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ISSUE 1

PANTHER PRINTS

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**DROWNING IN DEBT:
EDUCATION'S PRICE
TAG TO SUCCESS**



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LETTERS FROM THE CO-EDITORS-IN-CHIEF

While the learning process for this issue was much more challenging than I thought it would be, it was interesting to see how this new role would shape me as a person and an editor. Coming into this position, I was weary of the task I was taking on. Although it was the biggest challenge I faced, I would not give back the things that I have learned and the things I have accomplished. I would like to give the biggest thanks to my co-editor, Kayla Vu, for her constant reassurance and common attitude throughout this entire process. I would also like to thank our readers for your continuous support. As a new start to the school year with lots of excitement, I hope you enjoy what we've shared with you.



Although it was a struggle to reach this point, I'm proud of the work that my fellow co-editor Sydney Grayson and staff members accomplished. Entering the new school year with only a year of journalism experience, I knew I would be taking on a large role as co-editor in chief and head of design. After spending hours on both my articles and the design, I hope that my efforts can be seen. As we progress through the school year, I'll continue to dedicate myself to providing our community with intriguing and improved content. I hope this issue brings interest and joy to your day.



MISSION STATEMENT

At Panther Prints, our mission is to serve as a connection between the Plano East student body and surrounding communities. Through inspiration and high-quality content, Panther Prints offers diverse coverage, passionate writing, relatable stories and a unique point of view. Our credible sources allow an in-depth experience that appeals to both the public and the individual. Our publication offers an informative and distinctive outlook on current interests.

DIGITAL MEDIA POLICY

We, at the Panther Prints, commit to responsibly utilize all of our media platforms to unite and inform the student body. We strive to create original content and attribute credit to all sources. We require our staff to uphold these values and to accurately report the news to the student body and community.

All student polls were conducted through
Google Forms and shared through social media

CONTENTS

5

**NASA DELAYS
ARTEMIS I
LAUNCH TO
NOVEMBER**

PHOTO BY NASA



7

NEW DISTRICT CHANGES

PHOTO FROM PEXELS

20

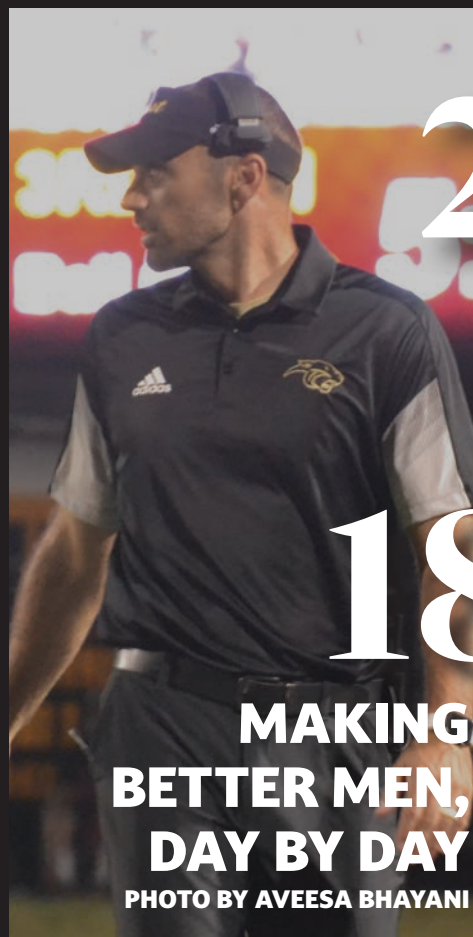
**RESTRICTED
READS**

PHOTO FROM PEXELS

11

**STUDENT'S
LIFE DURING
VENEZUELA
CRISIS**

PHOTO BY MICHELLE
MENDEZ-ARREGEA



18

**MAKING
BETTER MEN,
DAY BY DAY**

PHOTO BY AVEESA BHAYANI



22

**CLASSICS
REEMERGE**

PHOTO FROM PEXELS

**TWITTER
INSTAGRAM**

@peshprints

Puzzled Panthers

By Sydnie Grayson

"Why are dress codes stricter?"

Compared to last year, when dress codes were more lenient, administration wants to enforce a slightly stricter dress code for this year. After being met with resistance from students, the administrative team decided to set a standard early on in the year.

"We feel like we've reduced it down to what seems acceptable for our image projected to the community and something I think kids can live with," Principal George King said.

"How often is the pond cleaned?"

The pond is cleaned every three weeks, but it's been postponed due to supply chain shortages across the nation. Recently, the school has been using a herbicide to get rid of the algae building up on the surface of the pond. This algae-type growth began growing during the summer and is still present.

"Who's the best person on campus to go to for college help and information?"

Counselors would be the best options to go to about extra college information regarding applications and scholarships. If a counselor is busy or full with appointments, the administrative team can help pave a way of communication to people who can provide more information.

Artificial Intelligence Art Arises

By Michelle Mendez-Arreaga

During this year's Colorado's State Fair annual art competition, an Artificial Intelligence (AI) generated piece won the big prize. AI art is defined as artwork generated by a machine learning process, artists use AI as a creative tool that allows machines to analyze images. One network makes the image and another judges if it is original. Algorithms then create new patterns and designs to produce new works, based on rules made by the programmer.

"I know there are a lot of negative opinions towards it because it takes away the effort put into art, but I feel like art can be expressed in many different ways," senior Dhilan Nag said. "The way I see it, AI is simply a medium of art."

The first AI painting was made by computer scientist Harold Cohen in 1973. He developed a set of algorithms known as AARON that allowed computers to create authentic artistic images. Today, AI art can be seen in numerous fields such as film and television, architecture and fashion. For example, AI art websites are being used to generate hundreds of outfits for fashion show runways. Costumes and fashion designs can be brainstormed in a matter of seconds.

"AI art is a way for us to understand how what we create can turn into something new on its own," Nag said.

Nonetheless, many have different opinions on this new technique.

"I personally believe that the process of making a traditional art piece is more fun," senior Orlando Muñoz said. "It feels like you can't be as individualistic with AI art."

In 2018, an AI art piece, "Portrait Of Edmond De Belamy" was sold for over \$430,000 during an auction. This would be the beginning of the rise of AI art, as it slowly started to get more recognition. According to the BBC, around one million users use the art gen-

erator DALL-E, in over 115 countries.

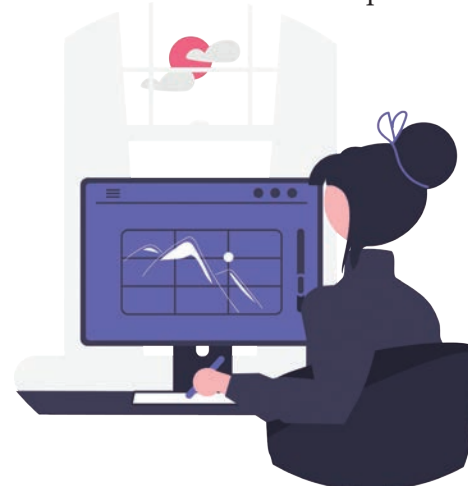
"A lot of it is navigating the program, because it's very different from traditional art," vice president of the National Art Honors Society Daye Esmeralda said.

DALL-E, Dream by WOMBO and StarryAI are some of the most commonly used AI art generators. Creators can produce art by simply using a text to image generator or by combining multiple images into one. Artists have the opportunity to expand their horizons, with the many tools and features that come with these generators. Automated formatting, a variety of templates, and its photo editing attributes is part of the reason why AI art is quickly expanding.

"AI art will probably become more integrated with all the technology that we have," Esmeralda said.

Even so, statistics show it's unlikely that AI art will take over traditional art. In the last decade, researchers in the computer science field published various papers regarding datasets using computational methods. Studies show that between 2001-2010, traditional art remained favored as it was almost twice as popular as AI art.

"Some people love it, some people hate it," Muñoz said. "As long as people are doing what they love, who cares about what kind of mediums artists are using. Art is beautiful because of its uniqueness."



NASA Delays Artemis I Launch to November

By Kayla Vu

Photo By
Eric Bordelon
from NASA

Because of Hurricane Ian, NASA postponed their Artemis I launch to the middle of November. Artemis I is the first in the series of Artemis missions aiming to develop long-term human occupation on the moon.

"I'm very excited about this launch," senior Ansh Panchal said. "Bringing mankind back to the moon is a special moment because, after 50 years since the last moon landing, we're finally going back there. It's about time we set forth to the moon."

Due to an engine failure, the initial launch on Aug. 29 was canceled. During the countdown, one of the four engines failed to reach the proper temperature. NASA later declared that it was a false alarm caused by a malfunctioning sensor that incorrectly reported the temperature of the engine. After this issue was resolved, a second malfunction occurred on Sep. 3 which called for a more serious delay. A hydrogen fuel leak was discovered in one of the core-stage engines, causing NASA to delay their launch date again.

"These delays that have been happening have actually helped the progress of the rocket itself," Panchal said. "They found a lot of leaks in the hydrogen propellants, [so] the delays helped solve these problems before launching."

The Artemis missions began in 2017

with three missions currently underway. Artemis I will be an uncrewed mission extensively testing NASA's Space Launch System (SLS) and the Orion modules. The Orion spacecraft is a command module with life support systems and shuttle interfaces necessary for transportation of astronauts in space. Within the past decade, NASA developed the SLS, a heavy-lift rocket intended to carry astronauts beyond Earth's atmosphere. Each launch is estimated to be around \$800 million.

