

The Tower

95th Year: Issue 3

Princeton High School
151 Moore Street, Princeton, New Jersey 08540

April 28, 2023

PHS alum Evan Gershkovich '10 detained in Russia



photo courtesy: Aristide Economopoulos/NJ Advance Media

Evan Gershkovich (middle) celebrates his win at a PHS soccer game in 2009.

Jessica Chen, EDITOR IN CHIEF
Chloe Zhao, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

On March 30, 2023, the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation arrested Wall Street journalist and PHS alum Evan Gershkovich '10, marking the first Russian detainment of an American journalist on charges of espionage since the Cold War. On Monday, April 10, the U.S. State Department deemed Gershkovich as "wrongfully detained."

The FSB arrested Gershkovich while he was on a reporting trip to Ekaterinburg, Russia. The next day, the FSB pressed charges of espionage, claiming that Gershkovich was "collecting classified information from a Russian military complex" and "acting on instructions from the American side." He was ordered into pre-trial detention until at least May 29.

"The Wall Street Journal vehemently denies the allegations from the FSB and seeks the immediate release of our trusted and dedicated reporter, Evan Gershkovich," the Journal said in a statement on March 30. "We stand in solidarity with Evan and his family."

Pjotr Sauer, The Guardian's Russian affairs reporter and Gershkovich's close colleague, had been talking to him the same morning he was arrested. To Sauer, Gershkovich is an "extremely kind" person who would be "the kind of guy that you bring to a party."

After Sauer received a call from Gershkovich's parents asking about his whereabouts that evening, he was unable to contact Gershkovich that night.

"I obviously got worried right away... He's a colleague of ours, he's a friend of ours, we know he's not a spy... We as journalists are trying to talk as much as we can about him, and write as much as we can about him so the world knows," Sauer said.



photo courtesy: dennissymons.com

In the Princeton community, Gershkovich was known as a well-rounded student at PHS and the captain of the boys varsity soccer team. In addition, he had been a Tower news and features and sports staff writer.

"It has been a difficult morning for the Princeton High School alumni in the class of 2010, particularly the many PHS soccer players who were close to Mr. Gershkovich," a Princeton Public School press release said. "He is remembered by his peers as being an outstanding student and an exceptional athlete during his time at Princeton High School."

Gym teacher Wayne Sutcliffe coached Gershkovich for four years on the boys varsity soccer team and shared a memorable moment from the 2009 Mercer County Tournament semifinals that attests his leadership and resilience.

"It was a really tight game and eventually it had to go to penalty kicks. After five kicks, it was still a tie, so it went into sudden death penalty kicks," said Sutcliffe. "The manager can choose anyone he wants to take the sixth kick and we chose him. He took the same kick in the same spot [as the first time] and converted. We blocked their kick and won the game just like that."

Growing up in a bilingual household that spoke Russian and English, Gershkovich also brought his love for his Russian heritage to the student body at PHS.

"In the 90's, everybody watched shows on Nickelodeon and there was a very popular little cartoon called 'Hey, Arnold' that a lot of little kids watched. But Evan instead watched a Russian cartoon and then he would share that with the other guys on the soccer team and his friends. That was something that you couldn't [easily] access and experience during those days," Sutcliffe said.

When Gershkovich first went to work in Russia six years ago for The Moscow Times, the political climate was more cordial towards the west. Over the years, he captured the changes that were occurring,

but did not ever think to sacrifice his journalistic integrity.

"He said, 'I'm just one of the few [American journalists] left [in Russia]. I know that he felt like it was his duty to report. He loved the Russian people and he still does,'" said Ella Gerkovich, Gershkovich's mother, in an April 15 Wall Street Journal interview.

On April 13, Sergey Lavrov, Russia's foreign minister, told U.S. media that Russia could be open to a prisoner swap — but only after Gershkovich stands trial. What seems to be yet another prisoner exchange situation closely mirrors when WNBA Basketball player Britney Griner was detained in December 2022 and was eventually released in exchange for arrested Russian arms trader Victor Bout.

Gershkovich's arrest is also part of a growing trend where journalists are being targeted and exploited by authoritarian countries such as Russia and Iran. Sauer explained that the journalism community feels threatened and outraged by Gershkovich's arrest.

"It's becoming harder to do journalism, to be honest... it seems like journalists are being used more as pawns [and] arrested, kidnapped, etc... The profession is getting harder," Sauer said.

PHS alum Thatcher Foster '10, Gershkovich's childhood friend and former soccer teammate, created freegershkovich.com, alongside Gershkovich's family and other friends.

"It's been amazing how much support there is and how many people want to help. But it's a hard [situation] to help. So I think the website is a really important place for people to stay updated on statuses and provide support, write letters, and also support his family [with the] GoFundMe," Foster said.

While Gershkovich's immediate release is unlikely, Sutcliffe urges onlookers to maintain an optimistic outlook.

"Evan was always at his best under pressure. So, if I know Evan, and even though I haven't seen him in a long time, I have to think that he's a resilient guy, and that he's okay," Sutcliffe said.

Students can amplify Gershkovich's story by using #IStandWithEvan or #FreeEvan. Letters to Gershkovich can be sent to freegershkovich@gmail.com. ■

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PHS Profile: Kathie Foster's short time at PHS focuses on student well-being

Chris Cheong and Daniel Guo,
NEWS & FEATURES CO-EDITORS
Mattias Blix, CONTRIBUTING WRITER



Adrian Serieyssol '23, Nevaeh Williams '23, and Victoria Odole '24 listen during a meet and greet.

Following the sudden dismissal of Former PHS Principal Frank Chmiel, Dr. Kathie Foster, an educator and a strong supporter of the public school system, assumed the position of Interim Principal at Princeton High School two days before Spring Break.

Foster started her educational career as an elementary English teacher in the Robbinsville school district and fell in love with working on the curriculum. This love brought her to the administrative side of the district, and eventually led her to the Superintendent position.

"I was an elementary teacher, and I actually taught every single grade level but kindergarten," said Foster. "I started to fall in love with middle school students, so I really focused on being a middle school teacher and I ended up being an English language arts middle school teacher, and I loved it until I took the position as Assistant Principal."

Last year, Foster came out of retirement to take up the position of Interim Assistant Superintendent for PPS. After fulfilling her role, she was called back once more to become Interim Principal in March.

"I retired as Superintendent in 2020 ... I did some volunteer work, [for] Dress for Success, which is an organization that empowers women, [and has] workshops and resume building [about] educating and teaching. [Following] that, I was ready to return, [since] I've always been a passionate supporter of public education," Foster said.

Foster's transition has been well-received by administrators such as Cecilia Birge and Rashone Johnson, both current PHS Assistant Principals.

"I think her transition has been seamless. Schools are not run by the individual, [they're] run by a team. And we're very lucky that we have a really good team. She's so mindful of Princeton culture... academically, athletically, artistically, and politically," Birge said.

Although students are only just getting to know her, she already has knowledge of the culture at PHS from working as the Assistant Superintendent last year, letting her blend into the administrative team already at PHS.

"She's a veteran principal and she's been an administrator for years. Remember, the last year or two, she was here in the capacities of being the Assistant Superintendent before, so she's been doing this on a higher administrative role. She knows the district from having been here in that higher position. She's familiar with how to operate building operations," Johnson said.

Her familiarity with the PHS community has clearly shown itself to the administrators.

"There are times that as administrators, we often live in the gray area when it's time to make a decision, but because [Foster] served as superintendent and assistant superintendent for so many years, she's so familiar with the district policies and does not hesitate to make decisions. So I think I can speak for the entire team that we all feel really, really supported," Birge said.

Foster's main goal is to have a positive school year. She places a special emphasis on mental health and how to

maintain a balance between academic stress and time to regroup. Foster wants to work with the staff to make sure that everyone understands and supports students in the classroom with mental health.

"I know that the school year is almost over, but I want to make sure that students feel emotionally and physically safe, that they're successful academically, and that they know that people care about them," Foster said.

One thing Foster loves about the Princeton community is that students are at the center. She also appreciates how passionate the educators are and how they really care about the students that they are teaching.

"It's about activating your voice, empowering students, creating student leaders."

"It's about activating your voice, empowering students, and creating student leaders to go out in the world and contribute. So, I love my work even though I didn't get to interact as much with students. I was able to interact with people and engage with students," said Foster.

Instead of sending out morning emails, Dr. Foster will stick to her Sunday night messages.

"I know that it may be a disappointment to people, but I'm learning all of these new systems all at once and I am trying to meet with students. We are also looking into the possibility of putting the lunch menu on an app or website to make it easier [for students]," Foster said.

Foster has also made the decision that this year, students will not be required to wear lanyards, but students are given the choice to adjust to the new system early. While she believes that it would be beneficial, Foster and the Student Advisory Council decided that wearing lanyards would be too big a change this year.

"Students, I want you to know, I'm here for a short time, but I am here for you fully. I want to be visible; I'm going to champion for you and provide the best end of the year for you. I can guarantee you that I am really passionate about making sure that you have a great end of the year," Foster said. ■

Save The Dates: May and June

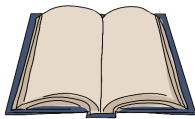
events compilation: Chris Cheong and Daniel Guo,
NEWS & FEATURES CO-EDITORS

Communiversy

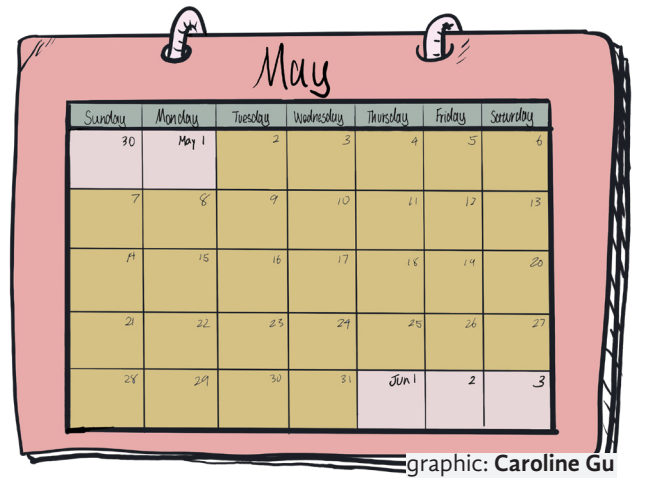
April 30, 1:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.
Location: Downtown Princeton and the Princeton University Campus

Aptly named, Communiversy is a time of celebration within the Princeton and Princeton University community. Throughout the afternoon, there will be plentiful booths for arts and crafts, live music, and stands featuring the most well-known restaurants in the area. Make sure to come with your friends and family to enjoy five hours of non-stop fun in downtown Princeton!

2023 Senior Reading in Fiction
May 3, 5:00 p.m.
Location: Prospect House



graphics: Sara Hu



graphic: Caroline Gu

Princeton Research Day

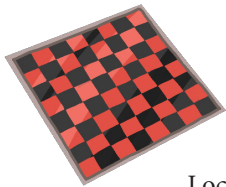
May 11, 12:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Location: Frist Campus Center

Interested in what work is done by college students and beyond? Head to Princeton Research Day at the Frist Campus Center, open to the entire campus community and the public to attend in-person, to hear projects done by various students, post-docs, and even professors free of charge. If not for the work, go there for the cupcake celebration held to commemorate the event!

Prom
June 1, 6:30 p.m.
Location: The Westin at Forestal Village



Tabletop Game Night
May 18, 6:00 p.m.
Location: Princeton Public Library



Film and Q&A
Filmmaker Christine Choy: "Who Killed Vincent Chin?"

May 30, 6:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.
Location: Princeton Public Library

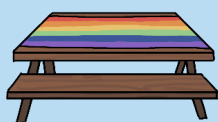
A documentary film about the murder of Vincent Chin, a Chinese-American engineer in Detroit during the 1980s, come to watch an eye-opening film with interviews from eyewitnesses, activists, and even the perpetrators themselves that highlights the community activism that pushed for a retrial as a civil rights Supreme Court case.



