



THE

*education*

ISSUE

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# Editors' Note

Dear Readers,

As we dive into the 2022-2023 school year, we find it fitting to discuss our education. Our 30th issue covers how our writers – mainly female-identifying high school students – view and interpret education systems around the country. The issue features debates on dress codes, education-themed poetry, an interview with a former dean at Brown University, and much more.

We chose education as the theme for this issue because of its relevance to youth around the world. The pandemic forced schools to provide quality education for their students without the benefit of human interaction. Students attended online classes while simultaneously coping with the confusing and isolating events occurring in the world. Aside from the pandemic, many underprivileged communities are struggling with an unequal education system, and school shootings are a concern like never before.

In some ways, GirlTalk has taught us more than any class at our high schools: managing staff members, giving assignments, holding ourselves accountable, troubleshooting, and most importantly, being effective leaders. GirlTalk is working to teach students how to utilize their school education for a positive, tangible change – one that involves readers and writers outside the domain of their personal school. And, leading such a talented young staff has shown me just how powerful education can be.

Unfortunately, many of us share a love-hate relationship with our own education. We love to learn but often focus too much on grades and numbers. We hold ourselves to standards that cloud our self-confidence and damage our mental health. With the added stress of college and the weight that comes with being a woman – like body image and assault – education can seem like an unbearable burden.

This issue is predominantly negative; articles about school shootings, prejudice within education, burn-out, and so much more. However, these articles are not negative because our writers feel solely pessimistic when thinking about their schools, but rather because students are often not given a platform to express frustration about the institutions they attend.

With college admissions season rounding the corner, we also want to recognize the struggles of all applicants. As admission processes become more and more difficult and seemingly arbitrary, it's normal to feel as if receiving an acceptance letter is the only way to prove your intellectual success. GirlTalk reminds us that there is a bigger picture. There is so much more we can do with the merits of our education.

Education in the purest sense is why we at the GirlTalk Magazine write. We write for others (including ourselves) to educate and develop opinions that can be published, critiqued, altered, and solidified. We write because our classrooms can only teach us so much. We write so young girls can be teachers themselves and interact with their education in a different light. We write to do what we can to positively impact the way young women are seen in our world.

Enjoy!

Kate Ragatz, Eve Kaplan, and Lily Kramon (Co-Editors-in-Chief)

## Current Events Column #1: Enough is Enough

By: Mia Groeninger

Imagine hearing your principle on the loudspeaker informing you that a shooter has entered the building. The fear and uncertainty suddenly becomes overwhelming, and the thoughts of the next few moments are utterly terrifying. For hundreds of thousands across the United States, this is a reality. Nearly 300,000 students across the country have been on campus during a school shooting. The tragic shooting at Robb Elementary on May 24, 2022 marked the 27th school shooting of 2022.

In all, there have been around 314 mass shootings in the U.S.

Gun violence, typically propagated by marginalized groups, negatively affects everything from education

to communities to mental health. U.S. laws include a plethora of loopholes that make possessing a firearm easily attainable. It could be your friend, teacher, or child that does not get to come home at night. When are we going to realize that kids having to play dead at school is not normal? When are we going to do something and realize that enough is enough?

Between the perpetrators and victims of school shootings, mental health must be discussed openly. Doctor Ragy Girgis, expert in severe mental illness, along with his colleagues from Columbia, have been studying the relationship between shootings and mental health. They have found that only 5% of mass shootings are related to severe mental illness and 23% to substance abuse. It is important to remember that pure evil and psychopathy are not the same as being mentally ill. In fact, most mass shootings are not planned, and instead are

committed by middle aged men in response to a stressor. Because of these cases, it is crucial to limit gun availability. Yet, it is also important to note the mental health of victims. Gun availability aside, collaboration and communication are crucial to ensuring the mental wellbeing of those who have experienced aforementioned traumas. Several organizations, including The Child Welfare League of America, concluded that administrators, parents, teachers, counselors, and students needed to work together in order to address the impact of gun violence on mental health. Workshops, support groups, and therapy are just several ways to work through the trauma that school shootings can inflict, and they must be more available. There is no quick fix, but as a society, we can continue finding more ways to support those whose mental health has declined from such incidents. We must continue to combat gun violence, the clear root of the issue.