"Pennies on the dollar," AP Physics teacher John Thompson said. "You have to understand that it's not just about us going to the moon. The SLS is going to be the biggest and most powerful rocket to have ever left the earth. Its goal is to not just put us on the moon [but] way beyond that."

With these missions, NASA plans to eventually build a new space station orbiting the moon and a habitable moon base. In doing so, the government agency hopes the outpost will provide them the ability to support long-term missions on the moon and allow for discovery of the moon's resources. According to the Smithsonian, possible resources such as water ice, oxygen, metals and building materials made from lunar dust or rocks could be found.

"There's some unique chemical

compounds out there on the moon," Thompson said. "The idea is to actually be able to find resources [and find] a way to make that commercially viable. We get a direct benefit from [NASA]. These [discoveries and developments] go on to make things like cars cheaper [and] more reliable."

Although it's still uncertain, NASA hopes to launch Artemis II no earlier than 2024. The mission will be a crewed flight going beyond the moon, farther than they've ever been before. Artemis III, planned for 2025, will land the first woman and person of color on the moon. In early August, NASA opened eligibility for all genders and ages of current astronauts to qualify for the Artemis missions.

"I could say that I'm disappointed [NASA] didn't make progress faster, but they have made progress," Thompson said. "I look forward to the time when we choose the best person for the job and you won't even look at their skin color. We should be judged in science and engineering by the quality of our thoughts and the [creativity] of our brains and that's all. Looking at today and tomorrow, we're finally making some progress."

Photo by H-E-B

H-E-B Expands to DFW

By Sydnie Grayson and Sumayya Ali

As AVID teacher Summer Simmons stands in line, waiting for the new H-E-B to open in Frisco, the hot sun shines down on her. While waiting for the chance to go into the highly anticipated grocery store, workers offer her refreshments such as ice water to keep her hydrated. With her mind on H-E-B, she shifts her thoughts to the store a little closer to home, on Preston Rd. and Spring Creek Parkway, opening on Nov. 2.

“Being a true Texan, I’ve always been a fan,” Simmons said. “I think a lot of it depends on where you’re from and what you’re used to growing up with. I think those of us who are from Texas, [for] those things that are Texas-based, we’re always going to be very partial to it and we’ll kind of always choose those things first and foremost.”

With the first H-E-B store opening in 1905, the stores have dominated Texas for over a century. In the U.S., the southern-based supermarkets are located only in largely populated cities in Texas, establishing themselves in Texans’ memories.

“When I was a kid in Houston, they used to give these buddy bucks [when] you would check out,” sophomore Shreya Kharwar said. “You could use [buddy bucks] to get a prize. They’d have a wheel to spin and you could

win utensils or H-E-B merch. Overall, it was always a really fun experience.”

A typical H-E-B location features a deli, bakery and pharmacy. The Frisco location encompasses all of these as well as more, including buddy bucks and H-E-B’s signature frozen meals and produce.

“If I had to [compare], I would say it’s kind of like Costco, in the sense that it’s so huge,” sophomore Zayneb Ali said. “But I feel like [with] Costco you get tired of it and it’s not as exciting. It’s kind of how people prefer Target over Walmart. I feel like it’s just more fun to be [at H-E-B].”

While H-E-B offers a variety of services, there is controversy on how affordable H-E-B is. According to the Bloomberg study, the average transaction value grew by 12% from July 2021 to July 2022 accounting for the largest increase within companies; these companies include Kroger, Aldi and Trader Joe’s. Simmons has a different perspective towards this issue.

“H-E-B products and brands are sometimes better or we think they’re better than some of the things we just get at the normal grocery store,” Simmons said. “The prices are good and they have really good coupons which are always nice to have.” With the upcoming opening of the

Spring Creek location, the proximity of the new supermarket excites members of the community.

“I can see why people are into it,” Ali said. “Especially if you’ve seen other locations, it’s really cool because this one is actually in our city. It’s a lot more convenient.”

As new grocery stores come into the community, competition arises as this industry grows. According to the Dallas Morning News, H-E-B is the top-rated grocery store in the U.S., trumping stores such as Target, Walmart and Costco.

“The Frisco one was just such a big deal because it was the first main one in this part of Texas,” Simmons said. “I think the grand opening [of other H-E-B’s] will not be as overwhelming as it was for Frisco just because there’ll have been others and people will have tried it. I think it’ll definitely bring competition to a lot of our typical grocery stores that we have, so it’ll be interesting.”



New District Changes

By Sumayya Ali

The district is undergoing major changes, with four new proposed bonds and a shift in safety regulations. After a two year assessment of district facilities, the district school board decided that improvements are necessary to be made. On Aug. 16, the board unanimously voted for four bonds to be proposed, totaling up to 1.5 billion dollars. Each bond offers detailed information to renovate facilities. While the bonds have passed through the board, the final decision will be up to parent and staff voters on Nov. 8.

A bond allows the district to borrow money with the promise of repaying it later in the future. The district regularly has bond elections, deciding whether specific schools or facilities require upgrades. With only one bond passed in the past 14 years, the district hopes it will no longer require any more bonds following these four.

"The district [is] investing more money into making our security better," senior Audrey Nguyen said. "[They're] making it more safe for the future."

The first proposition totals about 1.2 billion dollars, allowing for increased funding for electives such as fine arts and campus athletic programs. Furthermore, it covers transportation costs, technology infrastructure and other innovation programs. It also includes new security cameras, more organized emergency operations and new alarm and radio systems. The bond also encompasses new safety and security regulations following the UL-

vade shooting, centralizing in school improvements and security measures.

"With the rise in school shootings, I definitely think that the district and the school included are stepping up the security measures," Nguyen said. "Last year I feel like [security measures] were less implemented, but this year they're actually enforcing them."

The second proposition would pay for instructional technology and costs 173 million dollars. This would allow for new programs as well as

yet been finalized, the district plans to make the space large enough to accommodate 8,500 seats. The fourth bond focuses on upgrading district buildings that have already been built. Rounding off at about 19 million dollars, proposition four would allow for athletic stadium renovations in Kimbrough and Clark stadium. These renovations would include turf replacements, concession renovations, restrooms, parking lots and security lights.

The four proposed bonds are an effort to make the district's schools incomparable to other districts.

"I do think there are still flaws to this system [that] need to be figured out, but they're definitely trying [and] they're putting in an effort," Nguyen said. "Especially [with] comparison to previous years which I respect."

While the bonds have not been finalized yet, the district has already begun tightening security.

The new precautions went into effect at the beginning of the 2022-2023 school year. The school now limits the time between passing periods, requires students to sign in when late and teachers are locking their doors during classes. Identification badges are required and students in the hallway must have a hall pass.

"Everybody [needs to be] in sync to [ensure everyone is] safe," King said. "We all [need to] act as a collective body to look for signs that might be troublesome. When we all behave that way, [the school] will become a much more safe and secure place."



"The district [is] investing more money into making our security better. [They're] making it more safe for the future."

- senior Audrey Nguyen

updated technology across the district's schools. The technology would provide automatic locks, improved security cameras and renovating old technology.

"It was several years ago when the electronic door locking automatic system was put into place," principal George King said. "So that was a huge leap forward for a campus like this."

The third bond being proposed would offer funding for the district event center, totaling at 130 million dollars. The event center is planned to become a multi-functional center for events like concerts, competitions and graduation ceremonies, allowing for more district wide events. While the architectural design for the space has not

Inflation Reduction Act Takes Effect

By Aveesa Bhayani and Maryam Ahmed

On Aug. 16, President Joe Biden signed the Inflation Reduction Act into law. This new bill lowers health-care costs, incentivizes clean energy and raises corporate taxes. However, doubts arise about the bill's economic sustainability as it begins to take effect.

"One thing about the act is that it doesn't run into a deficit; it is actually a budget surplus, which is very rare," senior Haider Zaidi said. "U.S. policy almost always runs into a deficit."

A deficit, or excess government spending, is a common problem in initiative bills like the Inflation Reduction Act. Its failed predecessor, Build Back Better Act, ran into a deficit costing \$3.3 trillion. However, the Inflation Reduction Act attempts to circumvent this problem by establishing a minimum corporate tax rate, or a tax on a company's overall income of 15% to pay for the bill.

"In 2021, [the] tax rate was around 20%, but corporations could find loopholes and pay a small margin on their taxes or none at all," Zaidi said.

Critics claim the reduction in the tax rate from 20% to 15% is counterproductive, but it eliminates the loopholes in previous corporate tax laws. Generating around \$300 billion, the new bill is supposed to pay off the Inflation Reduction Act, presenting a budget surplus.

"It is economically sustainable because the relative cost of the bill is offset by tax, which is not a politically popular thing to do, but it is the responsible thing to do," American Studies teacher Joseph Russell said.

In addition to the corporate tax rate, the act is also targeting health-care prices. U.S. citizens pay an average of \$1,300 a year on prescription drugs, two to three times the amount paid by citizens of other first-world countries. Because of the provision

allowing Medicare to negotiate prescription drug costs, 5 to 7 million Medicare beneficiaries could see their prescription drug costs go down.

"It's only cutting down insulin prices for those on Medicare or Medicaid, not for everyone," Zaidi said. "That's one of the big things that people are against; people want more."

While the reach of the act is limited in terms of lowering healthcare

costs, that's to avoid the bill running into a deficit. At the same time, there's a strong argument for dedicating money to the health of workers.

tric cars and \$350 per year for buying energy-saving home appliances. "Economists say that, because we're not putting that much money into [the act], there won't be that many economic side effects," Zaidi said. "However, there is the counterargument that not putting enough money into it will not be enough to solve the climate problem."