Princeton Library Pride Picnic

June 3, 12:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Location: Princeton Public Library

Kicking off Pride Month for 2023, the Princeton Public Library will host a Pride picnic on June 3 at Palmer Square. Celebrating inclusivity and acceptance, the picnic will host live music featuring Sarah Donner, and also have art projects and family friendly games for the Princeton community.

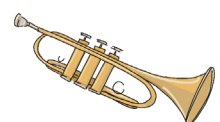


The Princeton Festival

June 9 – 25
Location: Morven Museum & Garden

What better way is there to welcome the summer than a beautiful performance by the Princeton Symphony Orchestra? The Princeton Festival, which will occur throughout the month of June, will feature the production of Gioachino Rossini's "Il Barbiere di Siviglia." Make sure you find parking in advance; there is no on-site parking available.

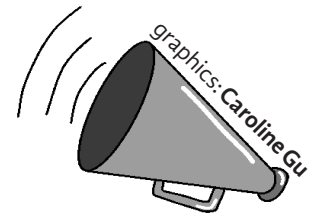
Jazz in June
June 2 – 30
Location: McCarter Theatre Center





Flash Features

Leila Guitton and Meiya Xiong,
CONTRIBUTING WRITERS



College Board National Recognition Programs grant awards to PHS students



photo: Caroline Gu

Lynne Williams '24, Ella Bardzilowski '25, Logan Hollingsworth '24, Aiden McKenzie '24, Ella Hemon '25, Sophie Gono '25, Marina Perez '25, Sara Shahab-Diaz '25, Emilia Avalos '25, and Daniela Garcia Perez '24 are some of the many recipients of the award at PHS.



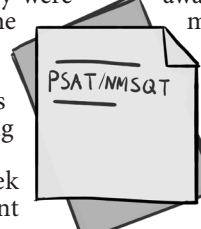
A total of 42 PHS students earned academic honors from the College Board National Recognition Programs, which recognize underrepresented students who identify as African American, Hispanic, Indigenous, or attend high school in a rural area. These students were able to qualify through excelling on PSAT/NMSQT, PSAT 10, or AP exams. "[These recognitions are] something that a student can put on their resume [to] highlight that they were recognized by the College Board as being one of the highest scoring people within their ethnic group, [which gives] them something to add in as a plus in the college admissions process," said PHS Director of Counseling Services Dana Karas.

As more colleges and universities seek to increase the diversity of their student bodies, these recognition programs on College

Board exams play an important role in bolstering the applications of high-achieving students from underrepresented groups and allow them to be identified in the College Board's Student Search Service.

"I think it's a really nice opportunity, and it's really awesome that the College Board has these kinds of awards to recognize underrepresented minorities. I'm really honored to have received it," said Emilia Avalos '25, one of the recipients of the National Hispanic Recognition Program Award.

"I think our students should just really be very proud of their achievements, and they should also be proud . . . even if they don't make one of these lists. Our kids should just keep doing their best and making us proud," Karas said. ■



Cranbury School celebrates 125 year anniversary

From April 21 through April 30, the Cranbury School hosted a week of jubilation to honor and celebrate its 125th anniversary. Since many PHS students live in Cranbury and attended the Cranbury School, many students attended and helped out in this event as it gave them an opportunity to volunteer and earn community service hours. PHS students also formed a band that performed in a segment of the revelry.

The school tried to tie events into the school's lengthy history, placing an emphasis on the number 125. Other major events were a spirit day, the featuring of a "Hall of Memories" with tributes, artifacts, and photos from school history, and a community dance for former teachers and alumni. These festivities reflect the "go big or go home" spirit mentioned by Cranbury School Superintendent and Principal Dr. Jennifer K. Diszler.

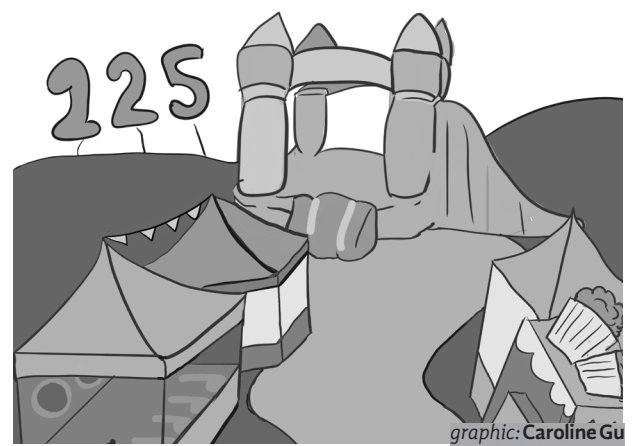
"The importance [of the events] is celebrating how this

school has really been the heart of our community... It's providing an opportunity for prior alumni [and] families that have kids that go here or that went here to be able to come together. ... This school is the thing that we all have in common, [so the significance of the celebrations] is an ability to come together and celebrate [the school] and really be excited," Diszler said.

Similarly, Cranbury School alumna Drew Trenfield '25 liked the sense of connection that the celebrations offered to current and former members of the Cranbury School.

"I think it's cool that they're asking former students and teachers to come because it's nice if you haven't seen people in a while... [it] helps us to stay connected," Trenfield said.

The week of festivities ended with a community-wide daytime celebration, featuring student performances, food trucks, arts and crafts, school tours, and the unveiling of a "special" gift to give back to the school for the future. ■



graphic: Caroline Gu

Odyssey of the Mind club achieves greatness in competitions



photo: Caroline Gu

Left to right: Wendy Jin '24, Leyla Gibbon '24, Avery Madison '24, and Elie Nghiem '23, exchange ideas.

PHS' Odyssey of the Mind club had two teams compete at the 2023 State Finals Tournament on April 1. All year long, the club focused on creative problem solving, requiring a mix of engineering and performing arts skills. Two teams of PHS students worked to produce a creative solution to their prompts in the form of the performance.

"We respond to the prompt that we're given in a skit that we come up with. We also make all the sets and the scripts and whatever is going to be part of [it]," said club leader Emma Macmillan '23.

The 2022-23 Technical Problem is titled "Because iCan" and required teams to build a device that could complete tasks on its own, such as raising a flag and ringing a bell. The team then needed to include this in a performance by creating a character, costume, and settings that reflects a laboratory. For the structural problem titled "Where's the structure?," teams were required to create a structure

consisting only of balsa wood and glue to balance and hold as much weight as possible.

The club's two teams placed first in their categories at the Coastal Plains Regional Tournament on March 11. This allowed both of them to advance to the 2023 State Finals Tournament. There, the "Because iCan" team placed third in the category, making it to World Finals. The team working on "Where's the structure?" placed fourth in its category and did not advance.

The club is currently focused on raising money to cover the expenses in order to send the team to the World Finals, which will take place May 24-27, 2023 at Michigan State University.

"I learned to appreciate my teammates, and [with] the experience and the knowledge that we have [gained], we can structure stuff more easily. I have these experiences now, and I've also made some good friends," Macmillan said. ■

IDEAS Center offers young students guidance

Matias Da Costa, STAFF WRITER

Throughout the month of April, during Tiger Time, the PHS IDEAS Center hosted a set of study skills workshops designed to help PHS students in their academic ambitions. After receiving many requests from students this year, the IDEAS Center Board, together with Head of Ideas Center Andrea Dinan, decided to offer Study Skills workshops tailored to teach freshmen and sophomores various study skills that may be useful for their academic career as well as after college.

"Many students this year requested more assistance while preparing for tests, which led to interest in bringing the workshops back. The two-day workshop [utilized] brain-compatible learning with strategies and activities that [were] based upon current neuroscience research. Students will have a better understanding of study habits, how they use their own time, and essentially how to study smarter, not harder," Dinan said.

During the sessions, presentations and activities were administered by members of the IDEAS Center Board. Overall, the workshop emphasized methods to help attendees become more self-reliant in their study habits.

"With the workshop, students [learned] how to be better students overall in a more productive manner with various things relating to school. The first session [talked] about self-evaluation, managing your time, organization tips, and test prep. At the second session, we [covered] study skills, memory, and how to stay motivated," said IDEAS Center Board member Yugan[dhara] Luthra '24.

Applications for the spring Study Skills workshops closed before Spring Break, but will be offered in October for those who weren't able to sign up this year, as well as for incoming freshmen. Luthra stresses the importance of these workshops, as they give all PHS students equal opportunities to succeed in their classes.

"For those who don't happen to have as many resources as other people do, the workshop [was] very helpful. PHS is considered a very [academically] successful community, but there are some [students] who don't have the resources for that. We [wanted] to provide them with these opportunities for free. Outside help would [have] cost money," Luthra said.

One of the participants in the first workshop of the year was Vita Moss-Wang '25, who thought it was a great experience to interact with people who have been through the same experience.

"I would recommend this to other students if they feel like they were never really taught how to study... Studying comes easily to some kids, but not others, so I think environments like these are important for kids who think they are the only ones struggling or don't know where to start," Moss-Wang said.

Additional activities later in the year were offered for those who would have liked to continue the workshop after the two preliminary sessions. Luthra explained that the Study Skills workshop was part of a continued effort to augment their current efforts to assist students in their classes in a more productive and effective manner.

"It [was] an extension of our current tutoring methods because with traditional tutoring, we try to help [tutees]



photo: Caroline Gu

Cherie Sun '23, a Board member of the Ideas Center, gets ready for the workshop session.

learn things, but with the workshops, we [taught] them how to learn things in a better way," Luthra said.

Ever since the IDEAS Center's inception, PHS students from all grades have had the opportunity to sign up either as a tutee or a tutor, helping those who need assistance in their respective classes. IDEAS Center tutor Priya Brunnermeier '25 suggests that by connecting with students and assisting them in their classes, tutors can facilitate a more positive learning experience and help form a more tightly-knit PHS community.

"I liked the IDEAS Center's goals of providing free tutoring services to everyone and thought that it would be a good way to help my community," Brunnermeier said. "My favorite part is watching my tutees grow and learn new skills." ■

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OPINIONS

The indictment ripple effect and the need for ethical leadership

Aishwarya Vedula, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

The recent indictment of former President Donald Trump has sent shockwaves through the political world. While it remains to be seen whether or not he will be found guilty, the mere fact that a former president has been indicted is a significant development. Trump has pleaded not guilty to over 30 counts of hush-money payments in a recent court case that discusses Trump's felonies starting from the 2016 presidential election. It is simply unfit for a person of that much status to have such

a prominent role in a substantial scandal, and still have political power after the fact. Although we like to think that our political leaders have similar lifestyles to our own, due to their fabrication of a common-man life, we simultaneously hold them on a pedestal, assuming that their language and actions would reflect the high political power that they were able to earn. Ethical leadership must be a subject of discussion when such criminal offenses rise to the surface. The way that this redefines who is suitable for political power extends far beyond the political realm and has the potential to impact leadership across all sectors of society, including schools.

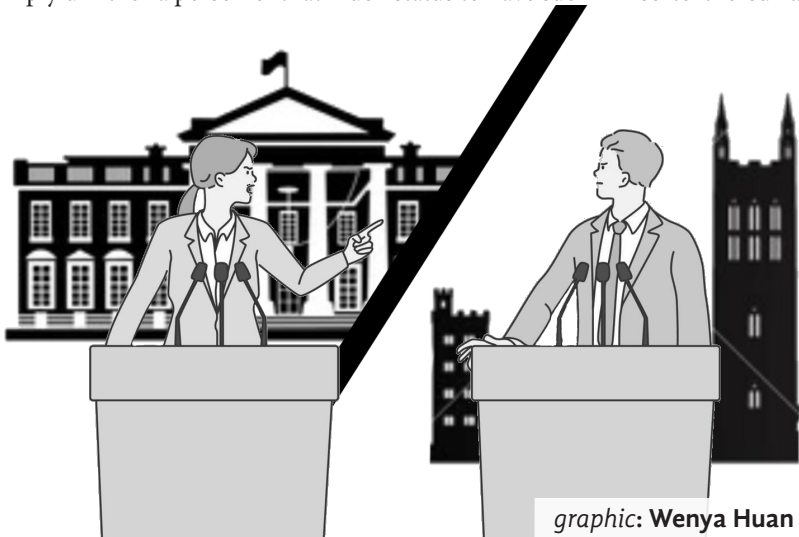
One of the most significant ways in which Trump's indictment could change leadership in the future is by setting a new precedent for accountability. For too long, leaders in various industries have been able to act with impunity, knowing that they are unlikely to face any serious consequences for their actions. Trump's indictment signals that even those at the highest levels of power are not immune to accountability. This message has the potential to trickle down to other sectors, including schools, where administrators and

educators may feel emboldened to take a stronger stance on issues of ethics.

