rule can be suspended and their clubs can be fined. The academies are certified club teams that prepare talented athletes to make the US national team and play for elite colleges. The academy teams also expose the players to college scouts and national team coaches, as well as playing games out of state against the top competition.

LASA junior Lopez and LASA senior Tanaka both play on the U18 Lonestar USSF academy team. Their team is the highest level at their soccer club, Lonestar, for athletes under 18.

"I play for Lonestar Soccer Club U18 US Soccer Developmental Academy, which is the highest level I can play without being on the youth national team," Tanaka said. "Lonestar is the biggest soccer club in Austin so that's why I play for them."

Playing for an academy team gives players more opportunities than a high school team would but also requires more commitment and dedication, Lopez said. The academy teams require players to practice three times a week with their team as well as travel for games. Reciprocation for this time includes meeting college and national level coaches as well as intensive technical training.

"I don't really train outside of

practice, but I do play a lot of soccer and try to go to the gym as much as possible," Lopez said. "I go to Soccer Zone almost every weekend and play there for at least five hours. I also go to St. Edward's University and kick the ball around with my cousins and my brother."

According to Lopez, the academy teams are much more intense than school teams. While they do teach players many skills, they also prevent them from playing for their high school, which is controversial amongst coaches and players alike.

"I think the rule is fair but I think everyone who plays academy wants to play high school soccer," Tanaka

want to be able to play academy and for LBJ," Lopez said. "I would love to play for LBJ. Freshman year I only played six games for LBJ until I had to quit because I got moved up to academy."

LBJ assistant soccer coach Chad Faldt has been coaching for three years and has mixed views on the rule. Faldt said having these exceptional players on a high school team could take away recognition and development from the other more average players.

"I think the rule is okay in the sense that high school athletics serves a dual purpose; in that beyond just giving students an opportunity to showcase their skills and get athletic scholarships, [it] also encourages positive participation and gets them involved in stuff," Faldt said. "In that sense, if allowing the kids that are in the academy to participate in UIL sports would prevent others from doing it I think it is good."

However, having a few top players could take the school team very far according to Faldt. More developed players have the technical skills that the other players could learn from.

"I could see the players might love it if they got a couple of guys that were star players that could come out and help them get really far in the state playoffs or win a state championship," Faldt said. "That would be positive."

The rule is in place for good reason but is unfortunate because many academy players would also like to play for their high school teams according to Lopez.

"Playing for LBJ was a great experience, I had a bunch of fun and it feels good to represent and win for your school," Lopez said. "I also didn't have to worry about winning and performing well in front of college and U.S. national coaches; it was all about having fun."

**"I don't think the rule is fair, I want to be able to play academy and for LBJ."**

-LASA junior Antonio Lopez

said. "Around 10 players from my team have already quit this season to go play high school soccer."

Full-time academy players are only permitted to participate on their academy team, and National Team duty, according to U.S. Soccer.

"U.S. Soccer believes that more meaningful training and games over a 10 month season will better develop players for the highest level," Victor Pace, Tanaka and Lopez's academy coach, said. "Adding more games and training with high school [training] on top of an already busy academy calendar would take away from the development of players."

Pace says that his athletes are required to make a decision of whether or not to play at a higher level and that it may not be fair, but it gives players opportunity outside of school sports.

"I don't think the rule is fair, I



After school practices occur on the LBJ practice field with teams from left to right: Boys Soccer, Girls Soccer, Track & Field, Ultimate Frisbee, Softball. Not pictured is girls lacrosse, which practices behind the boys soccer, and baseball, which practices behind the softball team. photo by Chloe Edmiston.

## Teams fight for after school practice field space

**JEFFREY KOVAR**  
Staff Writer

Three sports teams crowd onto the small, grassy plain behind LASA and LBJ on a Monday afternoon. Girls lacrosse, boys soccer and girls soccer are each there for their regularly scheduled practice, but the quality of much of the available space leaves all three teams vying for the best field, at the far end of the lot.

"There is plenty of space within the sports complex and enough room for three to four full fields," Bridget Haby said, the head coach of the LBJ girls lacrosse team.

"Unfortunately, the lack of good fields has pushed everyone to the far field, which traditionally has been used by the freshman football team in the fall, and the girls lacrosse team in the spring."