While it creates affordable clean energy for families, this act doesn't target large corporations, which make up the majority of the United States' carbon emissions. They account for 71% of the United States' total carbon emissions, according to the National Resource Defense Council.

"The only thing that ever moves big corporations is an effect on the pocketbook," Russell said. "When a company realizes that the public opinion has shifted, it becomes financially foolish to not demonstrate it."

Between the Inflation Reduction Act's environmental standards and corporate tax rate, large companies will be forced to find a cheaper method of clean energy, such as lithium ion batteries. The U.S. currently sits on the largest proven reserves of lithium in the world.

"We can lead the future on that," Russell said. "We could be the energy giants of the future if we're just bold enough to do it."

Despite its caveats, the new bill presents many opportunities to go into the future with the door open for innovation, especially with the environment and healthcare.

"The actual effect is in clean energy and finally getting serious about infrastructure investment," Russell said. "That money is going to come back to you in the long term because it drives innovation and growth."

"We could be the energy giants of the future if we're just bold enough to do it."

- American Studies teacher Joseph Russell



costs, that's to avoid the bill running into a deficit. At the same time, there's a strong argument for dedicating money to the health of workers.

"If you invest more into the health of your workers, they can work longer and better," Zaidi said. "By investing more into healthcare, you benefit economically, but that's not measurable."

What is measurable is the rate at which climate change has increased rapidly throughout the years, another problem the Inflation Reduction Act tries to combat. Earth's temperature is increasing at double the rate of what it used to be in 1981, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The Inflation Reduction Act incentivizes clean energy by allowing families to save \$1,000 per year when using elec-

Texas Governor Election Heats Up

By Maryam Ahmed

As election season peeks over the horizon, polls are tightening by the day. Although he still has a nine-point lead, incumbent Governor Greg Abbott faces a formidable opponent, Beto O'Rourke, in the upcoming midterm election. With both candidates doubling down on national issues, the scales could tip either way.

"I don't know who's gonna win," government teacher Noel Peterson said. "I know Beto's done an amazing job of going everywhere in Texas, talking to every constituent that he can. Governor Abbott doesn't need to get out, since he's leading in the polls."

In 2020, former President Donald Trump won Texas by only 5.5%. Democrats now hope this governor election will flip the state. With his disapproval rate climbing up to 45%, Abbott is taking this election more seriously, launching a series of offensive and defensive political advertisements.

"The demographics of Texas are changing," Peterson said. "Pretty soon we're going to have a white minority and more urban voters, and those tend to be more Democratic voters."

According to a Wall Street Journal poll, abortion is the biggest issue driving people to the polls, and it's not working out in the Republicans' favor. The same poll found that 52% of suburban women would vote for a Democrat while only 40% would vote for a Republican. About 52% of the nation lives in suburban areas.

"I think [abortion] is working more in favor of Beto," Peterson said. "The overturning of *Roe v. Wade* has energized the base a lot."

With a string of shootings in Uvalde, San Antonio and El Paso in recent years, O'Rourke supported numerous gun restrictions in his 2020 presidential run, including an assault rifle buyback program and universal

background checks. However, gun laws haven't been a very crucial part of his governor campaign, considering 52% of Texans think gun laws should either be loosened or left the way they are, according to the Texas Politics Project.

"He's not able to campaign as well, specifically to the people of Texas and in policies they would like to see," ju

it would be ideal if he could," Ladak said.

The other issue on Texans' minds is the border, an issue that predates both candidates. Abbott's policy of busing migrants to the east coast has garnered national attention as places like New York City struggle with the influx of migrants.

"Based on the majority Republican population, I don't think this is going to shake his voters," Ladak said. The migrant situation made national headlines once again due to a joint effort between Abbott and Florida governor, Ron Desantis, to fly Venezuelan asylum seekers from San Antonio to Martha's Vineyard. Both governors are now facing backlash for the ethical implications of their actions.

"I don't think it was the right thing to do politically, and I know it wasn't the right thing to do morally," Peterson said.

As inflation wracks the nation, Texas has it particularly bad, with an inflation rate of over 9%. The Abbott campaign claims the Biden administration is responsible for inflation, citing sanctions on Russian oil and Biden's \$1.9 billion pandemic relief package.

"[Abbott's campaign] is going to make it a national referendum," Peterson said. "They're going to call attention to the policies the Biden administration has instituted, and then tie that to the local candidate that's running."

Although Texas has a Republican majority, a victory by O'Rourke is a very real possibility, as issues like abortion and gun laws work in his favor. Meanwhile, Abbott has his seven-year long record as governor to speak for him, as well as national inflation helping his image.

"It's going to be a tough election with lots of finger pointing, with lots of personal attacks down to the core values," Ladak said. "It's going to be a very interesting election."

42% of students align with Beto O'Rourke

23% of students don't align with either candidate

6% of students align with Greg Abbott

29% of students had no comment

**Out of 434 students polled*



nior Aliyan Ladak said. "There's already this predetermined image of him leaning to the left two years ago."

In the wake of these shootings, Abbott plans to focus on access to mental health resources, such as increasing on-campus counseling and mental health first aid training. He also plans to secure schools, fortifying them and getting more police on campuses, as he proposed in his 2018 School and Firearm Safety Action Plan.

"Personally, I feel like Abbott wouldn't be able to deliver on these promises, but

Invisible Heroes

By Varsha Jhanak

Schools are a hive buzzing with activity as they flood the hallways on their way to class and continue pushing through their day. In the front office, receptionist Melinda Morris lets students in, greeting them with a smile and warm energy. She answers phone calls and visitors' questions and helps them navigate around campus. Cafeteria manager Maryam Youseff enters the cafeteria crowded with hungry students. She leads the cafeteria staff and makes sure that the students are well-fed during both breakfast and lunch. It takes a large number of personnel in order to keep a school up and running. Many people at the school perform tasks that no student ever stops to recognize. Students see their teachers and principals every day, but there are many invisible heroes who keep our school running smoothly.

"My favorite part of the day is all day because I get to meet different kinds of people," Morris said. "Everybody's personality is different, even students. I love the different personalities."

Morris begins her day by logging into the security cameras and checking her emails. Throughout the day, she responds to phone calls from parents or other people located off campus and helps visitors navigate around campus.

"At the beginning of the school year [work is] a little more busy," Morris said. "Phone calls from parents are just nonstop, all day long. [The] mid-

dle of the year is good. Then at the end of the year, it's the same thing, busy."

Morris began her work as a secretary in a school prison system 10 years ago. After the program shut down, Morris moved to the Duke Schools in Oklahoma. There, she spent five years as the re-

Morris said. "But, I hope they feel [appreciative] of the work I do."

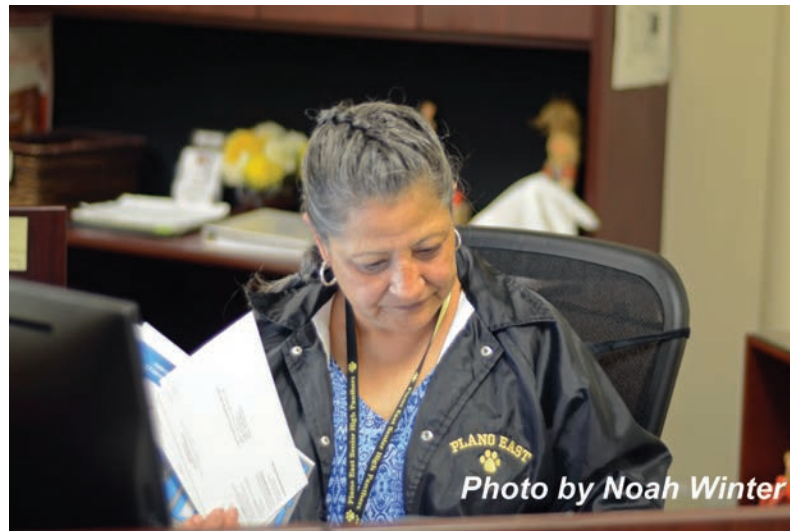
Cafeteria manager Maryam Youseff begins her day by checking that all equipment is working correctly, then logs into her computer, and proceeds to check her email. Once all of the

morning tasks are completed, she begins preparation for lunch along with the rest of her staff.

"I love [my work], believe me," Youseff said. "Even on the weekends sometimes I think about work. At night, when I'm trying to sleep I think 'Oh, I need to do this tomorrow, I need to do that tomorrow.' I'm always thinking about [work]."

Youseff began working on campus in 2018 after joining the FANS (Food and Nutritional Services) program in 2013. She began working in a school when her son entered kindergarten. She worked at a school in order to share the same time table as her son. She wanted to be able to spend time with her son, not have to put him in daycare, and spend weekends with him. Every day, Youseff bears a variety of responsibilities such as ensuring every single student gets properly fed with quality, nutritional food.

"I hope [the students] feel that we are trying to do our best," Youseff said. "We try our best to make sure all the students get the chance to get everything we have, and I hope they like everything and enjoy what we offer them."



Receptionist Melinda Morris checks papers during work on Sep. 27.



Cafeteria manager Maryam Youseff puts out a fresh tray of Bosco sticks for students during lunch on Oct. 4.

ceptionist. She has worked on campus for a year and a half. Her work keeps her occupied as she helps people not just on campus but off campus as well.