However, if Trump is able to get out of the indictment, this scandal could send a different message about leadership in our country. It could suggest that powerful individuals are able to use their influence to avoid facing consequences for their actions. This would be a discouraging message for those who are invested in promoting ethical leadership, particularly in schools.

As PHS continues to undergo leadership transitions, the importance of ethical and accountable leadership has become increasingly clear. It has become exceedingly important that we can rely on the people who are in power to be accountable and reliable, as well as transparent. Just as Trump's indictment signals the need for accountability at the highest levels of power, our school must work to ensure that their leaders are held accountable for their actions. This includes implementing strong ethical codes of conduct, fostering a culture of transparency and honesty, and ensuring that those who violate ethical standards face appropriate consequences.

Ultimately, the impact of Trump's indictment on leadership in the future will depend on the outcome of the case. However, regardless of the outcome, this event has already sent a powerful message about the importance of ethical and accountable leadership. As PHS continues to navigate leadership transitions, we must take note of this message and work to ensure that our leaders uphold the highest standards of ethics and integrity. ■



graphic: Wenya Huan

Martial arts at PHS: can we be doing more in P.E.?

Amy Lin, CONTRIBUTING WRITER



graphics: Wenya Huan

When we think of electives at PHS, we often imagine an extra class exploring anything from visual and performing arts, to language and culture, to STEM skills. While they're not strictly part of our core curriculum, they are still academic classes that encourage students to deepen their knowledge in an area of study, serving as exploratory programs outside of our regular classes. Yet, despite the wide range of classes we have at PHS, there are still certain things missing from our far-reaching program of studies; one example of this is martial arts, a unique intersection of both sport and philosophy.

Martial arts offer a wide range of both physical and mental health benefits. Since most martial arts require a lot of high-intensity training and coordination, they have been shown to improve cardiovascular health, strength, flexibility, balance, and reaction time, all while teaching skills needed for self-defense. In fact, these skills are so useful that the Marine Corps Martial Arts Program trains their marines with a combination of 17 different forms of martial arts, including Brazilian jiu-jitsu, Aikido, and Taekwondo. One of the mental benefits in practicing martial arts is increased self-confidence and sense of self-awareness, as they focus on the idea of coordination and cultivating your physical and mental energy. It's a common theme amongst experienced martial artists to increase the self-esteem of students as they teach new techniques and improve their abilities. The key idea is to stay humble while outperforming your opponent, who is assumed to be bigger and stronger. Given that this requires a great deal of discipline and focus, practicing martial arts improves perseverance, which can translate to other areas of a person's life. Additionally, one aspect that distinguishes martial arts from other sports is the respect for teachers, opponents, and oneself. Martial artists are taught to control large outbursts of emotion, especially in victories or losses. This key philosophy is particularly beneficial for children and teenagers who are developing interpersonal skills. Resolving potential conflicts with a

calm mindset will aid in students' ability to remain cool in times of distress.

Some forms of martial arts practice concentration in a different way. Tai chi, a popular form of Qigong, incorporates slow, fluid movements and focuses specifically on breathing. The calmness of Tai chi helps with relaxation as it promotes blood circulation and dispels tension. Practicing Tai chi sets a strong foundation in learning how to deal with stress in the face of adversity. As this foundation strengthens over time, it sets up lifelong skills for improving mental health; these skills can be very beneficial in the future, when students really need them.

Besides the health benefits, adding a martial arts class would likely build cultural awareness and diversity in our curriculum. Martial arts are built upon culture and principles of East Asian philosophy. Take Tai chi for example — what many people may not recognize is the deep connection between the ancient Chinese Taoist philosophy, often represented by the Yin Yang symbol, and the principles within Tai chi. The Yin Yang symbol famously represents the Taoist ideology of balance between opposite but connected forces. Tai chi's slow, focused movements allow one to gather their energy in a harmonious, undisturbed way. When one move is performed in Tai chi, another move must be performed simultaneously to balance the first move out. For example, slowly raising your right arm would imply raising your left leg at the same time. The physical act of balancing transforms into a spiritual balance of opposing forces.

While many sports struggle to incorporate gender equality in their practice, martial arts faces no such problem, because teams do not get split with regards to gender. Martial arts also tackle issues with the "make the team" model of conventional sports, which often favors those with a natural talent and leaves others behind. Due to martial arts' inclusive nature, each individual has an

opportunity to participate. Furthermore, it's easier to get started with martial arts compared to other sports. Martial arts do not require expensive gear or renting out a field; it can be practiced by anyone in any setting. So while martial arts may seem daunting at first, its environment is much more friendly and inclusive than conventional sports.

“Learning martial arts would encourage students to get out of their comfort zone and try something new.”

Martial arts are a strong candidate for a new elective in our program of studies, or even a new unit in P.E. class. Currently, our outdoor P.E. classes don't usually involve high-intensity exercise, as many students

choose to walk around the track given the chance. Due to the lack of structure in our P.E. classes, students don't learn much about physical exercise and instead stick to what they're comfortable with. Learning martial arts would encourage students to get out of their comfort zone and try something new. Having a greater structure surrounding martial arts in our P.E. classes or adding it to our school's list of electives would benefit students' physical and mental health greatly, in addition to diversifying our school's academic culture. ■

Fun facts about martial arts!

1. In the United States, martial arts became very popular in the 1960s and 1970s.
2. Internationally, there are about 180 different types of martial arts.
3. In 1960, Elvis Presley received a black belt in Karate.
4. The little-known martial art by the name Kalaripayattu was one of the first martial arts ever practiced.
5. Some of the most famous films about martial arts are "Karate Kid" and "Rocky".

Ops Editors take on studying: how and where?

Tamar Assayag and Jane Bennett, OPINIONS CO-EDITORS

Studying is hard. We all know from our hours of working that it takes a serious amount of endurance to stay focused on a task for such a long period of time. When we are so surrounded by distractions and our brains need a break, shifting our attention is easy. When that does occur, and our minds give in to the tempting distractions around us, we often feel a lot of guilt for failing to stay on task. If there was a way to be in a perfect flow state when we have to work, the world would be far more efficient. So, is there a way to simulate that state through the environment that people work in? Even though it's up to personal preference, in general, there are certain studying environments that are more beneficial in cultivating motivation compared to others.

Public vs. In Private Studying:

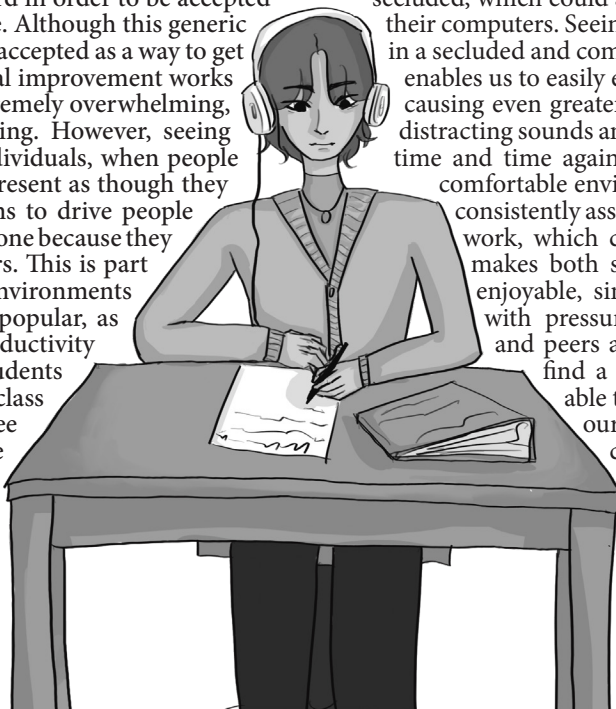
For the most part, it seems that the force that most often drives people to do work is insecurity; this is often achieved by working in public spaces, as they feel the need to prove themselves to the world. Oftentimes, students work hard in order to be accepted into a good college, and eventually lead a successful life. Although this generic view of upward mobility is seriously flawed, it is widely accepted as a way to get ahead of other peers. For some, this method of personal improvement works well, while for others, all the obstacles can become extremely overwhelming, which may distract them from accomplishing anything. However, seeing as working is a way to prove one's worth for many individuals, when people work in public, they often like to present as though they are very productive. This seems to drive people quite effectively to get work done because they are under the eyes of others. This is part of why in-person work environments and open offices are so popular, as they allow for one's productivity to be seen. At PHS, students often get distracted in class or even during their free periods, as they utilize their independent work time to play online games

or other such activities. Opting to complete their work in a library or a coffee shop after school could be a solution to these students' problems, as for some people, being in public helps eliminate the culture of distraction that we encounter so often in our school.

Comfort vs. Structure:

Working on the couch or in your bed seems appealing because it's cozy and you can snuggle up to your pillows while you do your work. It is the closest working can get to sleeping — which is why it can also be slightly risky. Although working in bed has a facade of seeming both productive and comfortable, and seeing as Rory Gilmore, the character from "Gilmore Girls" known for her study routine, was able to study on her

living room couch, one might assume that anyone should be able to work in that type of environment. However, not everything that works for Rory works for the average PHS student doing work at home. Working in the living room or in a bedroom often feels secluded, which could allow a student to easily distract themselves with something on their computers. Seeing as people rely on the eyes of others in order to stay busy, being in a secluded and comfortable area — which we generally associate with relaxation — enables us to easily escape from our work mindset and transition into a distraction, causing even greater stress later on. Although working in solitude, away from the distracting sounds and movements of others may be very effective for some students, time and time again we are suggested to separate our work from our most comfortable environments. By working within our rooms, we consistently associate our comfortable environment with work, which can become seriously suffocating and makes both school and home environments less enjoyable, since both would become associated with pressure and constant work. The adults and peers around us so often encourage us to find a work-life balance, but how are we able to balance out our normal lives from our work lives when our work lives consume the environment in which we are supposed to live?



Music vs. Silence:

Although some people are content with the sounds of their surroundings, others rely on silence for a lack of distraction. It seems that the general consensus is that working in silence is the most beneficial method. However, there is a large group of people that enjoy listening to relaxing music while studying, circulating through the various lo-fi and classical playlists that streaming platforms have to offer. ASMR (usually with no talking) and white noise also suffice as long as they do not end up being too distracting. Although there are the rare people who can work while blasting Harry Styles or Taylor Swift, and sing along as they do so, for the most part, silence and softer, more ambient sounds seem to do the trick in eliminating distractions.

It's really hard to find the perfect environment, and it generally takes several adjustments and constant movement from location to location to find the perfect one for your needs. Depending upon the type of learner you are, this could differ from person to person. It's important that each student finds their ideal studying environment in order to remain motivated and focused as we continue to work towards our academic aspirations. ■

graphics: Angela Wu

Behind the screen: the problem with idolization in K-pop

Ruhee Hegde and Meghna Myneni, CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

When it comes to celebrities, fans' grasp of social conventions seems to slip away, as oftentimes by claiming that they understand their idols, they dehumanize them. We tend to think of respected figures or famous celebrities as being so far removed from real life that it's impossible to connect with them in a typical person-to-person friendship. Idolizing celebrities is typical for adolescents — after all, just about everyone has a high-profile person they look up to or support. But with the rise of the internet and social media, these seemingly harmless relationships can turn into more nefarious ones.

The obsessions caused by the idolization of celebrities sometimes develops into full-fledged stalking. In South Korea, the stalking of K-pop celebrities is so common that a term was coined in Korean to describe them: sasaeng fans. Sasaeng fans predominantly consist of teens or young adults encouraged by a heightened exposure to the media. One example of a sasaeng fan is Josh1994, a German fan documented to have harassed and stalked various members of the K-pop group Twice. After publicizing information about her and eventually being rejected, he began to send her death threats. Fortunately, this incident didn't lead to further violence, but in some cases, it does. In one case, the look-alike of Rosé, a singer from the K-pop group BLACKPINK, was stabbed at an airport by a sasaeng fan for not returning their sentiments.