**WHEN ARE WE GOING TO DO SOMETHING AND REALIZE THAT ENOUGH IS ENOUGH?**

Have you ever considered why firearms are the most commonly used weapon for mass murder? This is simply because of how easy it

is to obtain a gun, as well as the efficiency of bullets. Gun laws differ by state and are therefore regulated at a state level. Despite gun violence being a human rights issue due to violence, it is ultimately a political issue. There are umbrella gun laws established by the federal government that apply to all 50 states, but beyond those, the federal government cannot change state gun legislations. There are two main categories that each state decides on: whether owners can carry their guns as open carry or concealed carry weapons, as well as if people need to show proof of permit when carrying firearms in public spaces. Now, things become less clear because technically, no state can ban guns altogether due to the Second Amendment, the right to bear arms. However, right wing states are typically more lenient; for example, there are only eight states that require owners to register their guns. Five more left leaning states, such as California, prohibit open carry entirely. Yet, with that background it is clear

or legal loophole, called the Stand Your Ground Law, enacted in 27 states, where murder is made justifiable for those who will go to any extent in order to protect themselves or their property. Basically, this law allows gun owners to use deadly force under the excuse of self protection, hence promoting the use of firearms as lethal weapons. If we continue to make excuses for firing, gun violence will continue to go unnoticed and unchanged, normalizing school shootings.

Aren't schools supposed to be a safe haven? - a place of learning, growing, and flourishing. The purpose of schools is education and preparing students for a bright future. When school shootings occur, not only the school environment, but the whole surrounding community loses that sacred space. Kids lose the place where they once enjoyed learning and playing with friends. They are pulled out of schools and are forced to start over because of gun violence. There are countless lasting ramifications, particularly on mental health, relationships, and trust. From that point forward, the school and educational atmosphere will always be associated with guns and violence. Students coming to school from bad living conditions are now void of the only place they could come to feel heard and comfortable. School shootings inflict a constant state of fear and uncertainty. It is challenging to learn and thrive when always thinking, 'what if it happens again?' or having flashbacks. Hundreds of communities have dealt with these impacts and consequences decades after the event. Once gun violence becomes more openly accepted as a global human rights issue and not only a fight between left and right, we can finally take action as a society and recognize that enough is enough.



## Women in Higher Education: An Interview with Dr. Mary Grace Alamandrez

By: Reva Datar, Emmie Kao, and Selina Kao

This summer, we took a Women in Leadership course at Brown University's Leadership Institute. This course allowed us to speak openly about current societal issues involving identities, especially our gender identity as women and how it has impacted and would impact us. This is where we met our professor, Dr. Mary Grace Alamandrez, the Vice President for Diversity and Inclusion at Syracuse University in New York.

Dr. Alamandrez's career began when she was the director of multicultural services at McDaniel College. Beyond that, she has worked in an array of leadership positions, including being the associate vice president and chief diversity officer at the University of Rhode Island (URI), associate vice president of campus life, and dean of students at Brown University. Alamandrez was also the assistant dean for multicultural student services at the University of San Francisco.

When asked about her identities, Alamandrez said that she is an immigrant from the Philippines and a cisgender woman who is also heterosexual. She also said that she is Asian American, which is a substantial part of her identity. One of the first questions asked was about how her identities have impacted her goals as an educator. One of the biggest challenges that she has had to overcome was breaking the stereotype of women being easy going and not wanting to cause any conflict. She had to challenge that norm, which surprised people because she did identify as a cisgender woman and thus expected to follow passive feminine traits. While working as a leader, Alamandrez came to the realization that Asians were not considered underrepresented due to high numbers of college applicants, resulting in more Asians being in the pool



for jobs in higher education and leadership. The underrepresentation of Asians is ignored in higher education as a result of colleges making decisions to essentially "get rid of" the high Asian population solely due to the fact that Asians generally score higher on standardized tests, but lower on personality tests. To clarify: this group does not include Pacific Islanders. After seeing this injustice, Alamandrez decided to research Asian Pacific Islanders in leadership and, during this research, she realized that she had a very supportive group of people with whom she has surrounded herself, allowing her to challenge traditional notions, including when to date or marry. Alamandrez also stated that her race and ethnicity have led her to be the first or only Asian woman in the group.