Multiple sports start competing at the beginning of the second semester, all of whom practice Monday, Wednesday and Thursday on the grass space and field near the portables and baseball fields. Girls lacrosse practices from 4:00 pm until 5:30 pm, girls soccer practices from 4:30 pm until 6:00 pm and boys soccer practices from 4:30 pm until 6:30 pm, meaning that there is an hour overlap when all three teams are using the field at the same time. True Pham, a LASA freshman on the boys soccer junior varsity B team, says the quality of the fields is not up to par.

"The quality of the fields are very poor," Pham said. "The space we play on is not necessarily great for playing. Add to the fact that girls lacrosse, girls soccer and boys

soccer all practice at the same time Monday, Wednesday and Thursday, practices are just pretty hectic."

The limited space has brought along some limitations at practices. There is not enough quality space to hold long distance drills or full field scrimmages for lacrosse, according to Haby.

"Because we are sharing the far field right now with the girls soccer team, we have had to use a smaller space to scrimmage," Haby said. "The space change has made us play in the width of the field rather than lengthwise, so it's been more difficult to simulate full midfield play."

Injuries have also been produced by the less than stellar fields, according to Haby. Two girls lacrosse players have already had ankle injuries from stepping in holes on the field.

"There's a lot of holes and you can hurt your ankle," LASA freshman Becca Brackin, who plays on the girls JV soccer team, said. "Also, there's a lot of ant piles which is dangerous."

The problems surrounding the fields seems to stem from one area: the sub par conditions of the fields, according to Pham. Brackin would like the holes in the field filled. Haby went a step further and offered possible solutions to the problems presented by the field.

"I would like there to be improved space, not more," Haby said. "I think there is plenty of space out there but it just needs more maintenance. Trash pickup within the field space, lined fields and regular mowing and watering could help to provide the quality of space that all the sports teams desire."

**"The space we play on is not necessarily great for playing."**

-LASA freshman True Pham

## LBJ Sports: By the Numbers

A run-down of recent scores and statistics of LBJ sports for the past six weeks.

### Boys Basketball

- Reagan 1/15: W, 60-46
- McCallum 1/19: W, 80-63
- Travis 1/22: W, 91-54
- Cedar Creek 1/26: W, 82-46
- Crockett 1/29: W, 79-61
- Lanier 2/2: W, 87-74

### Girls Soccer

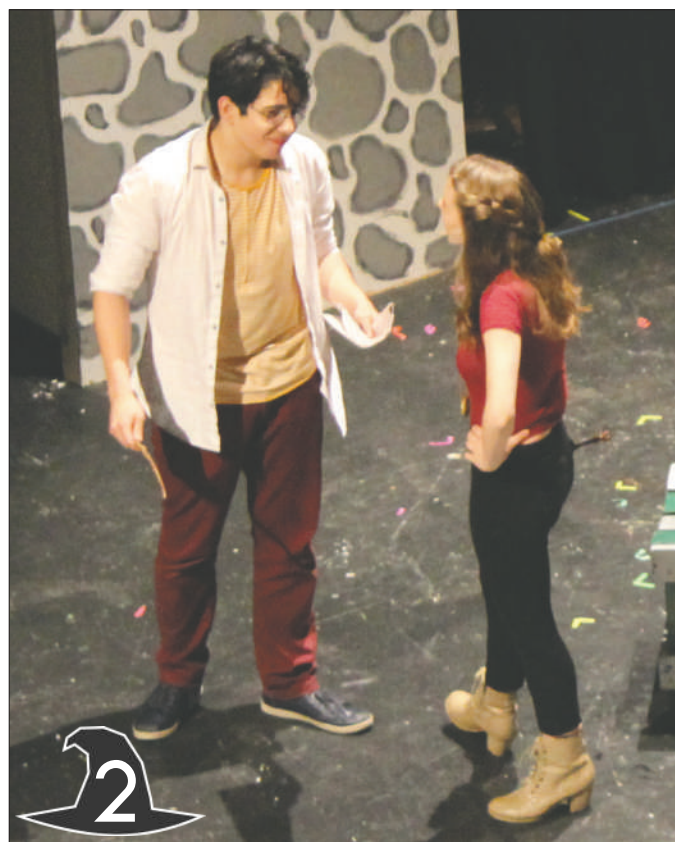
- Hutto 1/8: T, 0-0
- Dripping Springs 1/9: L, 0-2
- Reagan 1/25: W, 3-1
- Eastside Memorial 1/29: W, 9-0
- Travis 2/2: W, 8-0
- Crockett 2/5: W, 2-0