By supporting the tightly-regulated image of celebrities, the public essentially reinforces the false persona that controlling labels have placed on celebrities. In K-pop industries, celebrities are often subjected to unrealistic expectations pertaining to weight and body shape. Moonbin of the K-pop group ASTRO died allegedly by

suicide on April 19, 2023. It is presumed that the industry's expectations of him combined with the demands of the "Korea wave" were the major factors that led to his death. By continuing to idolize these celebrities, fans reinforce industry standards that oppress them.

Constant exposure to celebrities makes comparing them to yourself inevitable. The public often fantasizes and gravitates toward celebrities who seem more humble and funny, like a "regular" person, without realizing that the normalcy of these people is completely fabricated, which creates unachievable standards. The rise of social media has heightened this phenomenon by allowing internet users to be more exposed to celebrities, thus causing teens to have lower self-confidence when they inevitably compare themselves to seemingly perfect influencers.

Social media additionally offers a larger platform for celebrities to live more public lives, making them greater topics of obsession. Overexposure to one's day-to-day experiences are available to anyone, ultimately making it easier to create parasocial connections, which are essentially one-sided relationships. For example, by openly sharing vlogs online or having a very exposed media presence, fans feel more connected and involved in their idols' lives. Seemingly minor actions can also contribute to this curiosity — the use of second-person voice in vlogs, insider information on the "backstage" events, and even photos taken by celebrities themselves are all personal and inviting. This blurs the line between being a spectator or a friend, resulting in social media users feeling rejected and lonely upon realizing they don't know their icons as well as they thought.

Teenagers in general are disproportionately affected by these emotional repercussions of social media. According to a 2018 study by Pew Research, 97 percent of teens have a presence on some social media platform and 45 percent of teens are online constantly, thereby boosting their exposure to celebrities. Because of their large presence on social media, teens more than any other age group are affected by parasocial relationships with celebrities, especially since adolescents in general are always searching for role models. This highlights the larger problem of exposure to social media in children and teens: The importance

of online safety is often not thoroughly communicated. The lack of education dedicated towards online safety leaves teens especially vulnerable to the many emotional consequences social media widely causes. Realizing the dangers that can result from carefree exploration of social media is a necessary step in protecting oneself from those consequences, which is why it is imperative to recognize the emotional and physical dangers social media present. To protect ourselves from the adverse affects of social media, we must recognize and caution ourselves against the peril that festers even from behind the screen. ■



graphic: Angela Wu

PHS SPEAKS OUT

"NJGPA should not be a graduation requirement."



AVA GIKAS '24

"Psychology is NOT a real science."



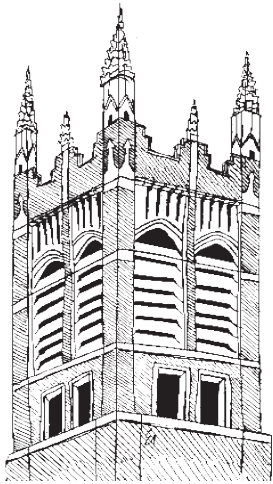
ARMAAN AHMED '23

"PHS needs to bring back the strawberry slushies."



MAYA HALCOMB '25

photos: Jane Bennett



Forming the ideal student-teacher relationship

Editorial

During their time in school, students spend time with numerous teachers, all of whom influence their education in various ways. Every teacher presents themselves differently, with some being close confidants for their students and others steering away from personal connections to maintain professionalism at all times. But is there a perfect balance between the two extremes? Can teachers find a way to be a support system for their students, while also ensuring that as an instructor, they do not cross any boundaries? At PHS, we want to ensure that both students and staff feel comfortable at all times, but it's also important to acknowledge the benefits that personal connections between students and teachers can have at our school.

On one hand, it is important for teachers to maintain their professionalism, whether in regard to whole class discussions, office hours, or emails. A teacher's job is to inform and educate, as well as to cultivate a greater understanding and curiosity among their students; all things that cannot be done if a teacher does not take their job seriously. Maintaining professionalism doesn't inherently mean that educators must wear a suit and tie to school everyday, but it does mean that students and teachers should, at the most basic level, keep their relationships educational. On the teacher's part, this entails establishing respect for the students, clarifying the rules and expectations for the the course, and ensuring that the students feel comfortable in class. For the students, maintaining an educational relationship can mean following the teacher's instructions and staying on task; speaking to the teacher as an educator, not a friend; and reciprocating the same respect that teachers show to students. To put it simply, a teacher shouldn't become a student's close friend; it would permanently alter the classroom environment and change the teacher's treatment of both that student and other students in the class. A close relationship could cause preference or favoritism within the class, harming other students. Such a connection between a teacher and their student can also raise reasonable concerns regarding safety. Teachers nationwide have abused their position of power by

reaching out to students as a friend and then proceeding to distort and manipulate their relationship.

Yet, not every teacher is like that. It's also important to acknowledge how positive such a connection can be. Often when a student has a teacher that they feel comfortable talking to, they go to that teacher for advice. For example, LGBTQ+ students who don't feel comfortable talking with their parents can use teachers as a source of guidance. In that case, a teacher can be a great person for that student to reach out to. Although on the whole, Princeton is a more accepting environment than many other places in the United States, it is still necessary to understand that many LGBTQ+ students at PHS do not have a supportive family; for these students, having a teacher they can go to for advice or simply act as a listening ear may increase their feeling of self-worth and general happiness. Additionally, if a student has enough trust in their teacher, the student could speak to them about bullying or harassment; teachers can help students out when they have nowhere else to go.

So where does the boundary really lie, and how can both students and teachers find a way to balance out the two ends of this spectrum in a responsible manner? Different methods work for different teachers and schools. Some build a strict appearance in class and then deconstruct said appearance outside of it. Others incorporate both intensity and compassion into their curriculums. Overall, if a student has a teacher they view as a mentor, they know they can trust that person and listen to their advice, but still respect them; this type of relationship allows for both professionalism and a personal connection to coexist. For the people that this type of connection does work for, the balancing act of teacher and confidant is imperative, and the title mentor seems to fit perfectly in between. Although this type of student-teacher relationship might not be ideal in every case, it serves as a midpoint between the two potential extremes, taking advantages from both. At PHS, we should aim to create the most beneficial student-teacher relationships throughout the duration of a student's high school career, for both parties involved. ■

The Tower

Princeton High School
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The Tower serves as a medium of information for the community through reporting and/or analyzing the inner workings of Princeton High School, the school district, and cultural and athletic events that affect the student body; providing a source of general news for parents, teachers, and peers; voicing various opinions from an informed group of writers; and maintaining quality in accurate content and appealing aesthetics, as well as upholding professionalism and journalistic integrity.

Editorial Board

The Editorial Board of the Tower consists of a select group of 14 Tower 2023 staff members. The views of board members are accurately reflected in the editorial, which is co-written each month by the Board with primary authorship changing monthly.

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All letters and articles are welcome for consideration. Please e-mail all submissions to phstowersenioreditors@gmail.com. The editors reserve the rights to alter letters for length and to edit articles. The Editor-in-Chief takes full responsibility for the content of this paper.

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The Tower is available to read online at www.towerphs.com

The newspaper accepts advice from the administration and the advisors in regard to the newspaper's content; however, the final decision to print the content lies with the Editors-in-Chief. The Tower's articles do not necessarily represent the views of the administration, faculty, or staff.

The Tower editorial is written in part by Peter Eaton, who is the son of Board of Education member Beth Behrend.

CHEERS

STUFF
WE LIKE

&

STUFF
WE DON'T

JEERS

"YOUNG ROYALS" season 3 filming

The sound of MESSENGER notifications

PIMPLE PATCHES

BELLA RAMSEY's Instagram page

SZA going on tour again

GYM FREES

The MET GALA

Tower STAIRWELL stench

MERCURY in retrograde

AP season

DICTIONARY APP on Macbooks

Loud CHICKENS in the courtyard

BROKEN paper towel machines

TAYLOR SWIFT's breakup with Joe Alwyn

Vanguard presents **OUTER SPACE**

Through hardships to the stars: should we explore space?

Jieruei Chang, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

“Pale Blue Dot” is a photograph of Earth taken from a distance of six billion kilometers by the Voyager spacecraft. Described by astronomer Carl Sagan as “a mote of dust suspended in a sunbeam,” our home planet barely takes up a pixel of the vast inky seas beyond. We think we have conquered Mother Nature herself as we bend ecosystems to our will; we think we are masters of the laws of physics as we build spires that graze the sky. We have sailed the seven seas, we have summited the highest peaks, and we have mapped the farthest islands. But as that photograph shows, there is so much of the heavens we have yet to explore.

There are those who logically claim that we should keep ourselves grounded in reality rather than chasing lofty dreams. First, the practical problems: space exploration is hard. Take a look at plans for bases on Mars, one of science fiction’s favorite places for settlements. You’ll find that most habitats look fit for a hobbit, covered in meter-thick walls of martian regolith as shielding for the scorching cosmic radiation. It’s also difficult to obtain energy; there’s a reason why Perseverance and Curiosity rovers use nuclear fuel for electrical power. With the added requirements of oxygen, food, and water, keeping humans alive in space is costly and demanding — the International Space Station costs NASA three billion dollars a year to operate. As it turns out, space really, really wants you dead.

Also, as much as we would like space exploration to be a peaceful endeavor, politics and greed get in the way. The Outer Space Treaty prevents nations from claiming sovereignty over space, in order to share its benefits and prevent resource wars. However, NASA’s recent Artemis Accords assert American dominance over commercial space exploitation, designating mining “safe zones” that other nations can’t encroach on — a blatant violation of the Outer Space Treaty. Unfortunately, humans have a terrible track record of agreeing to things; if space resources become commercially viable, we will almost certainly fight over them.

Then, the ethical problems: Is it right to spoil the pristine environment of space, left untouched for billions of years? When Europeans colonized Australia, they brought invasive species that destroyed much of its native ecosystem. If there is life on other planets, should we risk damaging it through colonization?

Looking at the short term, it seems like there is no good reason to go to space. It’s risky. It doesn’t make economic sense. It could destroy delicate alien life. And with so many problems on our planet, why care about another?

Yet, this is the kind of thinking that limits us; in seeking to preserve ourselves, we hasten our demise. Perhaps the universe is filled with civilizations with this same mindset, civilizations that rationally decided to keep themselves firmly rooted — their earthen graves remembered by those few that irrationally decided to fly.

We bury our noses in search of short-term gains, and fail to see the long-term benefit of space colonization; start looking at timeframes of decades or centuries, and its usefulness comes into focus. The first settlements on the Moon or Mars can serve as a springboard for the rest of the solar system, launching humanity into a multi-planetary future capable of supporting billions more people, reducing the effects of overpopulation and climate change. Asteroid mining can satisfy our hunger for precious metals without wounding the surface of the Earth. A Dyson swarm, a system of solar-power-collecting satellites encircling the Sun, would increase our energy budget by a factor of millions, satisfying our hunger for electricity even as our energy demands rise exponentially. It would be impractical to build and launch a Dyson swarm from Earth because of its thick atmosphere and comparatively poor metallic resources, but colonies on Mercury or asteroids like Pallas could provide the perfect launch point for such a project.

Even from a philosophical standpoint, exploration has always been a part of what makes us human — that innate curiosity to understand, that intrinsic hunger to see what lies beyond the horizon line. Space exploration can answer questions that we have tried searching for since society arose: Who are we? Where did the world come from? Are we alone?