Alamandrez's experience with being the only Asian in a group is true at her current position as the Vice President of Diversity and Inclusion at Syracuse University, where she is one of the few high ranking members to be a woman of color. Knowing that there is a lack of representation in many higher places of leadership in institutions, Alamandrez strives to provide women of color with pathways and opportunities their male counterparts

already have. She hopes that more women and women of color are able to occupy a higher percentage of financial and business positions so they are not limited to jobs given to them for the sake of diversity and inclusion – positions that are almost always assigned to someone whose identity might promote diversity within the organization to ensure the institution's legitimacy. In addition to women getting certain positions to “check off a box”, women can also be denied certain promotions and positions because of their gender identity. Almandrez said that women are often used for their labor, but less likely to be promoted or rewarded for it. In contrast, their male counterparts will be promoted before showing as much effort in their work because they have “potential.” In discussions about diversity and inclusion, Almandrez is never hesitant to discuss her identities as a mother, woman of color, and a wife. She believes that there are many ways to bring discussion and awareness about identity to the table.

Academia and higher education is a male dominated field, and also a white dominated one. Almandrez builds a safe environment for herself by making connections with other women of color, or people she might share some identities with and be able to empathize with. She feels most supported and confident in expressing herself in this type of environment. Almandrez also feels that with these relationships and connections in the workplace comes mentorship that can help women of color navigate a stressful field. She hopes that in the future, she can be a mentor for women in leadership and academia to face the obstacles they may come across because of their identity.

Almandrez consistently works to advocate for herself in the workplace, from uplifting minority communities such as her own to identifying moments when people attempt to make her feel inferior to others. When asked how she responds to discrimination in the workplace, she instantly thought of people from communities similar to her own who face harassment and discrimination. Through her various work experiences, Almandrez has learned to determine when people are “gaslighting” her, or attempting to make her doubt herself. For instance, they may try to guilt her for speaking out for her-

self. Over the years, Almandrez has consistently reaffirmed that her own feelings are just as important as her colleagues' and that it is completely fine to be uncomfortable in a situation. In a similar light, when asked how a woman can learn to advocate for herself in the workplace, Almandrez stated that each person has their own threshold for tolerance. The most important thing, she said, is that those who wish to report harassment or discrimination know where they can report it. It is also crucial for these reports to be taken seriously. Women in the workplace face discrimination and both them and witnesses often are forced to identify the severity of the issue in order to put a stop to it.

Finally, when asked if she has any tips for female leaders, Almandrez specified the importance of mentorship, self care, and “embracing your greatness.” She stated that she wishes more females of color could have the opportunity to connect with women who have had similar experiences. And, she hopes that women are able to find a supportive group of peers whom they trust and are mutually supported by. This is especially important to her, as a mentor has reminded her of the importance of self care in the past. Almandrez highlighted the importance of self care skills such as meditation, yoga, exercise, or any other form of a break from work. She said that young female leaders should begin to develop healthy habits as soon as possible, as they will serve you for your entire life. Finally, Almandrez, preached to embrace your own greatness. She has seen girls and women who have not been able to recognize themselves as a leader despite the fact that they were most definitely leading. She has caught herself saying that “we” made accomplishments, even though she spearheaded those efforts. Almandrez said that she wishes people would realize how wonderful they are and that “greatness is already inside of you.” As a female in education, Almandrez says that we should all look for how people in future generations can make an impact, as if we can do this, then “we can work to make the world a better place.” Thank you so much, Dr. Almandrez!

## A Collegiate Amount of Bias

By: Eve Kaplan

In the spring of each year, videos appear on social media of friend groups wearing their college hoodies. Often, these sweatshirts only represent the top twenty-five schools. When this is pointed out, you'll find comments on said videos remarking on how these schools are “feeder schools. What features define a feeder school: A private school, with a wealthy student body, full of legacies to prestigious institutions and well connected admission staff.

These “feeder schools” are directly targeted during the college admissions process, as recruiting efforts often focus on wealthy, predominantly white high schools. On average, these are the students with the higher SAT and ACT scores and more access to internships, club sports, large selections of advanced classes, and much more.

This issue is systemic. The wealth gap between white and black families remains as large as it was in 1968, over 50 years ago. Fewer than 7 percent of colleges (6.8) say race or ethnicity has “considerable influence” on admission decisions, while 17.8 percent say it has “moderate influence” and 16.9 percent, “limited influence,” according to NACAC's 2019 “State of College Admission” report.

In the Education Issue of a magazine that was founded at “feeder schools” in West Los Angeles, it is prevalent to write about the advantages many of our writers have. From school funding for the club at Cate School, to club advisors with PhDs, many of us are those who benefit from the system. Windward School, Oakwood School, Sacred Heart Preparatory School, Cate School, Ethical Culture Fieldston School and Dalton School are a few of the prominent schools GirlTalk writers attend. These are all high academic schools with endowments larger than one can fathom.