### Boys Soccer

- Reagan 1/19, T 0-0
- McCallum 1/23: W, 2-0
- Travis 1/26: L, 3-1
- Cedar Creek 1/30: L, 3-5
- Crockett 2/3: W, 2-1
- Lanier 2/5: W, 1-0

# The magic of Hogwarts

As seen in "A [Wand]erful Show" on pg. 10, the Alley Cat Players' (ACP) production of A Very Potter Musical (AVPM) aimed to bring Hogwarts to the Don T. Haynes Theater. Speaking to cast and crew members, over and over again they repeated what an amazing opportunity they thought it was to get to portray the characters many of them have enjoyed since reading the Harry Potter series or watching the movies as children. LASA senior Lukas Keel, who played Harry Potter and Lee Jordan, was no different. "Playing Harry Potter was a blast," Keel said. "He's been one of my favorite characters in general, across books and movies, for a lot of my life, and getting to play not only him, but a caricature of him, was lit." From morphsuit-clad techs who played jokes on Hogwarts students on stage to the pit orchestra platforms which appeared like giant bookcases, the Alley Cat Players did everything they could to create magic during this revival musical. photos by Clara Gibbs and Isabel Saralegui



- 1 Discussing Harry Potter's love song to Cho Chang, LASA senior Lukas Keel, LASA junior Catherine Dickey and LASA freshman Lucy Pierce play Harry Potter, Hermione and Ginny Weasley in the Leaky Cauldron cast. Dickey said her dream had been to play Hermione. "Hermione is someone I always wanted to be when I was little and getting to play her was so much fun," Dickey said.
- 2 LASA seniors Antonio Skillicorn and Maya Haws-Shaddock argue with each other as Harry and Hermione in the Three Broomsticks cast. "I always have loved magic and the Harry Potter world, so it was a dream to get to play a character I spent so much time fantasizing about as a kid," Skillicorn said. "I couldn't have picked a better role to play in my last musical with the Alley Cat Players."
- 3 LASA sophomore Alex Siegenthaler and LASA junior Zoe Wills share a kiss onstage as Cedric Diggory and Cho Chang. Siegenthaler has been involved with ACP since last year. "It was an incredible experience and I'm really glad that I was given the opportunity to both be in AVPM and to be in the theater production," Siegenthaler said.
- 4 Hidden underneath the paper dragon is LASA senior Antonio Skillicorn, being sung to sleep by LASA senior Lukas Keel playing Harry Potter. Skillicorn plays Harry Potter in the other cast, but on nights that Keel plays Harry, he said that Skillicorn had jokes up his sleeve. "That scene makes me laugh because the nights I was Harry, Antonio Skillicorn was the dragon and he would ad lib growls and threats about eating me," Keel said.
- 5 Listening intently to LASA junior Cameron Carr as she relates wisdom as Dumbledore, LASA junior Catherine Dickey plays Hermione, a character she's adored since childhood, in the Leaky Cauldron cast. "This whole story has been something I've loved for a really long time so seeing it come to life was insanely awesome," Dickey said.
- 6 "The morph suits gave the techs a level of anonymity which allowed those of us with stage fright to have fun on stage," Ackerman said. "We needed a way to make all the 'magic' happen and our solution was to make the techs 'invisible' to the characters. It worked well because it ended up also being a huge chance for comedic ad libs and gags in the play."
- 7 When LBJ band director Brian Mayer wasn't conducting AVPM's pit orchestra or playing games with Hogwarts students, Mayer sat in his white chair onstage watching the show. "I thought that was really fun; it was mostly improv, so I think Ms. A and [Mayer are] like super tight, so I think she really supported him in his theater efforts," pit member and LASA junior Finlay Scanlon said.
- 8 LASA senior Nick Blacklock sings with LASA junior Isabelle Dickey, playing Ron Weasley and Draco Malfoy respectively. "That scene was my awesome for me because it featured my favorite song in the musical, and I got to sing it with Isabelle [Dickey]," Blacklock said.
- 9 Striking her signature pose with her wand, LASA junior Zoe Wills, alongside LASA sophomore Alex Siegenthaler, finds trouble as Bellatrix Lestrange. While her character may have been evil and working for Voldemort, Wills said that all the characters got the chance to be silly on and off the stage. "The great thing about AVPM was how much fun the actual show was," Wills said. "The characters did hilarious things, and that [along] with the hijinks we got up to offstage made every rehearsal and show so much fun."