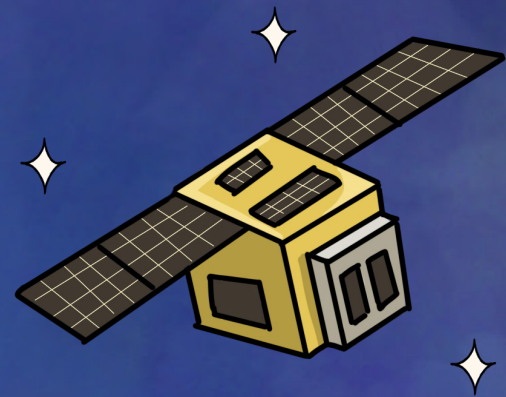
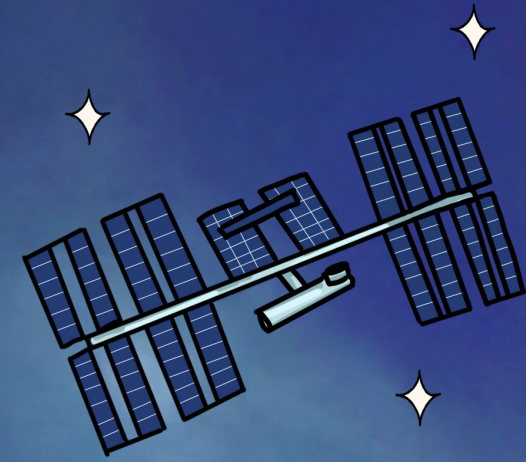
As Sagan said, “We have lingered long enough on the shores of the cosmic ocean. We are ready at last to set sail for the stars.” ■

graphics: Sara Hu

The technology among the stars

Will Pittman, VANGUARD CO-EDITOR, Vihaan Jain and Emma Li, CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

As society progresses in a more climate-friendly direction, many people have moved away from fossil fuels to greener forms of energy on Earth. However, the real solution may be in space. Solar panels on Earth are forced to endure the nighttime, the weather, the seasons, and the ozone layer, impeding productivity. Space-based solar panels, however, aren't affected by any of those issues, making them 40 times more efficient than their terrestrial counterparts. Though costly, China plans to build a space-based solar farm by 2025 and then using microwaves to transport that electricity back to Earth.



As the amount of objects in low Earth orbit increases, the risk of catastrophic collisions with space debris has become a more critical issue, threatening the future of safe and sustainable space activities. Thankfully, the Japan-based company Astroscale is developing spacecrafts designed to capture future junk in orbit using magnetic docking technology. A "servicer satellite" captures the "client satellite" and pushes it towards Earth so it burns up upon reentry into the atmosphere. Although this technology has yet to be completed, it is vital to reducing the perilous pile-up of debris in space.

On October 4, 1957, Sputnik 1 was the first communication satellite ever launched, setting the stage for technological advancements that would change the world. Today, there are over 3,000 communication satellites in orbit relaying telecommunication signals through a transponder, allowing for communication between Earth and space. Whenever you do something as simple as checking the weather or using Google Maps, you are using a communication satellite; they provide us with internet access, telephones, GPS technology, weather detection, and disaster management systems. ■



What space advancements do you think will happen in 50 years?

Compiled by Ruhee Hedge, Meghna Myneni, and Chloe Zhao, CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Ella Sheffield '23



"Based on NASA's currently stated priorities, I'm guessing that we will also send a manned mission to Mars in the next 50 years. In my opinion, though, the really exciting stuff will come from the robotic probes and new space telescopes that we're sending up. I'm excited to see what we'll know by then!"

Sheena Ash '25



"We know that Elon Musk and Jeff Bezos have ... [made] space viewing for humans very accessible. You can go to space for a lot of money ... just to see it for a couple of minutes or hours. I wouldn't be surprised if we had another form of cars, planes, [or] more environmentally friendly [transportation] that makes [space] easier to access."

Karim El'25



"I believe [that given that] humans are an incredibly progressive race...we're probably going to get a head start on colonization of planets in the next 50 years. We could make Mars habitable if we just change the atmosphere around [it]."

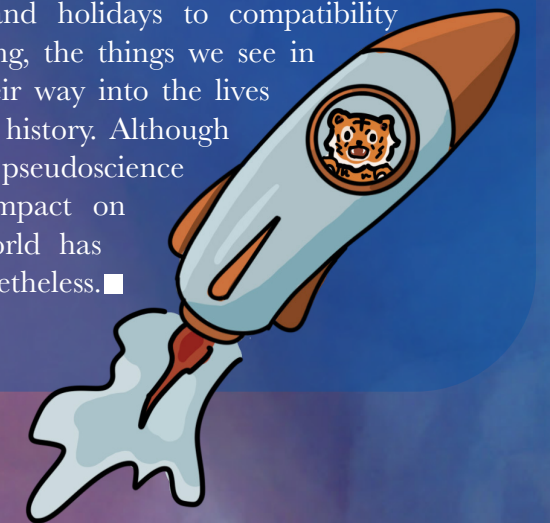
graphics: Sara Hu

Discovering astrology through different corners of the world

Raya Kondakindi and Asya Morosov, CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Humans have a unique method of dealing with unexpected situations: When unforeseen things happen, many tilt their heads up to look for answers in the stars. People from the past and present have discovered messages in celestial objects and have taken solace in the belief that the world is controlled by a greater power. Astrology, the study of celestial bodies' positions and their alleged influence on human existence, varies considerably across various civilizations and cultures globally. Often known as the "Cradle of Civilization," Mesopotamia birthed one of the world's greatest cities around 4,000 years ago. Aside from being home to majestic palaces and gardens, Babylon also gave rise to astrology. Babylonian astrology primarily focused on twelve constellations, each assigned a zodiac sign. Appointed priests used the sun, moon, and the five recognized planets to connect divinity with daily life by associating each with a different god. Priests believed that the movements of each of these cosmic bodies were representations of the current actions of each deity. Much like today, they believed that the celestial sign that occurred on a person's birthday contained information about their personality. Babylonian astrology contained many key ideas that developed into early and modern Western astrology. Chinese astrology, a practice known as Sheng Xiao, is based on a 12-year cycle that rotates between 12 animals. The order of the animals is thought to be based on a race, organized by the Jade Emperor, between 13 animals. The order of the winners became the order of the Chinese zodiac, beginning with the rat and ending with pig, and the 13th animal, the cat, was left out

because it came in last place. In China, the zodiac (based on your birth year) is believed to reveal your horoscope, love and marriage compatibility, personality, career path, and chance of success. The Chinese lunar calendar follows the turn of the zodiac to determine the passing of the year. The celebration of the transition from one zodiac animal to another occurs on Lunar New Year. Astrology also holds significance in Indian culture. Vedic astrology, as it is called today, was highly complex and relied on the precise movements of numerous celestial bodies to try to gain information about the future. It also seems to have been inspired by Hellenistic or Sanskrit astrological practices. It became more simplified over time and its modern form shares similarity to Western and Chinese astrology. Vedic astrology has an aspect that differentiates it from other astrologies; while most astrologies use the tropical zodiac, in which planets have fixed positions in the sky, Vedic astrology uses the sidereal zodiac, in which planets' positions are determined from constellations. Today, many believe Vedic astrology influences major life decisions, such as moving into a new home, naming children, or getting married. From horoscopes and holidays to compatibility charts and matchmaking, the things we see in the sky have found their way into the lives of humans throughout history. Although astrology is accepted as pseudoscience by many today, its impact on people around the world has been significant nonetheless. ■



ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT



Bianca Orostizaga '23 solos on "erase me" by Lizzy McAlpine with the rest of Studio Vocals and the rhythm section.



Kevin Huang '23 tells jokes to the audience.



Ashley Chen '23 performs a solo at Jazz Fest while the other Studio Vocals members provide background vocals.

photos: Sara Hu

Princeton Studio Vocals prepares to take the stage at Jazz Fest

Kathy Tian and Tessa Silver, CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

This spring, Studio Vocals showcased their hard work at multiple events, including the Princeton Jazz Festival on April 15, the National Jazz Festival on April 22, and the New Jersey State Jazz Festival on April 29. To accommodate the busy April schedule, Studio Vocals worked on a fast-paced schedule and held multiple practices every week to ensure that they performed their best in all of their events.

"We have a lot of dedication to making sure that a song is at the best it can be before a performance or a competition. If we need to go over a certain section repeatedly in order for it to be solid, we will," said Ashley Chen '23, a member of Studio Vocals.

Through their hard work and dedication, Studio Vocals were a key element to the jazz performances this month, and through these collaborations, they were given a bigger platform to perform.

"The plans are to give our studio vocalists more of a period to keep singing as Studio Band and Jazz Ensemble get deeper in the competition season and may or may not be using vocalists," said PHS Band Director Joseph Bongiovi.

On top of practicing as a group, the members also rehearse independently. Their hard work allows them to feel confident on stage, a key aspect of an overall good performance.

"I rehearse a bunch by myself and learn the songs mostly by listening to recordings and singing along to instrumental

recording tracks," said Studio Vocals member Maggie Dooley '24.

The group members focus a lot on the technical aspect of performing. To prepare for performances, they rehearsed with microphones beforehand. Being able to blend one's voice and figure out the correct volume and tone to sing into the microphone can make or break one's performance.

"For the competitions, we each have to sing with our own microphones. Although it was a bit scary at first, my ability to blend while on a microphone has definitely improved," said Vivian Clayton '24, another member of Studio Vocals.

While the vocalists initially used rehearsal tracks to learn their parts, the performances themselves were put on with a live rhythm section. To prepare for this, members of Studio Vocals rehearse multiple times with the Studio Band instrumentalists themselves in the time leading up to the performance.

"Our biggest strength is the fact that most vocal jazz groups don't have a rhythm section that plays as well as ours. That allows us to have something solid in terms of tempo and harmony to harmonize with," Bongiovi said.

From highlighting the songs played by the musicians to guiding them with the actual piece, members of Studio Vocals were a necessity for Princeton's jazz festival.

In addition to the pressure that comes with having to learn

multiple tracks, performing at a competition in and of itself comes with lots of nerves, so being comfortable on stage is one of the most important parts when performing and competing.

"Beyond getting the actual notes and rhythms right, our stage presence is hugely important. For the audience, and of course judges, a performance is much better when the singers are engaged with the music and their peers," Clayton said.

For many, just being on stage makes them feel gratified. The culmination of one's hard work with their group can feel very satisfying.

"After the crazy rehearsal schedules we have and all the hard work we put into our songs, it feels so good to see everything finally together on stage. Even if we don't win first, being able to perform together is the most rewarding part," Chen said.

While Dooley, Clayton, and the rest of the younger members will continue to grow as a group in Studio Vocals, others will soon have to depart from the group as they continue on their personal journey in college.

"It's definitely a little sad that this is my last time doing it all. I've been doing Studio Vocals since freshman year, it's been such a big part of my high school life and I can't imagine not doing it. I'm going to miss the whole working up to competition feeling, the excitement, and the pride we all feel together when we're done singing the most," Chen said. ■

An Easter dessert: Minnie's chocolate cake

Avery McDowell, STAFF WRITER

Preparation time: 20 minutes

Cooking time: 40-50 minutes

Almost every Easter morning, I'm woken up by the rich aroma of "Minnie's Chocolate Cake," a dessert passed down by a friend of my grandmother and now a traditional item on our display of Easter sweets. It's a moist cake rich with chocolate flavor and a silky glaze of chocolate ganache. But even this common bakery staple has a few twists to make it special to Easter. Although it is appealing to taste, with its dark coloring of the rich chocolate, we brighten it up with a grass field of Easter eggs on top made out of shaved coconut and colorful mini eggs.

Before spring decorations were added, this cake was developed by my grandmother's friend Minnie. Being huge fans of anything chocolate, my extended and immediate family have created the tradition of using this recipe for annual holidays, most commonly baking it for Easter. Over the years we've tweaked and twisted the recipe for preferred taste and look, while still staying true to its signature structure and flavor.