"I know I'm constantly reminding [students] of student IDs,"

PANTHER PROFILE

Student's Life During Venezuela Crisis

By Michelle Mendez-Arreaga

Millions of people come together as they watch their country slowly collapse into chaos. People on the streets beg for food, thousands protest against President Maduro; bolivars are being thrown around since they no longer have value. Senior Valeria Figuera, born and raised in Anzoátegui, Venezuela, felt her heart shatter into pieces as she wondered what her future would look like.

"The fear I felt as I watched everyone around me lose themselves was immense," Figuera said.

In the last few years, Figuera went through a rollercoaster of emotions as she had to migrate to three different countries. In 2017, her home country faced one of the biggest socioeconomic and political crises the world had ever seen. With so much corruption, human rights violations and hyperinflation, Valeria and her family knew they had to migrate to a different country.

"I didn't want to say goodbye to the people I grew up with, but I knew leaving Venezuela would be the right decision to make," Figuera said. "Food was deficient and the circumstances were too dangerous."

At just 12 years old, Valeria flew abroad to Peru by herself, where she would spend the next three years of her life. Unfortunately, due to the crisis back home, she dealt with xenophobia.

"At first, I felt welcomed in Peru, but then I started getting mistreated because of my background," Figuera said. "It started to affect my mental health severely."

Living in Peru was not easy, Valeria wished to move elsewhere.

"All I could think about were my

friends and family back home," Figuera said. "I missed them dearly. In fact, leaving them behind was probably the biggest challenge."

After living in Peru for three years, she moved to Texas. Valeria was to start her life in a new country

tia Alfaro said. "She's opening up more, which makes me happy for her."

Even though Valeria is more content with her new life, she wishes she could participate in more school activities and extracurriculars but one problem remains.

"One of the biggest barriers is not understanding the primary language," Figuera said. "In school, they don't take [foreign students] into consideration. Instead of trying to help you out, they exclude you."

Because of what she's endured, she is considering becoming a lawyer to help and defend refugees like herself.

"Valeria [is] a very empathetic person," senior Maria Carrillo said. "She's friendly, which may be why she's always surrounded by people."

Valeria's friends are some of the most important people in her life. She considers them sisters.

"You can never be bored with Valeria," Alfaro said. "She's constantly making me laugh. My favorite thing about her is how trustworthy she is. I feel like I can tell her anything."

This November will be Valeria's third year in the United States. Even though she's had to start from square one for a second time, she has an optimistic view on moving, rather than a pessimistic view.

"I can't wait to begin a new chapter in my life," Figuera said. "I wonder what great things the future will hold for me."



Photo by Michelle Mendez-Arreaga

Senior Valeria Figuera works on an English assignment on Sep. 27.

again. In the process of moving, Valeria used weaving as a distraction.

"My grandma taught me how to weave when I was 10 years old," Figuera said. "It helps me soothe down if I ever feel anxious."

Partaking in arts and crafts is something Valeria loves to do in her spare time. She's handmade many things, such as teddy bears and keychains. She even sells some of her products.

"She came here for a better future, and she's getting there," senior Ka-

**All interviews included in this article were conducted in Spanish and translated by Michelle Mendez-Arreaga*

Drowning in Debt Education's Price Tag to Success

Photo from Pexels

By Sydnie Grayson and Kayla Vu

Within her dimly-lit room, senior Kaleigh Lopez types away at her computer, attempting to write her college essays. Sentences form only to disappear as she cycles through the motions of writing then quickly hitting delete. As thoughts of her future flood into her mind, the pressure of meeting deadlines and getting accepted overwhelms her, causing her to sink into her arms with a sigh. After a moment of brief silence, she looks up at the screen and tries again.

"[The college application process is] a bit stressful, because from my family, I'm a first generation college student," Lopez said. "I have all that pressure to get into a good college, especially for my family [since] they're immigrants. I want to make them proud by getting into college and getting a good education."

Pressure of Test Scores, GPA, Extracurriculars

With the season of college applications already in session, many students are in a rush to meet deadlines. During

this time, the pressure to maintain grades and keep up with extracurricular activities and life outside of school starts to weigh down some students. According to a 2019 survey done by Challenge Success, a non-profit and research organization affiliated with Stanford University, 79% of students expressed that tests and grades were the main reason for their stress.

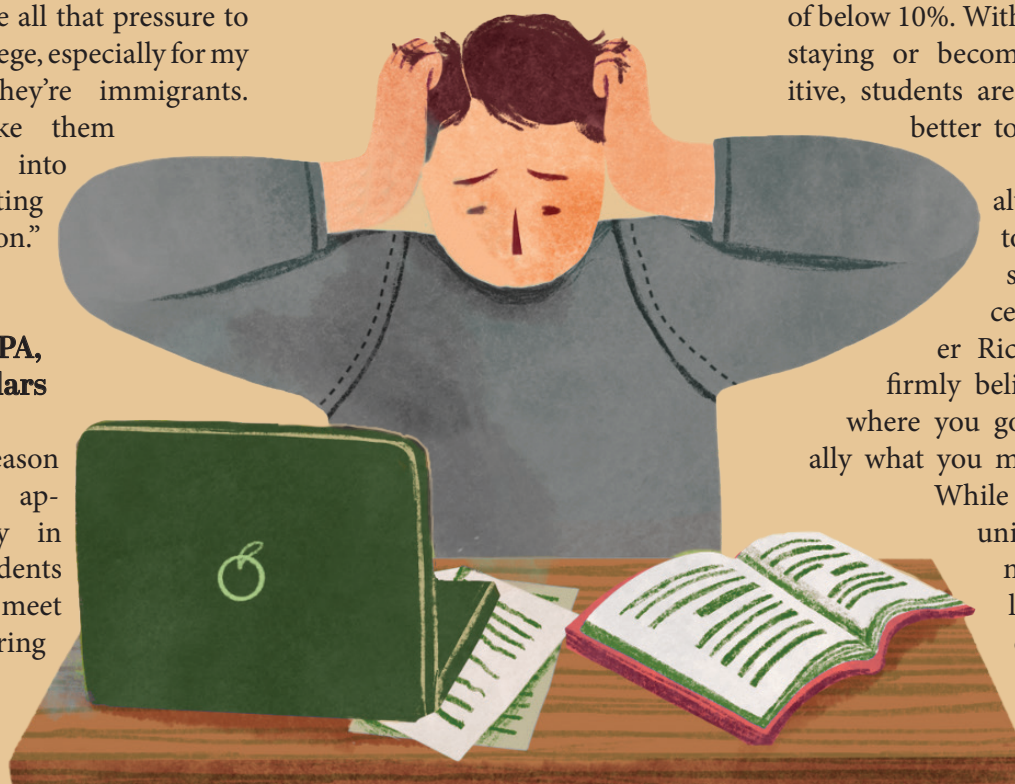
"I feel like a lot of students are anxious about their test scores, especially in the IB program," senior Gautam Penna said. "It's good to care, but a lot of students care a lot about

their test scores and they sacrifice their mental health for it."

Factors such as pressure from peers or parents may play a role in inducing this stress within students. Denise Pope, co-founder of Challenge Success, explains that many students believe that a successful life is only ensured through enrollment in prestigious schools. During the 2020 college application season, New York University's acceptance rate dropped down from 30% to 15% in only four years, resulting in an all time low. Other top-ranking colleges such as Harvard, Stanford and Brown maintain their acceptance rates of below 10%. With prestigious schools staying or becoming more competitive, students are forced to do even better to appeal to colleges.

"I don't think you always need to go to an Ivy League school to be successful," IB teacher Richard Sklar said. "I firmly believe that no matter where you go to college, it's really what you make of the college."

While most colleges and universities don't admit students solely based on GPA or SAT and ACT



scores, these factors still play a large role in the decision process. According to a 2019 study by the National Association for College Admissions Counseling, more than 60% of the colleges considered the strength of students' curriculums as considerably important and nearly half weigh ACT and SAT scores as highly significant.

"[GPA, rank and test scores] matter to colleges," senior Zahra Mahmood said. "Because college is the next goal in education, a lot of people want [their GPA, rank and test scores] to be good for colleges. They want to impress colleges or meet [their] standards."

Cost of Education

As students prepare to face these tests, they also face the issue of college prices. For some students, their parents will handle this part of the college application process, but for others, they have to figure out their own way to pay. According to U.S. News, the average tuition for a public in-state college or university is \$10,423 and \$22,953 for a public out-of-state college or university. Recently, Princeton University announced that the institution would cover all college bills for families of students attending for up to \$100,000. As an extension of their financial aid program, anyone whose household income is less than \$100,000 would have their tuition, room and board covered in terms of cost.

"Just because you don't come from money doesn't mean you don't have the abilities," American Studies teacher Janessa Bower said. "Some of the schools are realizing that if we give [kids] financial help, they'd buy into what we do here and do really well. [Schools would] get [these kids] somewhere in life and break that cycle of poverty."

Different tests through a student's high school journey can also amount to

a large cost such as the SAT and ACT. For SATs, disregarding the one schools offer, it amounts to \$65 per test and for the ACT, it costs anywhere between \$42.50 and \$58.50. In addition to these, there are other tests for different programs that add onto the cost of tests in high school. AP and IB exams amount

32%
of students are
paying for college through
merit-based scholarships

30%
of students are
paying for college
through their parents

16%
of students are
paying for college
through financial aid

**out of 434 students polled*



to \$97 per exam and \$119 per exam.

"IB tests are a fortune," Sklar said. "I don't think the price of testing should keep kids out of these programs. I think their desire to do it or where they are in their learning life could keep them out of it, but costs shouldn't at all."