Too often we leave the change making to those who are disadvantaged by the system; we leave the activism to those who have experienced the bias personally. GirlTalk is a place where we encourage students to make the world a more equal and just place for everyone, no matter their circumstances.

As smart, motivated and hardworking as one may be, nothing takes you farther in life than being born into privilege. We live in a system that empowers only wealthy young white students. GirlTalk strives to change that through growth. Founded at independent schools, the only way to widen the perspective of our magazine and writers is through outreach and for GirlTalk to become an opportunity at schools nationwide with a variety of socioeconomic statuses. It is especially important in an this issue to address where we fall short, as GirlTalk is not about white feminism but intersectionism.



Feminism in India

# The Intentions of the Dress Code

By: Gemma Luber

Schools across the country are searching for a reason to acts of violence, mental health crises, sexual assault, and so much more. For schools, students' "distracting" clothes is just that. Scandalous clothes are deemed not a reason but the reason for many of their structural flaws. I guess the length of our skirts and the size of our straps sounds "Mutiny!" to the administrators of many high schools. They say that words on our shirt must have a message, that it must mean something more. We cry, "It's only a logo, a trend, a funny little joke." My intentions weren't to distract you from your work, I intended to go to school and get an education, since when did my body become your business? The dress code I'm talking about isn't the reasonable one – "no prolific words and images". Dress codes are a way for schools to control kids' self expression. Students are pulled out of class for what they wear on a daily basis. This puts kids at a social disadvantage, embarrassing and humiliating them. And, beyond that, it makes students uncomfortable. Objectified. For what? A shoulder? Strict dress codes, where faculty are constantly watching and judging students' clothing, isn't healthy.

According to a statistic by Michael Barbella, more than 55% of American highschools and 77% of middle schools have enforced a dress code (2020). Schools should allow kids to wear their favorite clothes to let them show their personality. Students should be allowed to dress in what they feel most comfortable in. Harsh dress codes limit a students' creativity when it comes to fashion and self expression. By taking this away, you're restricting students' free speech.

Not only do dress codes violate a student's right to express themselves, but the majority of dress codes are sexist towards female identifying students. An article titled "Sexism Behind the Dress Code" by the newspaper The Grizzly Growler (2021) says that girls are almost 5.5 times more likely to get a violation than boys. The idea that someone's clothes are "distracting" causes many to ask: To whom? Personally, I'll never understand how people blame the girl so fast, she just wanted to go to class.

On the contrary, I think uniforms could be a solution to many of the problems that students go through almost everyday. Many teaching professionals argue that uniforms create a stress free environment. Schools think that having all students wear the same clothes will prevent bullying and create a more focused and safe learning environment. Studies show that uniforms create a higher



"Vessels of Genealogies" exhibit by Firelei Baez

sense of equality, as clothing can reveal one's socioeconomic status or background. Uniforms can take away the whole idea of a dress-code violation because everyone is already wearing pre approved clothing. This can create a stronger community where everyone is equal. It

makes sense to say that uniforms aren't trying to limit a student's creativity, but only trying to fix the problem of violations, bullying, and stress all together.

Both uniforms and dress codes are looking to be a "fix" to various problems at school and with student-interactions. Schools see students having trouble with fitting in, grades, stress, and bullying and want to create solutions to these issues. Many schools think that the students' clothing causes all these problems, but it's much deeper than that. In my opinion, uniforms want to protect kids and preach equality, while dress codes are limiting and degrading. Although a population of those in the world of education may disagree with me – they may think that their students are failing because of their clothing, I can tell you now that my shoulders aren't the problem, you are.

# Tips and Tricks to Learn a Foreign Language

By: Colette Chang  
Oakwood School

Whenever I ask people the best way to learn a foreign language, most will tell me to “get a [fill in the blank with whatever language you’re learning] boyfriend.” However, if you are like me and don’t have the time or energy to for this, read on for some other tips and tricks based on personal experience to help you master a foreign language.

## Tip #1: Travel to Said Foreign Country

One of the best, albeit pricey, ways to learn a new language is by immersing yourself in the culture, food, and language. I would advise you to visit a smaller town rather than a large city as there are fewer English speakers. This will push you out of your comfort zone speaking and comprehension wise. Also, if possible, stay longer than a week. One month is the optimal amount of time. This way, you have enough time to orient yourself with the location, figure out which stores and markets are your favorites, and get to know the local vendors.