Although more complicated than the typical boxed cake, the ingredients and instructions of "Minnie's Chocolate Cake" are very simple. Homemade cakes almost always come out better than store-bought mixes and are more fitting for Easter or any other holiday. But that's not to say that this cake can only be made for special occasions — my mother and I will sometimes bake it on weeknights at 8:00 p.m. if we're craving a chocolate dessert to satisfy our sweet tooth. But for a holiday like Easter, its rich chocolate taste, moist texture, beautiful appearance, and effortless assembly make it the perfect dessert.



photo: Avery McDowell

Ingredients:

Minnie's Chocolate Cake

- 1 ¾ cup of flour
- 2 cups of sugar
- ¾ cup of cocoa powder
- 1 ½ teaspoon of baking soda
- 1 ½ teaspoon of baking powder
- 1 teaspoon of salt
- 2 eggs beaten
- 1 cup of milk
- ½ cup of any oil (we usually use olive oil)
- 2 teaspoons of vanilla extract
- 1 cup of boiling water

Ganache

- 8 ounces of bittersweet or semisweet chocolate (if not in chip form, it should be finely chopped)
- 1 cup of heavy cream

Toppings and Assembling

- 1 cup of unsweetened shaved coconut
- Enough green food coloring to tint the coconut (personal preference)

Steps:

Minnie's Chocolate Cake:

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit. Butter and flour an 8x11-inch square pan or a 13-inch Bundt cake pan.

Whisk together all dry ingredients in a bowl until fully combined.

Whisk together all wet ingredients except the boiling water in a separate bowl until fully combined.

Add the combined dry ingredients into the bowl of wet ingredients and beat well with a whisk until fully incorporated.

Stir in the boiling water until fully incorporated. The batter should end up being very thin.

Pour the batter into the pan and place it in the oven to bake for at least 40 minutes (a Bundt should take almost 50 minutes).

Before taking the cake out, check to see if it is baked through by sticking a toothpick through the center. If it comes out clean, it is done, but if it doesn't, it may need a couple more minutes. Be sure not to overbake it.

When it is done, pull it out of the oven and let it cool for at least ten minutes inside the pan. Then let it sit outside of the pan until it is completely cool.

Ganache:

In a small saucepan, heat the heavy cream until it gently simmers (do not let it boil!). After it begins to simmer, take it off the heat.

Pour the hot cream over the chocolate in a separate bowl and let it sit untouched for about two to three minutes.

After waiting, whisk together the cream and chocolate until fully combined. It should be glossy and thick.

Transfer the cake to a stand or a plate, then pour the ganache over the cake, coating it evenly.

Toppings and Assembling:

Mix the coconut with a few drops of green food coloring in a bowl until it looks like your desired shade of grass.

Sprinkle the green coconut onto the cake until it almost completely covers it (again, personal preference).

Place the Cadbury mini eggs evenly over the coconut.

Enjoy! ■

From the page to the screen: adaptations

Luca Balescu and Todor Pophristic, STAFF WRITERS

As long as film has existed as an artistic medium, the written word has turned into visual spectacle. The first science-fiction film ever made, George Melies' "A Trip to the Moon" (1902), was a loose adaptation of two Jules Verne novels. Since then, we've seen countless books and plays transferred from the page to the screen, fulfilling readers' desires to see the stories they read come to life. For decades, the same debate has raged over these adaptations: To what extent can they be faithful to the originals? Should they be faithful to the originals? And can an adaptation not only match up to, but transcend the quality of the original?

While literature is a written medium, film is an audio-visual one, and often, what can be portrayed in one cannot as easily or as convincingly be portrayed in the other. It's in this transition from the literary form to the cinematic that most adaptations struggle, and it must be acknowledged that some works are more difficult than others to bring to the screen. For example, novels like Virginia Woolf's "To the Lighthouse," which is centered on a family's visits to an island in Scotland in the 1900s, would make difficult adaptations, as they are set more so in the psyche of their characters than any physical setting.

Words can depict things that images can't, but they can also more easily obscure a reality than film can. When a book deals with a reality that is kept hidden or sugar-coated in its description, visually depicting it can often either ruin the mystery or rob the reader of the veil casted over what is depicted. A prime example is Stanley Kubrick's adaptation of Vladimir Nabokov's "Lolita." In the novel, it is clear that all we read has been filtered through the romantic and charismatic writing of protagonist Humbert Humbert, and the reader has to read between the lines to picture the reality (an underage girl kidnapped and preyed upon) that Humbert sells to the reader. With film adaptations, however, this kind of sugarcoating is harder, because we are able to see what is happening. Kubrick, however, found his own way around this by using a similar strategy in the visual medium: filming, scoring, and writing the movie as if it were a romance, rather than the story of a pedophile. For instance, the film is shot with the glossy diffused lighting most romances and comedies would use on their leading actresses, and the film's music is built around a catchy pop tune rather than any suggestion of suspense or unease.

This brings us to the question: In cases where a story can be easily adapted, should a film be faithful to the original? When is it appropriate to take creative liberties? With some stories, sticking close to the books can be an asset: the Harry Potter films did so, and received critical acclaim, as did Francis Ford Coppola's version of Mario Puzo's "The Godfather." Other books, however, are less suitable for close adaptations to the screen, either because of lack of action or public interest (the film adaptation of Penelope Fitzgerald's "The Bookshop" has this problem). Many successful film adaptations take liberties, sometimes altering the entire core of the source material, and in some cases it is these films that transcend the originals. The French auteur Jean-Luc Godard would often take a story and strip it down to its barest skeleton of a plot, upon which he would add his own ideas, philosophical tangents, and experimentations (his 1965 film "Pierrot le Fou" retains only the idea of a man and woman running away together and betraying each other from the novel on which it is based). Most adaptations don't go as far as Godard, but in the hands of a skilled director, a novel's plot is often refashioned to fit the screen better: Steven Spielberg's adaptations of "Jaws" and "Jurassic Park" are better known than the original novels (which many, indeed, are unaware of) because he knew how to refashion their plots into blockbusters without losing the thematic and emotional core of each story. In "Jurassic Park," for example, character deaths are removed in the adaptation, and the ordering of scenes is changed to better fit the progression of an action-adventure movie.

The decision to faithfully adapt a book or take creative liberties rests on the filmmakers' discretion, and the success of an adaptation depends on their ability to capture the essence of the story in the new medium. Some books may be better suited for the screen than others, and some may require a different approach to achieve a successful adaptation. As long as the core of the story remains intact, filmmakers have the freedom to explore new possibilities and create something that stands on its own as a cinematic work of art. Ultimately, whether an adaptation transcends the original or falls short of expectations is up to the audience to decide, but what remains clear is that the act of adapting literature into film continues to be a fascinating and complex process that challenges artists to find new ways to bring stories to life. ■



Student Takes: Who would you choose to be a Met Gala co-chair and why?

Ruhee Hedge, CONTRIBUTING WRITER



"I think Lana Del Rey would be a good choice for one of them. I feel like she's often overlooked by those in the industry despite her public popularity. I also admire her authenticity in terms of fashion and know she would bring something unique in that sense," - Sarah Graham '24



"I would love to see Blake Lively as one of the co-chairs since I believe she's incredibly underrated in her fashion sense. I also believe she would make an amazing and charismatic host!" - Blythe Valvanis '26



"Me, my friend Sofia Wilhelm, and my friend Gabby Bennett because I think we would be really good at organizing how people are gonna sit so that it causes the most drama," - Anirvinya Joshi '24



"I would pick Blake Lively, because of her gorgeous past Met Gala looks — especially the ones from 2018 and 2022 — and because I think she is a good representative for the theme this year (Karl Lagerfeld: A Line of Beauty), as she has previously starred in many of Lagerfeld's Chanel Campaigns. I would also pick Zendaya as a co-chair, because she always makes such vibrant and unique outfit choices and because she is such a positive and inspiring influence in today's media," - Alexandra Sandt '25

The 30 Arabian nights: honoring Arabic culture through music

Sky Jo, STAFF WRITER
Meghna Myeni, CONTRIBUTING WRITER



graphic: Angela Wu

With the beginning of spring comes the celebration of another underrepresented minority in America. Only made official by President Biden two years ago in 2021, National Arab-American Heritage Month recognizes and appreciates the contributions Arab-Americans have made to American culture. Syrian-American advocate Pierre Subeh's campaign arduously for the acknowledgement of the struggles of Arab-Americans, especially following the anti-Arab sentiments that resulted from the 9/11 attacks. In honor of Subeh's goal of recognizing Arabic culture and heritage, the theme of this month's playlist is Arabic music and artists (playlist and QR code on the right).

To present the variety of Arabic music, we organized songs into different categories: religious (Islamic) songs, Arabic pop songs, and, to celebrate those of Arab descent, American pop songs created by Arab-American artists.

The most prevalent religion in Arab countries is Islam, so two types of Arabic Islamic songs, nasheeds and maqams, represent the religious contributions Arabs brought to the diversification of U.S. culture. Nasheeds and maqams bring to mind the diversity of faith and religion Arabs have contributed to America through their devotion to religion, predominantly Islam. Nasheeds are a type of Islamic music consisting of hymns that praise Allah, or God, and are generally very simple melodies. "Burdah Maula ya Salli" by Mesut Kurtis, "Ya Adheeman" by Ahmed Bukhatir, and "Who is the Loved One" by Alhaj Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Qadri all follow the theme of nasheeds of praising or thanking Allah and asking for His blessings. While nasheeds are typically geared towards followers of Islam, the singing can be very calming and provides a diversified listening experience for everyone. Maqams, on the other hand, focus more on music than singing and are a type of melody unique to Arabic music. "Maqam Nawa" by Safaafir and "Layali (Mawwal)" by Sabah Fakhri follow typical maqams in their instruments and melodies, but "Persepolis's Mirage" by Anouar Brahem uses a variety of instruments (including oud, piano, drums, and double bass) to create a more surreal sound while still staying true to the idea of maqams.

Another well-known genre is Arabic pop music, which deviates from religious songs in its inclusion of female singers. Because it is haram, or forbidden according to the rules of Islam, to hear women sing, there are very few, if any, female singers in Islamic songs; however, there are many in non-religious music, like Arabic pop. "Ser Alyhayah" by Aseel Hameem is a love song, a topic similar to many American pop songs, and "Hatramdan Ramadan" is a song about Ramadan by Donia Samir Ghanem, both of which are very well-known songs by popular female Arab artists. One of the most

popular artists in Arabic pop is Mohamed Ramadan; his and Super Sako's song, "Tik Tok," an extremely catchy tune named after the app, has become popular in America.

American hip-hop, in particular, has been greatly influenced by Arabic music. To highlight Arab artists in mainstream music, there are a myriad of American-pop songs created by Arab-American musicians. Faouzia is an up-and-coming Arab-American artist who has had many viral songs, including "RIP, Love," which won public acclaim for its combination of Arab influence and music with American pop. In her singing, she employs Arabic trills and tonalities, which she grew up listening to. DJ Khaled, or Khaled Mohamed Khaled, is another Arab-American artist who has released numerous famous songs, one of which is "All I Do Is Win." Formerly performing under the moniker Arab Attack, DJ Khaled credits his initial interest in music to Arabic music, which he listened to growing up. Throughout his career, he has additionally attributed his success to his faith in Islam. When asked about his Palestinian roots, he said, "I mean just to be able to say that I'm American Palestinian, that's so beautiful." Another especially popular Arab-American artist is Shakira, who has been prevalent in American pop music, namely due to her song, "Wherever, Whenever," which contributed to her rise in popularity. Despite people best knowing Shakira as a Colombian artist, she emphasizes her Lebanese heritage in her songs through the instruments and by belly dancing in the choreography. For example, in "Ojos Así," which includes Arabic lyrics, Shakira included the woodwind mijwiz and the doumbek drum, both of which are Arab instruments.

While all these Arab artists have undoubtedly contributed to American pop culture, Arabic influence on American culture is often overlooked or ignored entirely. It is important to pay respects to everything that has influenced our culture, and that is why April, as Arab-American Heritage Month, is such an important month. ■



Heidi Gubser '23 opens up about her musical journey as a flutist

Gayathri Kilaru, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

At Princeton High School, there are plenty of talented students in the field of art, including Heidi Gubser '23, a flutist in the PHS Orchestra and the first chair in the All-State Band. Gubser is committed to Princeton University. Though she won't be studying music as her major, she plans on continuing it in her free time as much as possible. Gubser began playing the flute in the summer before sixth grade. Since then, she started playing in an orchestra in middle school and joined PHS Orchestra her sophomore year. In only a few years' time, she has definitely made her mark in the PHS musical department through her brilliant flute playing.

What got you into playing the flute?