Some students can rely on these tests and Khan Academy, an online resource used to help with many different courses, including the SAT. While there isn't the benefit of having a personal tutor, they supply practice help and videos to reference on their website. Other students can pay for private tutors when it

comes to certain tests. For example, KD College Prep is a program where students can go to for help with their test-taking skills on the PSAT, SAT and ACT. This program totals anywhere from \$250 to \$5,000, spanning from options on specific classes or the entire program.

"I know KD is expensive, so for students of low income families that may not be able to pay for their child attending these kinds of tutoring places, the student would be at a disadvantage," Mahmood said. "I didn't enjoy my personal experience as much, [so] it wasn't worth it, but from an educational standpoint, I would say it was."

When applying for colleges and building resumes, admissions officers also take extracurriculars into consideration. Clubs or outside-of-school activities can come at a price for those interested, such as sports and fine arts. According to a study from Ohio University's Online Master of Athletic Administration Program, the average amount of money parents pay for high school athletics is \$671 per child. For music, each student must complete

one credit of fine arts, whether that be music, theater, or art. Marching band, considered to be both a sport and a fine art, is around \$600 per year, along with over \$1,000 for the annual band trip.

"I've been in a program for band where I got free private lessons because those are pretty expensive," Lopez said. "At that time, I was really into music, [but] I wasn't able to pay for [it] because it's really expensive."

Economic Wealth Gaps in Education

According to a 2021 study from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), the average amount of students living in poverty in Texas is higher than the national average of 16% with 19% of students being economically disadvantaged. Low-income areas usually receive less funding than high-income areas. The Education Trust's analysis, "Funding Gaps 2018," shows that the funding differences between these areas is about \$1000 per student. Lack of proper funding results in the inability for schools to do things like support staff, maintain their buildings, facilitate extracurriculars or provide supplies.

"There's data that supports that there is a correlation between wealth and success," Bower said. "There are some roadblocks for kids because they just don't know [what resources are] out there for them."

Without the necessary resources, students may lag behind academically or have their psychological states impacted. A study done by the Center for American Progress in 2018 found that higher-income districts displayed significantly higher scores in reading and math especially against lower-income districts that lacked access to comprehensive and advanced courses. Some low-income students don't receive help from home on school work either. According to the NCES, 3% of students had a household member that never checked if their homework was done and 10% of students never had a household member help with their homework. Of these students, 11% were below the poverty threshold.

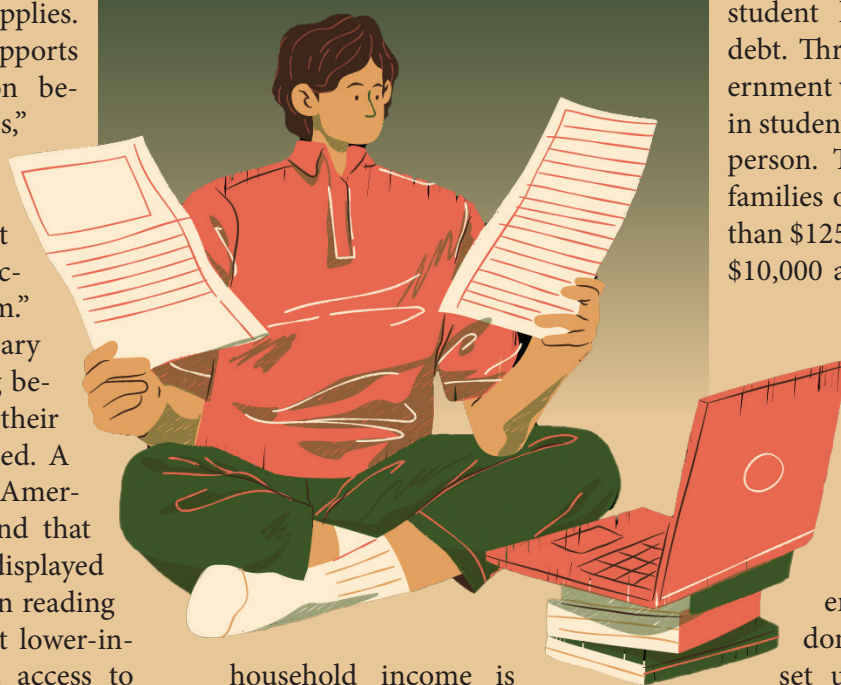
"[For] a lot of lower income people, their parents may be working two jobs," Sklar said. "They don't

have time to help their kids in school because they just worked 17 hours and two jobs just put food on the table. A lot of times lower income families are not as orderly and organized because it takes a large amount of effort to provide for their kids."

According to a 2019 Brookings Institute study, between students whose

79%
of students think that
the costs of AP and IB
exams are too expensive

**out of 434 students polled*



household income is greater than \$200,000 and students whose household income is \$20,000 or less, there was a gap of scores on the SAT by 300 points on a 1600-scale. A 2019 study by the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center found that 25% of students from higher-income high schools were more likely to enroll in college immediately after graduation compared to low-income students. However, according to the Texas Education Agency school ratings from August, 18% of the districts with

"economically disadvantaged" students earned an A rating. Despite this data, many critics still argue that there's a correlation between wealth and success.

"The more wealthy you are, I feel like you get more opportunities to become successful," Lopez said. "I feel like it is a little bit easier for people with wealth to apply to prestigious schools because they have those resources easily available compared to people who live in poor areas."

Government Role in Funding Education

President Joe Biden's new loan forgiveness plan was introduced in August, targeting college students who have taken out student loans and accumulated debt. Through this plan, the government will pay for up to \$20,000 in student loan debt per qualifying person. To qualify for this plan, families of students who earn less than \$125,000 per year will receive \$10,000 and Pell Grant recipients will receive \$20,000.

"There's some contention around it because it's a very specific group, it seems, that gets this loan forgiveness," Bower said. "People like first generation students who don't have the resources set up ahead of time don't really realize what they're getting themselves into with loans. [The loan forgiveness plan] can provide a lot of opportunities for people who maybe don't come from [the] means."

While the federal government is aiding student loan debt, Texas governments fund schools through local property taxes, collected by school districts, and state funding. These tax rates are calculated based on community income, increasing as the community becomes wealthier. The state

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government has a Robin Hood law that states that Texas must provide equitable school funding for all districts. Through this, schools can combat low funding by ensuring a reasonable amount of funding for each student in the district. Although this is true, according to KUT, Austin's NPR radio station, Austin Independent School District (AISD) pays more than any other school district regarding this law. Putting this district at a disadvantage, AISD has a decreased amount of enrollment with most of its students being economically disadvantaged.

"I'm blaming the low amount of money that our society puts into education and the low priority and emphasis that the United States puts into education," Sklar said. "I think there should be a lot more. My parents both went to college, but I also think I had a lot more support from the school in applying to college way back when it wasn't even as complex as it was today."

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and Texas Application for State Financial Aid (TASFA) are applications that students can fill out to apply for financial aid in regards to colleges. These are used to determine a student's eligibility for federal and state financial aid when applying for colleges regarding tuition and rates. Although these aids are beneficial, there are some restrictions. For example, while anyone can apply for FAFSA, as the household income increases, the amount of federal aid students can qualify for decreases.

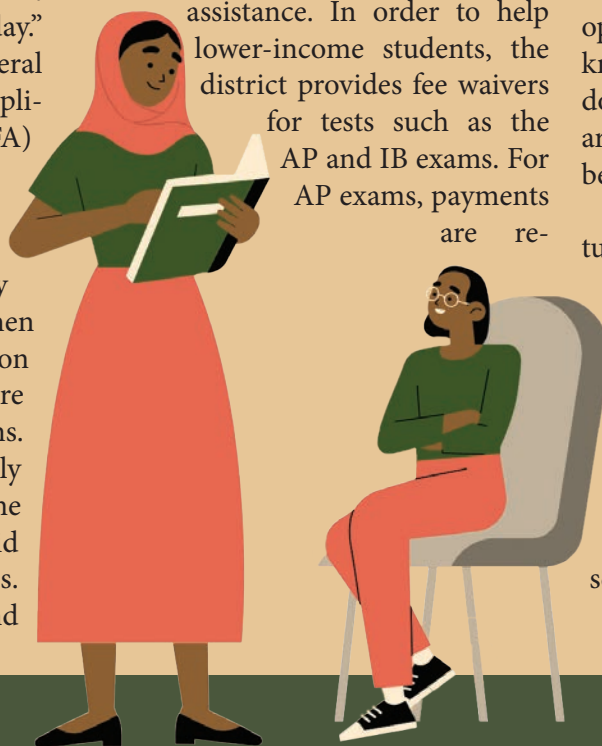
"There are lots of opportunities and programs for kids that maybe don't come from means that can get those same experiences, but they have to know to look for it," Bower said. "They have to be in touch with teachers or a counselor or somebody who can help them find those opportunities."

Scan the QR code to
access the counseling page for
college and career information



District Aid, Responding Criticism

According to the Texas Tribune, the district's demographics in the 2020-2021 school year had 35.6% of students who were defined as "economically disadvantaged." The organization determines this based on whether a student is eligible for free or reduced-price lunch and other public assistance. In order to help lower-income students, the district provides fee waivers for tests such as the AP and IB exams. For AP exams, payments are re-



70%
of students think that
schools need to do a lot
more to aid students

**out of 434 students polled*

15 • FEATURE

duced from \$97 per exam to \$14.

