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Stress, burnout strains education system nationally, locally

District, school fight to avert crisis as nationwide teacher shortage increases

Justin Diep
Co-Editor in Chief

There are fewer people choosing teaching as a career and there are more educators leaving the field. Effects of the higher workload for those remaining are becoming apparent and causing burnout. It's a nation-wide problem that has been brought to the forefront since the pandemic started.

According to a study done by MissionSquare Institute, 52% of kindergarten through 12th grade employees feel stressed or burned out.

Many teachers at Bryan High are also feeling the burn out. In a survey given to all Bryan High staff, 50 responded, of which 42 were teachers. This represents 23% of the 215 person staff. The survey found 76% of respondents reported feeling stressed or burned out.

The Nebraska State Education Association (NSEA) identified both recruitment and retention problems of educators in a survey sent out to its members last month. Educators reported more stress and less time to plan than in previous years. Additionally, the Nebraska college system reported a 50% drop in enrollment in the education field over the last decade.

"The social, emotional and academic toll of the COVID-19 pandemic is growing worse by the day,"

NSEA President Jenni Benson said. "Staff shortages and quarantines have stretched teachers thin to the breaking point. In addition to their own classes, teachers are covering classes for teachers who are ill or quarantining. They are losing their plan time, their time for one-on-one instruction with students, time to collaborate with their colleagues, and time to talk with parents. And this is the second year of these challenges – everything is compounded."

NSEA is currently calling on state lawmakers to increase salaries for public education employees and is requesting to use \$50 million of the state's COVID relief funds for a \$1000 stipend for their extra work.

Omaha Public Schools' human resources team reported last month the district is currently about 93% staffed with most of the vacancies being in support staff roles such as paras and nutrition service workers.

"Staff shortages in education is a decades-long challenge that has more recently come to our area, heightened by the pandemic like every industry," OPS spokeswoman Bridget Blevins said. "Omaha Public Schools has taken numerous steps to thoughtfully address these challenges in a variety of ways."

Some steps OPS has taken are modifying the

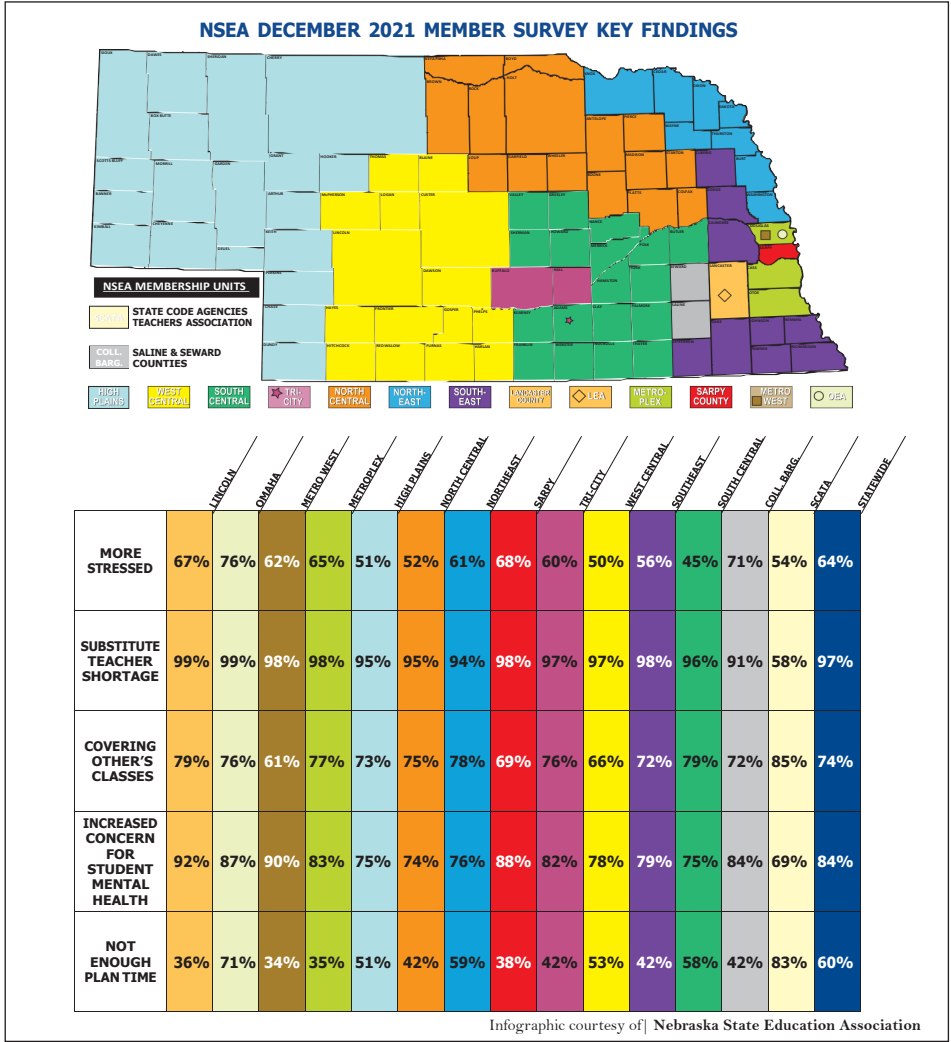
calendar to allow for more teacher workdays and hiring students in support roles such as interpreters and summer interns at elementary schools. Additionally, they recently launched a concierge program that would assist in non-instructional roles such as assisting cafeteria and transportation staff. Long term, OPS is investing in its para to teacher pipeline and its teaching academies that will be implemented at all its high schools.