My mom was the one who got me into playing the flute. She mentioned it once, because she played in high school, so at the moment I didn't think much of it. However, the summer before sixth grade, she signed me up for lessons. I was quite surprised, but I did really like my teacher. He gave me a lot of scales and such to play and that was kind of what we started with; we first focused on improving my technique and then we moved on to small pieces, and we went from there. This helped me grow to be the player I am now.

What do you think was the hardest part about playing your winter concert solo, "Chaminade Concertino"?

One of the hard things about it is to play it in a way that sounds fresh, since so many others have played it. Back in freshman year, my understanding of music was so much less complex, I kind of just played music how I thought my teacher wanted me to play it, or tried mimicking recordings. So, this was definitely something new. This piece definitely made me rethink everything about the way I was playing it. I wanted to obtain the feeling of making music and overall improving the quality of my music.

How was it playing with the orchestra accompaniment?

I started playing in an orchestra in middle school, so I was used to playing in the orchestra, but not as a solo part. So it is completely different playing a solo piece, with the orchestra accompanying you rather than playing along with the orchestra. Currently, I'm part of the PHS Orchestra, and I have been since sophomore year.

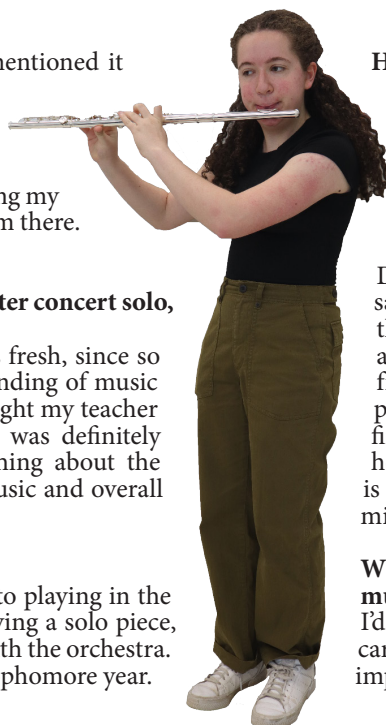


photo: Finn Neuneier

How important is practicing when it comes to becoming a musician?

Practice is a big part of becoming a musician, and people do recommend practicing every day. The most important part of being a musician is putting in your own time and effort into a craft that you yourself are creating and are passionate about. Sometimes your schedule gets in the way, but it's important to put that time aside for yourself.

Who would you say are your inspirations?

Definitely my mom is one of them, as she did get me into it. Another I would say is violinist Hilary Hahn. Though there are many musicians in the world, they rarely talk about practice aside from shows, which is something I like about Hilary Hahn, because she shows how to practice. I took inspiration from her 100 days of practice on Instagram, where the challenge was to practice everyday for 100 days, and post a caption with it. I actually recently finished my own 100 days, and this challenge really helped me think about how I was practicing and being more mindful of what I practiced. And she is definitely someone who influenced and taught me so much about being mindful and practicing music.

What is advice you would give to someone who wants to become a better musician?

I'd say that the most important part of being a musician is putting a lot of careful thought into practice sessions, since that's the only way we can really improve our musicianship. ■

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You Belong Here: Place, People, and Purpose in Latinx Photography is curated by Pilar Tompkins Rivas, chief curator and deputy director, Curatorial and Collections at the Lucas Museum of Narrative Art, and organized by Aperture.

LEFT: Steven Molina Contreras, *Abigail's Portrait*, United States, from the series *Adelante*, 2019. © Steven Molina Contreras. Courtesy the artist and Aperture RIGHT: Alison Saar, *Jitterbug*, 2019. Museum purchase, Kathleen Compton Sherrerd Fund for Acquisitions in American Art. © Alison Saar. Courtesy of L.A. Louver, Venice, CA. Photo: Jeffrey Evans

SPORTS

PHS girls golf team kicks off their first season

Matthew Chen and Sophie Zhang, SPORTS CO-EDITORS
Jaiden Jain-Edwards and Katie Qin, CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

As the spring season begins, the PHS girls golf team sets off in full swing for the first time. The team had made an impressive start to their first year as a PHS sports team, carrying a 3-0 record so far as they aim to maintain their peak form heading further into the season. The team dominated the Lady Bombers Tee Off Classic Tournament on April 19, achieving first place.

"We're gonna have three home matches this season, which is a lot fewer than we've had in the past. But that's super exciting, especially because we get to go on . . . a much nicer course to play with in the past," said Madeleine Zang '23, PHS girls golf team captain.

This year, the team has seven new additions, ranging from new players to experienced golfers, who weren't on the co-ed team the previous season.

"We have a bunch of seniors and a lot of freshmen I think that signed up. So I think [that is a] really interesting district team dynamic," Zang said.

Despite the changes in the team roster, they have developed a strong, dynamic, and supportive atmosphere, contributing to a tight knit team culture both on and off the course.

"I think that [the team has] a really positive vibe," said Shreya Gaekwad '25, one of the new members of the girls team. "Everyone's supportive [of] each other and [we] play as a team."

The team practices allow the players to improve their golf game in an encouraging, yet competitive atmosphere that motivates the golfers to record lower scores on the course.

"I believe I have become more consistent on the course and I can definitely see that coming from the fact that I am basically playing on the course everyday," said Raima Srivastava '25, one of the golfers on the girls golf team. "I can see my score improving everyday."

Prior to this year, the PHS Golf Team had been co-ed. Efforts from Zang, as well as the current boys golf team Coach Patrick Noone, were the backbone for the start of a separate team.

"[After the 2021 county tournaments], more girls showed interest, and the boys golf coach, Patrick Noone, met with the superintendent over multiple years to institute a Princeton High School girls golf team, which was finally approved for this school year," said Zang. "I know that I, along with all of the other members of the golf team, were ecstatic about having our very own team."

Girls golf Coach Jess Monzo is eagerly anticipating stepping into this new role due to his background in coaching wrestling, as well as guiding the players with an encouraging mood.

"It is extremely polar opposite from the other sport I coach at PHS. Golf is very laid back and relaxing, but the mental aspect is very much similar," said Monzo. "The truth is in golf you have to continue to stay positive."

While the journey to getting the program into play has been challenging, the players are making the most out of this opportunity. As they strive to level up their game, at the same time, they also look forward to making valuable memories through their commitment to golf.

"A memorable time with the team was playing 'best ball' on the course, where you play golf and play from the best shot," said Srivastava. "It's always such a fun game and we don't have to worry about our scores, [since] it's mostly for practice and fun."

What originally started out as a dream has become a reality for Zang's senior year season.

"So far this season, our team has been playing amazing, and everyone has shown immense team spirit," said Zang. "For the future, I hope the Princeton High School girls golf team continues to thrive; I know that we are all excited to see how far our team can go in the game of golf!" ■



photo courtesy: Alex Wu

Madeleine Zang '23 follows through on her swing during practice.



photo courtesy: Jess Monzo

PHS girls golf team poses for a photo in celebration of their first win on March 27: (left to right): Rachel Mcinery '25, Arunima Suri '23, Raima Srivastava '25, Tia Sindhu '24, Madeleine Zang '23, and Jacqueline Zang '25.

"Physical: 100" is not just about attaining the "perfect body"

Sophie Zhang,
SPORTS CO-EDITOR

How far would you go to achieve the "perfect body"? South Korea's newest reality show, "Physical: 100," delves into this question with its "Squid Game"-like premise, striving to discover the "fittest" among 100 contestants of various body types and builds. From team games to one-on-one matchups, the challenges are relentless and the stakes are high, with a cash prize of 300 million won (around 230 thousand U.S. dollars) on the line. While the games attempt to push each contestant's willpower and physical limitations, it also sheds light on the concept of physical perfection and its impact on society.

Behind the glittering aesthetics and stunning visuals of Korean content, especially in the recent global phenomenon of K-pop, lies a relentless pursuit of perfection. Big entertainment companies not only seek popstar-worthy skills, such as captivating vocals and polished dancing moves, but also prioritize appearance, the major factor in determining if one will make it. In this highly competitive industry, even the slightest imperfection is not tolerable if one cannot meet the society's beauty standards, which

includes features like radiant skin, double eyelids, a small face, and a tall, thin figure. In female idols, an hourglass body shape is the most desirable, while for males, they are expected to have a muscular and toned physique.

However, the participants in "Physical: 100" attempt to debunk the body standard Korea has set and promote a more inclusive image of the human body. For example, women show off their toned muscles and larger frames. Meanwhile, men who don't fit into the traditional mold of a muscular physique fight proudly in the arena. They play a role in challenging the stereotypes of the desired Korean physique, sending a message to audiences that it's important to break away from the norms.

Unfortunately for K-pop idols, the pressure to maintain a perfect appearance extends further than just the selection process. They face the expectation to maintain a flawless appearance and youthful image, forcing them

“For a show that seeks to find the “perfect body,” physical perfection isn't what the challenges attempt to determine.

to resort to grueling gym workouts, heavy dieting, and dangerous weight loss methods. According to Business Insider in 2019, these consistent routines doing more harm good, contrary to what might appear on screen.

However, Korea's appearance-obsessed culture is not just limited to the entertainment industry but has expanded to the rest of the nation. Many Koreans and other East Asians feel the pressure to conform to to societal beauty standards, leading to a surge in cosmetic surgery procedures. As such, South Korea has emerged as the plastic surgery capital of the world. This obsession with achieving the ideal appearance extends beyond facial features and includes striving for the ideal body type as well, with the belief that it can build up their status in society. The link between physical appearance and success creates a harmful notion as it builds onto the pervasive issue of valuing physical attractiveness above all else, degrading individuals to just their external features. By placing a high standard and value on visual appeal, it can claw people from the inside and set up an unhealthy environment for adults and youth.

For a show that seeks to find the "perfect body," physical perfection isn't what the challenges attempt to determine. Instead, it shows viewers the beauty of diverse body types and celebrates their individual strengths, challenging the notion of what physical perfection is. No body type is superior to another, and each individual excels in different areas of athleticism, whether that is flexibility, stamina, or speed. In addition, the series forces people from around the world to look beyond physical appearance, and instead at one's devotion, resilience, and resourcefulness, as they navigate through the matches. "Physical: 100" offers a refreshing and exhilarating take on physical competition — one that prioritizes body positivity, inclusivity, and individuality over the narrow notions of physical perfection. ■



graphic: Mia Gatzke



TOWER MULTIMEDIA

April 28th: **Jessica Hull '23** on mental toughness, and the PHS girls' swim team's incredible success

May 3rd: **Reyhan Garcia** on being a high school counselor in the COVID era

LISTEN NOW!



Athletes of the Month

Reece Gallagher '23: lacrosse

Katie Qin, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

At full speed, Reece Gallagher '23 charges down the field, weaving through a crowd of defenders. She grips onto her stick, zoning in onto the goal ahead. With one swift motion, she unleashes the ball at the net, slamming it into the goal. The crowd erupts into a roar as Gallagher makes her way towards her teammates, victorious. For Gallagher, this feeling of exhilaration and adrenaline is part of the thrill that comes with playing the sport she loves.

There are four positions in lacrosse: offense, defense, midfield, and goalie. Each position has their own crucial role, so Gallagher makes sure she executes her own position of offense well. In the 2022-2023 season, Gallagher has already made a total of six goals and two assists, contributing to the team's 3-0 record. Besides helping her teammates with her technical abilities, she also helps coordinate the team dynamic as one of the co-captains.

"I'm a very big team player; I like to get everyone involved ... we want all of our voices to be heard, so we just work together. We don't ever go against each other," Gallagher said.

Gallagher has developed these skills since she began playing lacrosse at six years old.

Injuries such as her sprained Achilles tendon set her back, but did not stop Gallagher from loving the sport just the same.

"It just gets better...[even though] shin splints have been a bit of an injury throughout my four years," Gallagher said.

A long term-injury would discourage any athlete, but not Gallagher. In her junior year, she moved from junior varsity to varsity and now is one of the captains in her senior year. She uses her experience as both a teammate and captain to play her best during games.

"I am near the goal usually, and when plays are going on, or if someone's making a cut through, I will pass it to them and they can have an easy shot," Gallagher said.