"I think [the school] does a very good job of [making AP and IB classes accessible]," Penna said. "There is no socio economic barrier to take these AP and IB courses. Anyone who's willing to meet up to these challenges and take these courses are able to take them."

For seniors and juniors starting their college plans, all counselors are available to help and meetings can be scheduled through email or their Google Form appointment request. The school handbook, found on the website counseling page, includes information about the college planning and application process with guides such as timeline for admissions, searching for majors and careers, paying for college and other resources. On the new school website, SchoolLinks, students can search for information about colleges and access scholarship opportunities.

"There are a lot of scholarships and opportunities out there that kids don't know about," Bower said. "We need to do more to get kids to know that there are opportunities out there [for college] because they think they can't afford it."

For students who can't afford KD tutoring, Lopez proposes for schools to try and open tutoring sessions for the SAT and ACT. Tutoring sessions for the AP and IB exams were conducted in a similar way but through the organization of teachers. Although these resources for test preparation could be provided by teachers, Lopez suggests that schools could spare funding for tutors.

"Everyone should have [an] equal opportunity," Lopez said. "Some people get test [preparation] and access [to] tutors. Especially for [the] SAT, KD is pretty expensive and a lot of people aren't able to afford it. It's very important [that] everyone has a chance to succeed and schools need to do more to help everyone be more equally involved."

Effect of Sports on College Admissions

By Varsha Jhanak

Many students participate in sports throughout high school, but only few are eligible for athletic scholarships. Around 1.3% of high school athletes receive athletic scholarships, according to the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). Under 2% of high school athletes go on to play at NCAA Division I colleges, while little over 7% of high school athletes go on to play a varsity sport in college.

"The best player we've had in the last five years is at Cornell," basketball coach Matt Wester said. "I've had quite a few kids go play college sports. None of them have received a full scholarship."

Scholarships can vary depending on each sport. Sports are generally categorized into two categories, head count and equivalency. Head count sports generate revenue for the college while equivalency sports do not generate revenue for the college. Head count sports are restricted in the number of athletes that can be on a scholarship. For example, according to Wester, basketball players usually receive full ride scholarships, due to it being a head count sport. On the contrary, equivalency sports have no restriction placed on the number of athletes that can be on the scholarship. Coaches allocate certain amounts of money to each student. However, this can vary in different schools depending on the levels of funding. The Ivy League does not give out scholarships; rather the cost of the student's tuition is based on the student's ability to pay. In lower funded schools, this may not be the case.

"In basketball, if a kid gets a scholarship most of the time, it's a full ride," Wester said. "For some of the lower funded schools, they can be a partial scholarship. Oftentimes

what they'll do is ask you to fill out the Pell Grant application and then what the Pell Grant doesn't cover, they'll match that and fill in the gap."

The procedure to get a scholarship varies among each sport but the process is fundamentally similar. As per the Princeton Review, there are five basic steps universal for each sport in order to receive an athletic scholarship. Students must know the division they

terest forms on the college's website."

Senior Mamie Krubally is captain of the volleyball team and is currently applying for colleges and sports scholarships.

"I have had trouble [committing to a college]," Krubally said. "It's a long process. [The colleges] either lose interest or the school isn't for you. Then, you have to keep sending emails and they keep reaching out.

I would say once you've committed, it's definitely relieving."

Extracurricular activities have become important in today's college admissions process. Extracurriculars, such as sports, can distinguish students from a monotonous mass of growing students. According to an admissions blog from the University of South Florida, extracurriculars do not override GPA and grades. However, these extracurriculars can aid with the process. Sports on a transcript, according to coaches, benefit kids.

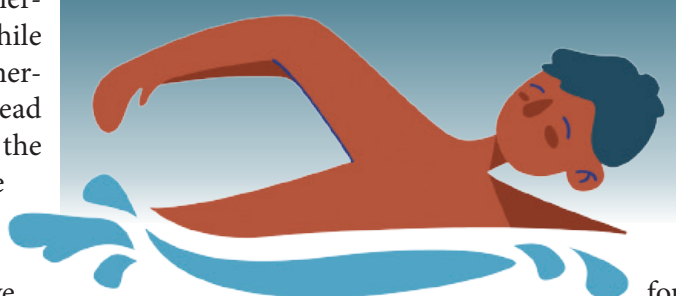
"Showing that you were able to play [a sport] for three or four years, shows that you can have commitment and discipline to a larger group," Bull said. "You're responsible enough to get to practice and meets and work with others."

Not all high school student athletes go on to play sports in college. However, sports can facilitate and further a student's college admissions process even if they do not plan on continuing or pursuing their sport.

"If you're good in school, [sports] definitely gives you an opportunity," Krubally said. "Especially if you have financial aid problems and you're good in school and sports, it gives you an opportunity to essentially have free college."

"Showing that you were able to play [a sport] for three or four years shows that you can have commitment and discipline to a larger group."

- swim coach Adam Bull



are eligible to play in and gather all of their information such as GPA and athletic statistics. Then, they can begin their communication and interviewing process with college coaches. At the end of the process, the student will need to evaluate which college or scholarship best fits their needs.

"Sometimes if [coaches] know [the athlete], college coaches will reach out to people's club coaches," swim coach Adam Bull said. "If they swim with a club outside of school, they might send a letter to that swimmer through the coach. There's some ways that swimmers will make college coaches aware of themselves, through in-

Teaming Up with Tennis

By Noah Winter

Two teams going at it with one ball, back and forth over the net until one comes on top. Tennis double teams, a pair of two exceptional players who are great by themselves, work together against their opponents. With two minds working towards the same goal, they can win any match that they put their mind to. Although without the right communication, the team can fall apart. With the tennis players here, there are a few teams who stay the same, but most change every week. The season is currently holding two matches every week and tournaments in the spring. The most important thing during matches is the team spirit and the encouragement between them.

"I'm in charge of the warm up and the team spirit check," senior team captain Parthiv Varanasi said. "[I] make sure that the intensity and the spirit is there every second that we are practicing or playing."

In addition to keeping team spirit up, it is also important to match players with different styles of playing. With baseline players being more comfortable near the back of the court as for the net players enjoy being close up to the net.

"If you have two really good baseline players that don't like to go to the net, it's hard to have them on the doubles team together," tennis head coach Robert Gifford said. "So if you have two players that are just baseline players that doesn't quite work out for team dynamics."

While the coach explains the dynamics between the different types of players, the team focuses on working together on the court.

"You need to balance, control yourself, and also encourage your teammates," senior Alexia Tran said. "I usually like to assess their skill level to get an expectation of how they usually play."



Photo by Noah Winter

Senior Alexia Tran practices in the morning with her coach on Sep. 26. The tennis team beat Lewisville with a score of 19-0 on Sep. 27, maintaining their winning streak.

Alexia has been playing tennis for 13 years, and has been on double teams since freshman year. Her partner gives insight as to why double teams are so different from playing solo.

"Obviously it is a team effort, but tennis is a very individualized sport in general," senior Riley Gewinner said. "Doubles give us a chance to take off so much of the pressure that you face by yourself."

The biggest thing that is common with teams is the communication between the teammates, making the team function as a whole.

"It's just like encouragement," Tran said. "Keep it simple; when they think more, they mess up more. They're not playing tennis. They're just thinking, [so] they overanalyze it. Keeping it short, sweet [and] calm helps."

Making Better Men, Day by Day

By Aveesa Bhayani

Anticipation arises for the varsity football game against Lewisville as Friday night lights become a routine, ending the school week for many students. The wins at the beginning of the season bring East side pride for many as athletes walk the halls in their spirit wear. This change is largely credited to new head football coach, Anthony Benedetto. After graduating from college, he worked as both a football coach and a science teacher at three schools before making his journey here, bringing with him a set of policies that he hopes will change the football team for the better.

"We're trying to make a program where the kids get better at football, but also [become] better men," Benedetto said.

One day at a time, Benedetto works with athletes to create well-rounded players. He starts his first season in the program by enforcing mandatory study halls every Tuesday morning and community service projects. They are encouraged to strive for good grades as well as serve in the community. The team's latest service project was at the Miracle League Frisco, a football team for special needs children. Each player was paired with a student, guiding their wheelchairs or helping them to catch the ball and run to the other end of the field in a game of flag football.

"When they go and volunteer, hopefully, they can see that they can have an impact on other people's lives and broaden their perspective on the world and what they can accomplish and help people do," Benedetto said. "That's why it's important, it's not just about football. It's about when they graduate, making them understand [that] they can help other people."

With these policies comes added

discipline, bringing a new perspective to this year's football program.

"As a whole, we've been a lot more disciplined than we were last year," senior Chiagozie Oliver said. "A disciplined football team wins games. Last year, people were flunking out. We had people missing because of



Photo by Aveesa Bhayani

Head coach Anthony Benedetto instructs players at Plano East v.s. Plano Senior Red Out Game on Sept. 23. The game ended with Plano Senior winning 33-22.

grade checks. Most likely we won't be having what we had last year. If we have people that are focusing in the classroom and they're gonna be focused on the field, it translates."

From the classroom to the field, Benedetto works to create a clear goal for his players. During the off-season, he sat down with the team in order to set goals for the rest of the year. They set standards for the upcoming season, all leading up to one overarching achievement: make the playoffs.

"He's made it so that everyone wants to play for him and a lot of the extra things people weren't doing before; now, they'll do it for him," senior Elijah Prince said. "It started when he came in February during the off-season. He told us what the plan was and everything that he said he was going to do, and he did it. After that, we always took him seriously."