However, Bryan High is almost fully staffed with only two vacant teaching positions, one in the English department and one in JROTC. Both positions are filled by long term subs.

"Our goal is to have a highly qualified and certified teacher in every classroom at," Bryan principal Rony Ortega said. "When this hasn't been possible, we have secured long term substitutes who have a strong background in education and know our Bryan High community."

According to a study by RAND Corporation, since March 2020, over half of respondents cited the pandemic and stress from it as their main reason for leaving the profession. The second reason was lack of pay. In an anonymous survey conducted of Bryan High staff members, the stressors indicated by RAND Corporation are on their minds too.

"It's [The Pandemic] been pretty awful, but it's



shown a lot of people that you need to be happy in life and not just work for the sake of work, there are other options out there," a Bryan teacher who wished to remain anonymous said.

They also agree that teacher pay is too low. 88% of the Bryan High staff who responded to the survey reported they felt underpaid for the work they do.

"Teachers don't become

educators for the money, but we'd like to be compensated for the actual work we do," one Bryan teacher said. "We don't just teach a subject. We become parents, counselors, aides, we embody a whole system of support that takes a toll on us individually."

Others have said additional responsibilities outside the scope of their contract are contributing to

their stress.

"It feels like society is dumping large scale social failures onto the backs of teachers and then expecting us to make up for those larger failures," a Bryan teacher said. "As teachers are expected to do more with less, we will leave the profession."

While national studies have shown the crisis in

SEE TEACHERS | PAGE 2

Junior class officers announced, prom 2022 planning commences



President
Bryan Benitez



Vice President
Wendy Pacheco-Menivar



Secretary
Bryan Diaz-Quezada



Treasurer
Justin Diep

Daisy Chinchilla Ramos
Reporter

Elections for the Class of 2023 Junior Class Officers (JCO) were held last week and the results are in. Joining 18 of their peers who will be JCO ambassadors are President Bryan Benitez, Vice President Wendy Pacheco-Menivar, Secretary Bryan Diaz-Quezada and Treasurer Justin Diep.

The group of juniors

will work to promote school and class pride and help with ACT preparations, but their largest task will be putting on prom.

"I hope to have an amazing prom that rivals previous proms," Benitez said.

While this is a large task, much of the decision making has already been done for prom. It will be on April 30, at the Durham Museum. They do not have a name for it yet, but plan

on having a vintage Hollywood feel to the event.

"The Durham is the perfect venue," JCO sponsor Ranae Duncan said. "It's elegant and has an art deco design to it already that will fit the glamorous, vintage Hollywood feel."

While last year's prom was funded by an anonymous philanthropist, this year's is not. Students will have to pay for their tickets once again. They will be \$25 each or \$45 for

a couple, which is the same price tickets were pre-pandemic. They will go on sale the week of prom.