Part of Gallagher's responsibilities is to make everyone feel included. She ensures that every individual is given the opportunity to showcase their unique talents, especially for the freshmen players. She takes it upon herself to improve the team, both on and off the field with a system she created.

"So green [means] you can shoot, red [means] you can't. So we'll go, 'Green, Leah!' or 'Green, Quinn!' if they want to," Gallagher said.

With these efficient signals, the team is able to make split-second decisions together, score goals, and win games. Communication is, of course, key, and Gallagher has honed these skills to lead the team

effectively. "Reece really stepped up in the off-season to help organize the team for winter league and organized

lifting sessions in the weight room... She leads in

a calm and positive manner," said girls lacrosse Coach Katherine Federico.

With her unparalleled level of experience and devotion to the team, Gallagher has become a pillar of strength for her teammates when they need it most.

"Reece is always super supportive and always there to give me advice. She's always really organized, both on and off the field," said Theona Hsu '24, one of Gallagher's teammates on the varsity team.

As Gallagher continues to grow in her role as captain, she hopes that she is able to use her leadership skills as she transitions from high school to college.

"She leads in a calm and positive manner," said Federico. "I expect her to continue to play a large role in helping lead the attack and set a positive example to the underclassmen." ■



photo: Wenya Huan

Jonathan Tao '23: baseball

Jaiden Jain-Edwards, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Ball in hand, pitcher Jonathan Tao '23 steps up to the mound. He heaves a slider, the famous pitch of his favorite player, Los Angeles Angels' Shohei Ohtani. The ball spins and dips abruptly as it reaches home plate, leaving no time for the batter to get a swing off. The umpire announces, "Strike three, you're out!"

Tao's grandfather inspired him to begin playing baseball, and talking to him inspired Tao to keep playing over the years. From Little League games to varsity baseball, Tao's grandfather has had a major impact on his baseball career.

"My grandpa was a catcher," said Tao. "I visited him every year... [and he'd] ask, 'How are you doing [with baseball]?'"

As a pitcher, Tao is the face of the defense. Every play begins with his pitch, so it is important that he throws a good one. He has a few types of pitches to choose from, including the fastball and several off-speed pitches. The speed he gets on his fastball makes it difficult for batters to hit it, as his aim is to confuse batters as to where the ball is headed.

Tao tries to have pitches such as the curveball and slider come off with more spin and variability, which adds to Tao's extensive toolbox while on the mound.

One of Tao's biggest assets is his communication and leadership role on the team. It's common to see Tao shouting out instructions and relaying information from the coach to the rest of his teammates. Dominic Capuano, head baseball coach, talked about his admiration for Tao's leadership.

"Jon has done a good job of being a voice for the coaches," said Capuano. "He [gets] the message across that we are delivering and keeping the team in line. Being a captain is an extension of the coaching staff and he has done a good job with that."

Through his supportive words, Tao's leadership has carried the team to greater heights and provided a sense of empowerment for all of his teammates. Jai Justice '25, the third base player and pitcher for the boys varsity team, expressed his admiration for Tao as well.

"Jonathan is a great captain for the team. He keeps the team motivated and is an excellent communicator," Justice said.

Tao's path to his current spot on the varsity roster wasn't without difficulties. A series of shoulder dislocations early on in his high school career set Tao back, including one in eighth grade and another in his sophomore year. But no matter how many times he got injured, he would always come back to playing baseball as a result of his dedication and love for the sport.

"[Jonathan] has done a good job of putting the injury out of his mind and just playing free," said Capuano. "He's been a mainstay at the top of our line up and he could be most vulnerable to reinjury, and it hasn't affected him at all."

While Tao has always bounced back from his low points, his baseball career almost came to an early end.

"Around ninth grade I was really hard on myself. I even considered quitting [baseball]," said Tao. "I didn't quit because I knew that failure was always a part of it, and so if I wanted to keep playing I had to deal with it."

So far, this year's baseball season has been going well, with Tao and Wes Price '23 as the co-captains of the PHS boys varsity baseball team. They won their first game against West Windsor Plainsboro North with authority; the final score was 14-4.

"Our win against West Windsor North shows that when we put the pieces together, we play really well," Tao said. ■



photo: Wenya Huan

PREX

PRINCETON RECORD EXCHANGE

Pilates fitness trend establishes community at PHS

Dester Selby-Salazar, SPORTS CO-EDITOR

Taking a deep breath, the athlete stretches and contorts their body into different positions and angles. The pilates exercise is a great way for the athlete to train their entire body.

Pilates, a combination of core exercise and yoga, aims to strengthen the body, as well as encourage flexibility. After a couple of decades of relative obscurity, the exercise has seen a resurgence in popularity, especially on TikTok and other social media sites. The hashtag "pilates" has garnered 5.7 billion views so far on TikTok, and it continues to grow. John Torrey, the fitness instructor at PHS, recognized the benefits of this popular trend.

"Any type of education towards [pilates] would be beneficial to the students," said Torrey. "I certainly think it could be incorporated into the [school] curriculum."

Pilates, which was invented in the 1920s by Joseph Pilates, has had a long and successful history in the world of athletics. The fact that it can be done without any instruments at all shows it's a cheap and simple form of exercise that anyone can do.

The availability of information on the internet allows for people to be introduced to many new types of workouts. Pilates is a unique and niche type of exercise, which newcomers to fitness may not be aware of. According to Torrey, this kind of exposure to fitness information is extremely beneficial.

"There's probably a lot more information on the internet now than when I was your age," said Torrey. "I really had to search for books and magazines to learn how to strength train and do body building."

While pilates has many similarities to exercise routines like yoga, pilates has one key difference which sets it apart. Unlike yoga, which usually requires the person to hold a pose, pilates poses are matched with leg and arm movements, which put strain on the core, adding to the exercise.

Because of its accessibility, it has potential to be very beneficial at PHS, where exercise and working out is very popular. The PHS fitness room is routinely packed with students during lunch and after school. Evan Weinstein '25 goes to the gym after school, and to him, fitness trends like pilates are great ways to get fit.

"I think that 99 percent of the time, fitness trends are helpful," said Weinstein. "Obviously there are some less helpful or even harmful [trends], but people should be able to ... make decisions for themselves."

At the PHS fitness center, strength training and yoga are some of the more popular forms of exercise, which is exactly what pilates is based on. Newcomers to pilates can get a lot out of just going to the PHS fitness center for a workout.

One of the benefits of the pilates trend is the sense of community. It's a common sight to see people sending positive, and motivational messages in the comment sections of workout posts. These messages only help to strengthen the community, and make fitness goers more motivated to work out. To Weinstein, these messages are nice, but not helpful.

"I think it's nice and obviously anyone who says it has nice intentions, but I think [motivational messages are] becoming overused, diminishing their meaning," Weinstein said. Still, Weinstein understands that these messages can bring motivation for those who need it.

Another benefit of pilates and other fitness trends is that they discourage sedentariness. With technology taking up a greater role in people's lives, fitness trends inspire people to get moving.

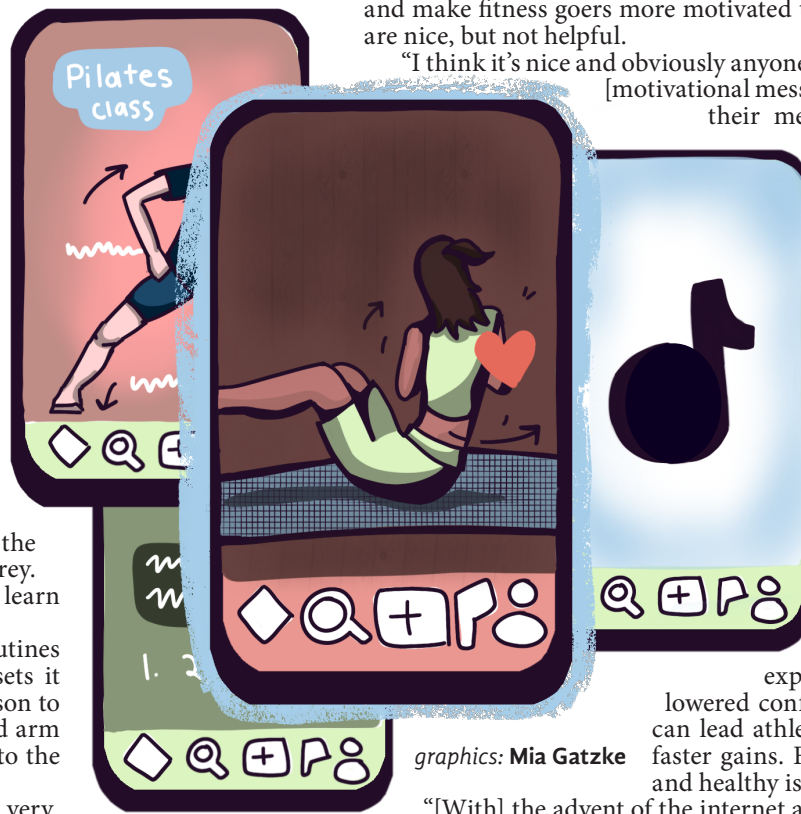
Jordy Paredes '23 is a regular at the gym, and understands the significance of fitness.

"Hard work will always pay off; just because others are not pushing doesn't mean you should stop," said Paredes. "Working out builds mental strength and physical strength."

Of course, pilates and internet fitness trends aren't all completely perfect. Students routinely find that they compare themselves with others online, creating unrealistic expectations for themselves, which can lead to lowered confidence. The desire to see physical results can lead athletes to consume dangerous substances for faster gains. For Torrey, understanding what is natural and healthy is of key importance.

"[With] the advent of the internet and social media sites like Instagram, there are a lot more fitness influencers, but you don't know how credential they are," said Torrey. "You don't know what type of supplements or illegal drugs they're on to get in that shape, and a lot of them don't look like that year round."

Because pilates has a wide range of difficulty, it is much more manageable for newcomers to administer a healthy routine, and not be influenced by questionable supplements. Overall, pilates is a healthy way to stay fit, and will give you massive benefits in the long run. ■



graphics: Mia Gatzke

Beginners guide to Formula 1

Matthew Chen, SPORTS CO-EDITOR

What is Formula 1?

Formula 1 is widely considered to be the pinnacle of motorsport racing. Ten teams with two drivers each compete against one another every season in a neck and neck race to the finish line. F1 cars can reach up to speeds of 200 miles per hour, and are the foundation for the iconic race car roars. From the tropical Singapore street race to the iconic Monza race track in Italy, F1's influence, history, and culture has been growing around the globe.

How do the races work?

Races usually take place on multiple consecutive weekends, starting with practice on Fridays, qualifying on Saturdays, and the race on Sundays. Drivers are given Fridays to practice on the track, as well as a final chance to fine tune their cars for qualifying and the race. On Saturday, the drivers compete in a qualifying format that determines their starting positions for the race, which can either make or break their weekend depending on where they start. Starting towards the front usually gives the driver an advantage, as there are less cars they need to overtake in order to climb towards the top. Starting further back in the group places the racer at a major disadvantage as it puts the driver behind more cars, which consequently means more overtakes. Finally, Sunday is the big race, where the drivers head onto the track and race for as many points as possible. Only the top ten drivers earn points, however, setting everyone on the grid, even teammates, against one another.

What is the strategy to winning?

With 20 drivers on the grid, competition flares high when the race arrives. Teams have to use all their resources to their advantage in order to gain points, which accumulate to their final standing at the end of the year. Typically, teams will play both of their drivers to their advantage, using various strategies to give them the edge. Some strategies include using one driver to stall the opposing team while their teammate who is behind catches up, or giving each other "slipstreams," which allow for less air resistance, allowing the car to move faster. Pit stops, used to change tires, also play a big part in determining the rankings.

Formula 1 has three types of tire compounds that the drivers and their teams can choose to use. They range from soft tires, which allow the car to drive the fastest but last the shortest amount of time, to hard tires, which drive the slowest but have the longest life-span. In between the two are medium tires, which is a mix between both the soft and hard tires. Which tires the driver decides to use comes down to the strategy they choose to play when race day comes around. ■

graphics: Mia Gatzke, Sara Hu