Respect for the new coach ventures far beyond just students. Benedetto sparked interest in Principal George King with his innovative ideas to better the athletics program.

"He is young and somewhat inexperienced as a varsity coach," Principal George King said. "We had other candidates who were older and considerably more experienced than him, but we chose Coach Benedetto because we believed he could connect to our players better, our students better, and we see him as having a natural talent in leadership."

Benedetto didn't always want to be a teacher. He started college wanting to be a physical therapist. Benedetto then began interning at an elementary school, helping kids with their schoolwork.

"I just felt impactful, like I can really make a difference as a teacher," Benedetto said. "I'd rather be a teacher because it feels more fulfilling and it feels like I'm not working when I'm helping kids learn or play sports."

Now, Benedetto makes an impact on his players, showing them that he is invested in more than just their performance in football.

"He wants to send us to college one day if we're winning football games or not," Oliver said. "It's good to have a coach that really cares about you as a person more than an athlete."



Club Sports Take Their Toll on Athletes

Photo by Noah Winter

Varsity football team plays Rock Hill on Sep. 9, winning with a final score of 35-28.

By Maryam Ahmed

Pressure is the price of being a serious athlete, but for some athletes who are in club sports as well as school sports, twice the playing time means twice the pressure. Club sports allow athletes more time on the field, but many experience mental burnout. About 66% of high school athletes feel they've suffered as a result of overtraining according to the Sport Science Institute. Despite that, many feel club sports ultimately help athletes in the long run.

"I think club sports helps them to get an outside perspective coaching-wise," girls basketball coach Derrick Richardson said. "For the girls that are trying to play at the next level, it's about exposure to college coaches whenever they can."

While exposure to higher level coaching helps, some athletes feel that juggling both school and club sports takes a large mental toll on them.

"I love swimming, but day after day, sometimes it'll get really hard," sophomore Sahana Thasma said. "It's kind of like that battle between yourself like, 'do I push myself to go or not?' It just ends up burning you out."

The pressure on athletes comes from not just the game, but coaches, teammates, and even parents. In club sports, it can be even more competitive, as those athletes are trying to pursue their sport at a higher level. For those with stress

coming from all sides, it can very easily push them to the breaking point.

"The truth is, sometimes it's pushed by the parents," Richardson said. "Kids are kids [and] they want to please their parents, but it may not necessarily be what they love and what their dream is."

However, for those wanting to pursue their sport beyond high school, they feel club sports is where they're able to improve and develop their skill set the most rather than in school, since club sports are tailored better for their abilities. Even though extra playing time comes with extra stress, that's ultimately what helps them grow as players and allows them to continue their sport at a higher level.

"With me getting recruited through out-of-school ball, putting in the extra work is what allows you to be a better player," junior Marli Kennedy said.

Despite the added pressure and time commitment, many athletes with the dedication feel that club sports in conjunction with school sports have a net positive effect on them, especially when it comes to college applications.

"Club sports are a lot faster paced and that helps with recruiting to go to college," Kennedy said. "High school is more recreational, more for fun, rather than getting recruited for school."

For college applications, doing club sports in high school shows a level of dedication that proves the athlete is

willing to put in the time and effort for their sport, potentially giving them a boost in the application process.

"If we're talking six or seven years of club sports, then I feel like that's really impressive that you've stuck with it," Thasma said. "It shows the college admissions officers that you really love what you're doing."

To many athletes, their sport is more than a game; it's an integral part of their lives that shape who they are and help them mature. For those athletes, the extra physical pain and mental pressure are a small price to pay for invaluable life experience.

"At the end of the day, it is a game," Richardson said. "But what we do and what we teach is so much bigger than the actual game itself."

For athletes dedicated to mastering their craft, a little extra sweat goes a long way to making them not just better players, but better people. In the long run, it helps them achieve their athletic goals and gives them the tools to launch themselves to the next level.

"We tell the girls all the time that we want to win basketball games, but that's not what this program is about ultimately," Richardson said. "It's about teaching life lessons through athletics. I want them to look back in a few years, and feel like their time was well spent in this program, and that it helped them to mature and become a better human."

Restricted Reads

Book Bans Harming Students

Staff Editorial

As stated within a PEN America report, Texas was the leading state for the largest number of book bans with a total of 713 different publications being restricted. With more books being removed from shelves under the pretense of ‘protecting’ students from inappropriate content, freedom of speech is inflicted, highlighting the dangers of censoring student libraries.

Amidst a modern age of social and political tension, book bans continue to be evidence of administrations misusing their powers to enforce biased viewpoints. According to PEN America, a nonprofit organization advocating for freedom of expression, a total of 1,586 book bans were enacted across 86 school districts and 26 states throughout the 2022 school year. Of these books, stories containing LGBTQ+ topics were stated to be a “major target” for bans along with books discussing activism, racism and sexual assault. The blatant disregard for stories that confront social issues displays a clear prejudiced belief possessed by several school districts. This lack of exposure to new ideas within books has the potential to leave students with narrow viewpoints that prevent any progression in today’s society.

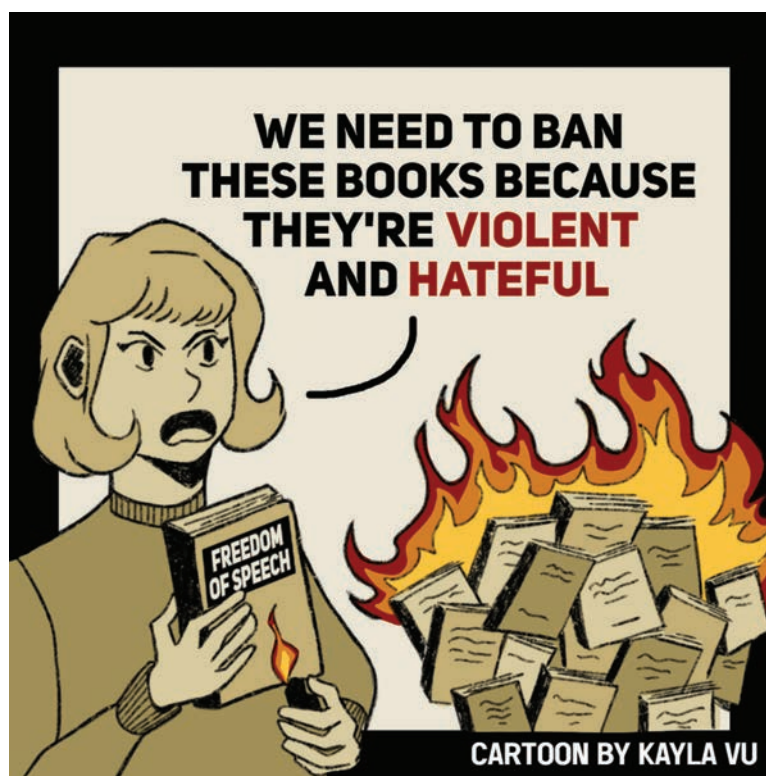
The banning of topics such as racism, sexual assault and LGBTQ+ in books also sets an implication that these subject matters aren’t appropriate to discuss. The U.S. Census Bureau 2021 statistics show that nearly

40% of the U.S. population are people of color and the Human Rights Campaign 2021 data estimate there to be at least 20 million LGBTQ+ adults in the country. Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN) data also reveals that on average, there are 463,634 victims of rape and sexual assault each year. Removing these books from li-

choice should rest with the student to read that book or not. Younger generations deserve the opportunity to form their own beliefs without the influence of others pushing them into a biased perspective. Older students are at a critical age for them to be exposed to diverse ideas, especially with the approaching of adulthood and opportunity to vote in elections.

While families may have valid concerns of stories containing inappropriate content and possess the right to restrict their children, their beliefs shouldn’t be imposed onto other families. According to expert Maoria Kirker of the Teaching and Learning at George Mason University Libraries, banning books limits the diversity of stories students can access and this can ultimately create significant learning gaps for young children. By attempting to ‘protect’ children from toxic media, the outcome becomes a different kind of damage, a decrease in knowledge.

Although censorship in books will most likely still continue into the far future, students deserve the opportunity to learn about different outlooks through their books. During a time of social media uprising, issues of racism, homophobia and sexual assault are brought to light. It’s a dire time for younger generations right now to be educated, and an even more important time for schools to be a part of that education.



braries provides a lack of representation for students who may relate to experiences of racism, sexual assault and sexual identity crises. Censoring storylines that display content such as LGBTQ+ couples also insinuates the discriminative idea that non-heterosexual relationships are inappropriate and necessary of censorship.

The action of book bans also continues to threaten the freedoms of students. Even if schools or parents disagree on the social and political perspectives within a story, ultimately the

**The Panther Prints staff voted unanimously against book bans*

Social Media Severely Impacts Students' Ability to Learn

By Noah Winter

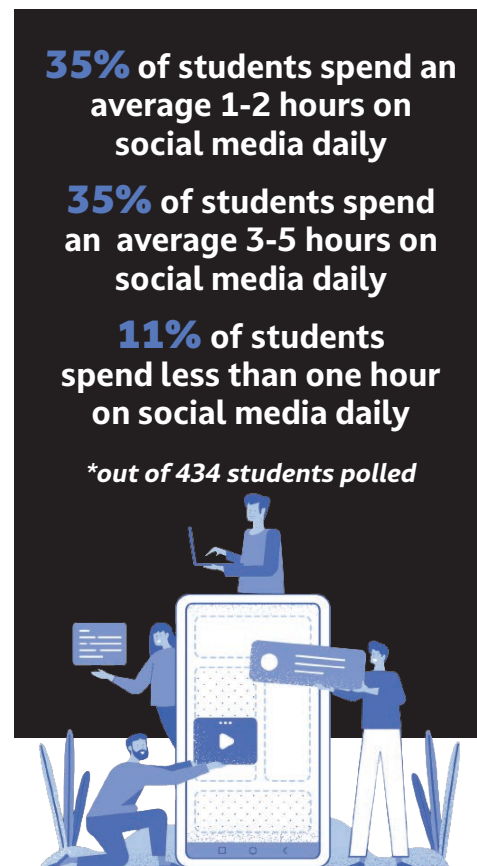
The new social media platform BeReal on the Apple app store is now in the #1 spot for downloads after finding recent popularity amongst Gen Z students according to Time Magazine. Now, social media is a common thing to see students using throughout the school day and during their own free time outside of school.