Resources needed: Parents who will foot your travel bill!

## Tip #2: Learn the Art of Eavesdropping

As a child, we have all been taught that eavesdropping is wrong. Well, throw that out the window the second your plane lands on the tarmac because eavesdropping is great for practicing your comprehension and learning how locals really talk. If you are at an open-air market, listen to how the locals say “how much is this?” or “is this fruit ripe enough to eat right now?” At ice cream parlors, learn how people order flavors or how to answer the “cup or cone?” question. You can also catch expressions, phrases, and even swear words that you definitely would not hear in your average language class.

Resources needed: A big hat or dark sunglasses to hide behind.



## Tip #3: Speak Every Opportunity You Get

When you first arrive, speaking will feel daunting. Not only will you be talking in a language you are not familiar with, but you will also be conversing with complete strangers. But trust me, the more you speak, the more comfortable you will get with making mistakes. Help your parents schedule massages or call restaurants to cancel dinner reservations, and soon you will be able to have a full-on conversation around town! Also, a lot of times locals will correct you if you, for example, conjugate something incorrectly in the past tense. Don’t worry, they are not judging you, they are just trying to help you learn!

## Tip #4: Read Local Books

Find a book or story you already know and try to read it in the language you are learning, researching words you don’t know along the way. And if you’re like me and struggle with pronunciation, read aloud and see how much of the story you understand. Don’t worry if you are reading a book at the reading level for elementary students, you will slowly build your vocabulary and be able to level up!

Resources needed: Thick skin to buy a book a kid half your age would read.

## Tip #5: Watch Local Movies

Watching movies is another great way to improve your comprehension. Choose entertaining movies to watch with your family in the language you are learning and put on English subtitles. This way you can listen to the characters’ words and read what they mean in English.

Resources needed: A post-it note with your Netflix password on it.

## Tip #6: Make a New Friend from the Area

Meeting someone your age and participating in a language swap is super effective for improving your vocabulary, grammar, and ideal pronunciation. If you speak in the language you are learning and your new friend speaks in English, you can give feedback and correct each other. Talk about music, movies, or sports. You will notice that there are cultural differences like the school system for example. Your new friend can also show you around the area and take you on fun activities like canoeing, zip lining, going to watch a movie, or even going to parties

with their other friends! Not only will you learn a lot, but you will also make great friends for life.

Bonus points: Text your friend in the language you are learning. You can practice reading and writing!

## Tip #7: Challenge Your Family to a Duolingo Contest

If you don’t know, Duolingo is a language-learning application. However, it is unique because the app has game-like features. There is a leaderboard, which you can only get on by earning “XP” experience points, from completing language lessons. This feature is extremely motivating when it comes to your family’s Duolingo competition. However, if you aren’t the competitive type, you can also work together with your friends and family to complete “friend quests” and get extra points! In both scenarios, you end up learning a lot. I’d advise doing at least one lesson in the morning every day because Duolingo teaches you useful phrases like “the check

# MALALA YOUSAFZAI



School:

Her thoughts get tangled in  
Spirals of numbers, theories, equations  
Each Greek letter chipping away  
At the unknown  
Physics: the vector, the force, the velocity of  
the Khushal school bus  
As it winds through the Swat Valley

School:

She fights for it huddled in the corner of her  
room  
Hidden behind her pink niqab  
Hidden behind a pseudonym  
Writing articles, essays, anything to be heard  
She watches her pseudonym self  
Projected as a flickering shadow  
Across the white plaster walls of ignorance

School:

The power of her efforts is echoed  
In the glimmers of light  
In the eyes of schoolgirls

please” that you can practice using when you go out later in the day.

Resources: Duolingo and the willingness to possibly have to purchase “Super Duolingo” when you get addicted.

## Tip #8: Make a List of New Words and Phrases

Keep a small notebook and pen with you at all times and write down new words and phrases you learn every day. Hopefully, by the end of your trip, you will have a long list of vocabulary words to take back home with you as a souvenir.

Learning a new language is difficult and takes resilience, effort, and time. But by following these tips, you can improve your speaking, reading and writing, and comprehension skills while having a fun and adventurous vacation. You’ll make new friends, explore a new place, and be able to add a new language to your repertoire. Bon voyage!