Social media affects students' ability to learn with it being a distraction, being exposed to online conflicts and stressing their mental health.

Social media only impedes the busy life of a student and causes a distraction, especially in class when their focus should be on learning instead of watching media on their mobile devices. Students can be very busy with studying for tests, working on homework, preparing for college, or working at a part time job. A survey taken by Tallo, an online platform that connects talented students with opportunities, reported that 82% of current generation students said that social media is a distraction with many teens spending hours a day on social media. According to Stomp Out Bullying, as reported by Common Sense Media, teens from the age of 13 to 18 spend an average of nine hours a day on entertainment media. With so many students spending so much time on social media, they are bound to run into some form of conflict.

Conflicts in general are not things that most students want to be engaged with. Online conflicts are worse, with cyber bullying becoming more common in the last couple of years. Online conflicts are more prone to happen because of one simple thing, comments. Roughly 80% of online conflicts originate from comments according to a group of 12 to 19 year old students

reported by Pew Research Center. 72% of girls and 64% of boys come across online drama at least once while on social media, also reported by Pew Research Center. The drama that is observed by many students can impact the focus of their learning with students' state of mind being focused on the drama that is going on instead



of the lesson that is in session. With all of these affairs being observed, it doesn't help the mental state of students and makes it more stressful for students to stay focused on school.

Students often have a lot on their mind, such as getting jobs, submitting their college applications, getting their driver's licenses and other tasks that are associated with becoming an adult. A student's stress level is often quite high at this point in their lives, and the stress

that is induced by social media doesn't improve the students ability to focus on school. In 2018, a survey was conducted with the Child Mind Institute with 450 students surveyed between the ages of 11 to 17. Of the 450, 35% of the surveyed students claimed they had poor sleep due to the excessive hours spent on media entertainment apps. In the same survey, 47% of the students were identified with anxiety after expressing their use on social media. With stress and anxiety being more common in students, their performance in school is shown by that through their participation in class and grades.

While some students claim that they learn tips and tricks from social media platforms, more than 98% use social media platforms for staying in touch with friends and keeping up with the news, according to Axiom Elite, a platform for data integration in higher education. More often than not, social media is being used as a way to pass time and keep someone entertained while waiting for the next planned part of their day with it not often being used for educational purposes. The University of Texas at Tyler reported that only 6% of social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook are being used in education.

Social media doesn't improve or make a positive influence on a students ability to learn. It creates a distraction for the students with most students even agreeing that it is a distraction. It also makes online conflicts worse and degrades our mental health with stress and anxiety. Social media should be limited in a student's life to improve their learning abilities, allowing students to relax and reduce the stress that can be induced by social media.

Classics Reemerge

By Sumayya Ali

Entertainment: the constant shift of media from generation to generation. For many present day adults who grew up in the '70s, '80s and '90s, media in 2022 has been a refreshing surge of their childhood obsessions. Ranging from movies like "Top Gun Maverick" and "Elvis" to the iconic Kate Bush in "Stranger Things," modern day media has been giving adults and teenagers a gateway to share interests on common ground.

"I do think that there's a lot of good stuff that came out of that [time period]," AP environmental science teacher Benjamin Wood said. "Corny stuff, cheesy stuff, there's a lot of good ['80s and '90s] entertainment. The music was simple but fun. The sitcoms were funny [and the messages] were always positive."

While the original film followed young Maverick and his inability to listen to his mentors, "Top Gun Maverick" switches the roles and has Maverick as a mentor, all of the while dealing with the mistakes of his past.

"I thought they did a really nice job of both connecting the new movie to the original, but making it its own as well," Wood said. "As a child of the '80s it was fun to listen to [the] music and to see the same actors. I grew up in a military family so I grew up around jets and ships and that kind of stuff, so that's always kind of extra nostalgic for [me]."

With the original "Top Gun" sweeping awards 36 years ago, "Top Gun Maverick" carried on the legacy of breaking box office records. "Top Gun Maverick" reached the highest grossing movie of the year as well as the sixth highest gross-

ing movie at the domestic box office.

"I watched 'Top Gun Maverick' and it was really good," sophomore Ishita Talati said. "I was excited to watch it because [there were] a lot of good reviews and the actor himself was like 60, so he [grew] up in the '80s and '90s. The way they made the movie, the pilots and the planes and the [editing] was amazing, the soundtracks were amazing too."



The nostalgia does not only encompass films. Musicians like Elvis and Kate Bush, who assisted in shaping the previous generations' entertainment, have been making comebacks recently. "Stranger Things," a show taking place in the '80s, featured Kate Bush's song "Running Up That Hill."

"The Kate Bush song was clearly way more popular now than it was the first time around," Wood said. "I think 'Stranger Things' did an amazing job [of] capturing the life of a kid who

knew how to ride a bike in the '70s and '80s. I mean if you take away the supernatural stuff, that was my childhood."

The reemergence of the song caused it to sweep number one on charts globally, as well as an increase in the use of the song on social media.

"I really loved [the "Stranger Things"] soundtrack, it was very nostalgic and I think what first brought me to the show was basically that," junior Arushi Tripathy said. "It was placed in an older setting, and I like the music and aesthetic [of the show]."

Elvis Presley, titled the "King of Rock and Roll," was a musician who heavily impacted entertainment culture during the 20th century. A man with numerous Grammys to his name, he secured a spot in the Grammy Hall of Fame and has songs that can always be found playing on '80s radio stations.

"I'd say old school [music] came from kind of like the neighborhood I grew up in," Tripathy said. "Everyone would listen to it. That's kind of how I grew into it."

A movie honoring his legacy and influence on music released this year. The soundtrack in the film includes the lead actor's voice mixed with excerpts of Elvis' voice as well as new songs from modern artists such as Doja

Cat and Eminem. The unique mix of popular artists from modern generations and Elvis' unique style allowed movie audiences to connect together.

"I think it's important to understand the institutions that older generations went through and how music [tends to] incorporate those feelings," Tripathy said. "I love that older artists are getting attention, I'm glad that other people have my music taste now."

Weekend Treats

By Sydnie Grayson

The weekend is a time to enjoy different experiences with friends; one of those experiences tend to be fun and exciting new places, such as restaurants, to brighten the action of the weekend.

RED TRUCK CAFE ★★★★★

910 W Parker Rd. #101, Plano, TX 75075

This cafe offers a great vintage atmosphere. Its signature logo, a red truck, makes it noticeable from a mile away. Their menu has a variety of entrees, including breakfast, lunch and dinner, but mainly serves burgers and other American dishes. The music in the background adds to the vintage feel of the restaurant, playing songs from the '70s, '80s and '90s. The interesting staff and the unique, bright decorations, such as fruit posters and pictures of different kinds of red trucks, join together to create the perfect restaurant for a fun night out with friends and family.



★★★★★ SCRAMBLER CAFE

231 E Farm to Market 544 Ste 709, Murphy, TX 75094

With a wide variety of breakfast entrees, this breakfast cafe offers gluten free and vegetarian options. While this establishment is a little smaller than the average restaurant, the posters and signs on the wall make the environment very welcoming and entertaining. The staff add on to this excitement with great recommendations from the menu and places to visit around Murphy. The service in this establishment is excellent due to its quick and efficient chefs who get the food to the table, hot and ready. Scrambler Cafe is the perfect place to enjoy a cup of coffee and a warm breakfast on a morning in the fall.

HAIDILAO HOT POT ★★★★★

9244 Prestmont Pl. Ste 200, Frisco, TX 75035

This hot pot restaurant is a great place to go for a fun and futuristic environment. This establishment offers a great variety of soups and meats for this Korean hot pot restaurant. Futuristic robots send you your food once you order it; the servers are there to take your initial order such as drinks and the main dishes, but the robots deliver everything to you at your table. The sauce station is very extensive and caters to a large audience with many different sauces of many different tastes. This station allows for a wide variety of different vegetables and sauces to mix together to dip the meat in. A personal favorite combination is satay sauce, sesame sauce, hoisin sauce, green onions, garlic, and sesame oil. The aprons given to you at the beginning of your meal tie everything together and make this restaurant an interesting weekend getaway.



★★★★★ SWEET HUT BAKERY & CAFE

2001 Coit Rd. Ste 301, Plano, TX 75075

While it is a bakery and a cafe, it provides a plethora of different sweets to choose from to cater to sweet tooths. They are located near the intersection of Park Rd. and Coit Rd in the Park Pavillion Center. Their menu includes drinks such as boba and other teas along with sweet pastries like the custard bun. They also offer healthy options for the drinks they serve, such as the brown sugar ginger tea and the honey lemon aloe tea. This cafe is a great place to study and chat with friends, considering the calm environment and the free wi-fi.



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