They metamorphose,  
Growing above their wraps  
As each formula is mastered,  
Each passage is comprehended  
Each essay is written  
Each day a little more of the unknown con-  
quered

School:

Her fight leads her to the bus  
Where the driver does magic tricks  
With disappearing pebbles  
Where she is safe, nestled in her valley  
Where she can just be a girl  
A girl named Malala.

School:

Her fight follows her out of the classroom  
Chases her down in the form of two strange  
men  
They wield their guns of  
Hate, ignorance, fear  
Aim them at her hope  
She faces their blast  
Each shot amplifies  
Her plight for education

By: Annie Chian  
Cate School

# Education's Role in the Cycle of Poverty

By: Zohar Lindennmann Dalton School

According to CBS News, a 2021 study conducted by economist Thomas Piketty found that 2,750 people are wealthier than half the planet. The wealth gap is nearly as wide as it was during the famed Gilded Age- an era that occurred over a century ago. The cycle of poverty occurs when children who grow up in low income households are disadvantaged through the lack of resources available to them. This lack of resources impacts their entire life as many struggle to get a higher education or well paying job. When they give birth, they raise their own children in poverty, thus continuing the rotation all whilst being berated for being "lazy" or simply not having "the drive" to achieve a better life for their family. While many factors play into trapping people within this pattern, one particularly impactful aspect is inequality in educational opportunities.

The criteria used to distinguish who deserves higher paying job opportunities is often based on level of education: a luxury that isn't available to everyone. While scholarship programs are advancing, the most "impressive" or "distinguished" low income students these programs are limited. High academic universities tend to cost an immense amount of money, and often require a long list of extracurricular activities and outstanding grades. Often students with low socio-economic statuses don't have the opportunity to do such extra-curricular and aren't encouraged too. These students also bear the added responsibility of working jobs or familial commitments that hold



them back from prioritizing their own passions and creating a stronger application. Those who take out student loans, both federal and private, can often be trapped in debt for a good portion of their lives after they graduate, especially if they choose to pursue graduate studies. According to a Forbes article on 2022 student loan debt statistics, "Student loan debt in 2022 is now more than \$1.7 trillion... Student loan debt is now the second-highest consumer debt category — second only to mortgage debt and higher than debt for both credit cards and auto loans." In addition to the troubles of student loans, students of higher incomes are given advantage from the existence of private schools. This

## 2,750 people are wealthier than half the planet.

injustice is also seen in the public education system as private donors only give back to public schools in affluent districts, furthering the education divide. As stated by a Slate magazine article, "While 10 percent of students admitted to Harvard's Class of 2018 were recruited athletes and 12 percent were legacies, almost 40 percent of the class went to a private school. If we really wanted to get rid of the most glaring case of bias at prestigious private universities, we would target private high school students."

While education can very well be used as a tool to break the cycle of poverty, lack of proper access to it can just as well be used to trap individuals. Although universities are taking action with affirmative action, scholarship programs, and financial aid, how much can truly be accomplished in distributing "equal" opportunities in a system created to do the opposite? Education should not be used as a weapon to reinforce the structure of society- rather, to empower young people to make change and works towards a more equitable, unprejudiced future.

# A FAILING FUTURE: INEQUALITY IN OUR SCHOOLS

By: Eleni Bahati

Cate School

The United States is based on equal opportunity; every citizen, in theory, is given the same chance as another to succeed. This theory of equality includes the government providing the prospect of equal education to all children. Every child is equipped with a school in their neighborhood to attend. However, the quality of a school in an affluent neighborhood compared to a school in a poor area is unfair and certainly not equal. The United States is trying to provide an equal education for all, but there is an evident learning gap between higher and lower-income schools. The schools in poor cities do not have the financial means to provide their students with the supplies, experiences, and teachers that schools in wealthy areas can provide. As the educational standards have increased throughout the years, and higher levels of education are expected for well-paying jobs, wealthy schools can continue to support their students and give them the best education possible to succeed. The poor schools are not given the necessary assistance to help them adjust to the ever-changing standards. Students stuck in poor schools and poor areas cannot even compare to those in affluent areas because they are not getting half the experience of wealthy students. The same students who attend the considerably worse schools cannot afford private schools. These students suffer from the public school environment and will continue to suffer because the United States government is not currently making change to support low-income communities.

Students in low-income schools are not set up for the same future as wealthy students. Wealthy school students are expected to apply to top colleges, are encouraged to become doctors and lawyers, and are given all the means necessary to

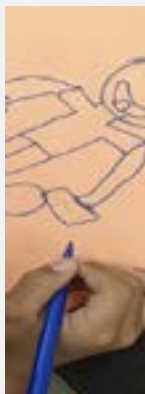
achieve those goals. But the students in low-income areas are not given the same encouragement and don't receive the same opportunities. Our education system is rigged to keep poor people at the bottom and wealthy people at the top. The United States says that anyone can succeed if they work hard, but the education system proves it false. Furthermore, students in low-income areas must overcome countless hurdles at home on top of everything at school, like worrying about rent or getting a job, all things students in high-income regions don't need to consider. The public school system is portrayed



as providing equality for all. But, in reality, it comprises two vastly different groups of people who are far from equal. What does this mean for the trajectory of our children's education? The education system has changed drastically in the past 20 years, and a high school diploma is not enough to succeed anymore.

With the wealth gap becoming larger and larger, there is more pressure to achieve the highest level of education possible to survive in our capitalist world. However, the students stuck in low-income schools are struggling because it is becoming more and more impossible to break the cycle of poverty. Parents cannot trust the government and public school system to give their children an education they can use to succeed. Instead, the trust is going into the hands of the teachers. Teachers are now expected to take the initiative and put less privileged children onto a good path. And frankly, teachers who genuinely care about their students make more of an impact than a fancy school. But, until the United States decides to care about this inequality, teachers must do their best to ensure their students are set up for success and unite to fight for equal education.





# School on Wheels

By: Lily Kramon, Oakwood School

The United States is in the midst of a homelessness crisis. In January of 2020, approximately 580,466 people were experiencing homelessness in the United States and this number has risen with the impact of the pandemic. Homelessness is defined as living in a state of being unhoused and unsheltered, but can entail being in transition from housing locations or “transitional homelessness”, episodic homelessness, chronic homelessness, or hidden homelessness; being homeless can mean living in a car, shelter, motel, or another non-permanent place – the definition goes beyond the stereotypical picture of living on a street. According to the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, California has the highest homeless population at 161,548 people and the city of Los Angeles is one of the most significant contributors to this number. Los Angeles has an estimated 66,000 people living without homes. This accounts for about twenty percent of the homeless population in the United States. Even more troubling, A Los Angeles Times Article states that there are more than 17,000 students in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) living in motels, homeless shelters, cars, or unsheltered on the streets. Students who are homeless are nine times more likely to repeat a grade and four times more likely to drop out of school. While these numbers concern both citizens and governments alike, many local organizations are working to make a change.

These students are placed in difficult conditions that make performing at school extremely challenging. For instance, many homeless people are living in small spaces with multiple family members, which brings about noise and distraction while these students attempt to complete their homework assignments. Moreover, many homeless students in Los Angeles move from place to place, which can result in more absences than the average student.

However, communities and nonprofit organizations have stepped up to make a difference in this ongoing crisis.

I have had the opportunity to volunteer with one of these organizations, called School On Wheels. This organization provides free tutoring and academic support for children of all grades living in motels, shelters, foster homes, cars, and on the streets of the Los Angeles area. As a tutor, I meet with a student assigned to me once a week. During these sessions, I had the opportunity to assist students with homework, play amusing academic games and videos, and help them with areas of study that they struggle in. After multiple weekly meetings, I am able to create a powerful bond with the students and can see how meaningful this bond will be for both me and the student. In Los Angeles and beyond, many homeless students are not receiving the education they need and are falling behind because of circumstances that are out of their control. Many of these students whom I meet are struggling in school, whether it is with reading, writing, or math. School On Wheels is helping combat this issue and has tutored over 50,000 students since the organization’s founding. Personally, I feel empowered that I get to step up as a privileged leader and student to help mentor students and, most importantly, share a lasting friendship with them.



While School On Wheels is making a significant change in the lives of Los Angeles’ homeless students, there is still much more work that needs to be done. Some of this work, I believe, needs to include more funding for LAUSD for the development of after-school programs, a better partnership between LAUSD schools and the city of Los Angeles, and more involvement from the city’s citizens through non-profit organizations. The Los Angeles homeless crisis is growing at an alarming rate, and it is going to take an immense amount of people and resources to address it. By sharing my experience volunteering with School On Wheels, I hope more people will step up and contribute their resources to lessen the impacts of homelessness in Los Angeles and beyond.