"I wish it could be free to attend, but that's not how it goes," Duncan said. "The funds for this year's prom came from ticket sales from the 2019 prom and the revenue from this year's prom will pay for next year's."

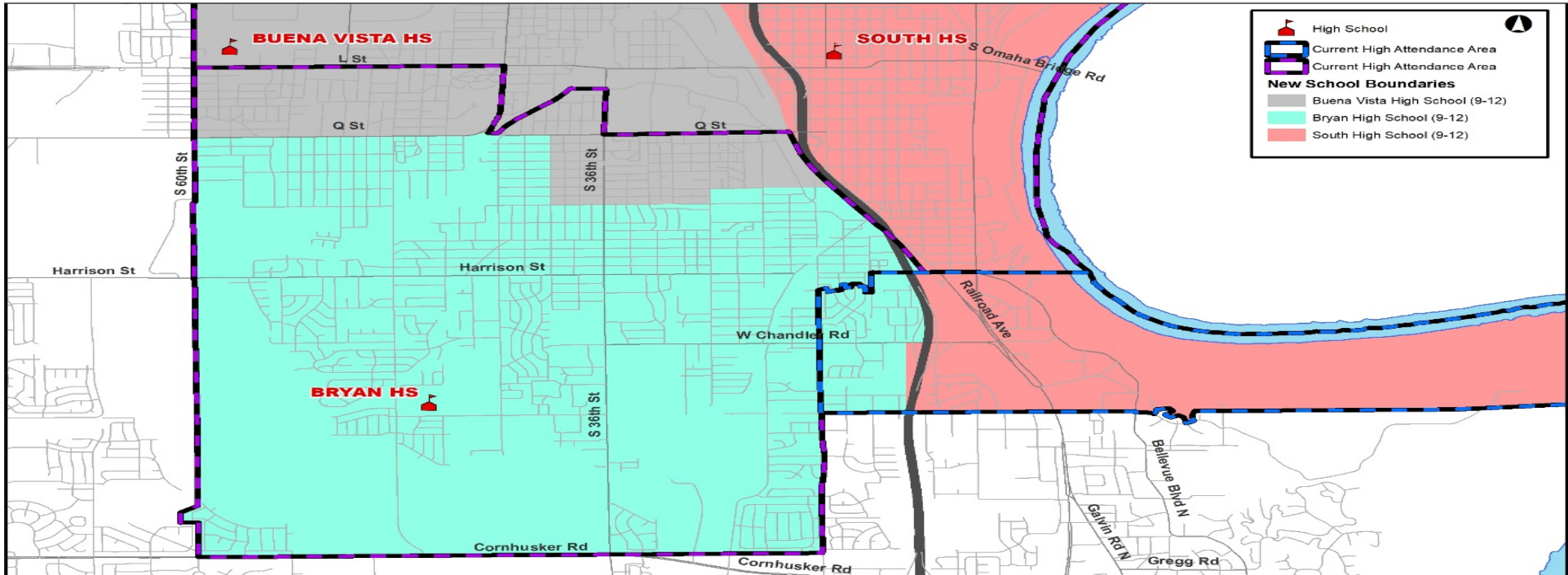
As far as details go for the 2022 prom, the colors will be red, black, white

and gold; the DJ will be DJ Devon Dupree who has been the DJ in the past and there will be a photo booth and snacks.

In addition to prom, they will be in charge of a prom spirit week to build excitement for the big event.

"Spirit weeks kind of bring the classes together and build school spirit and that's what we're supposed to do as junior class officers," Diep said.

SCHOOL REZONING



As the new high schools are finished being built and opened, Omaha Public Schools (OPS) has redrawn the boundaries for the school zones to accommodate the new schools. The high schools will open in the fall of 2022.

District redraws school zone boundaries

Justin Diep
Co-Editor in Chief

Omaha Public Schools (OPS) will be opening two new high schools next school year.

The new schools will come with an updated student assignment plan. Students will be guaranteed enrollment at their neighborhood school. While students have the option of applying to any of the high schools, students who have siblings who will stay enrolled at the school the following school year and

those who live in a partner zone will be prioritized first.

Current freshmen who live in Buena Vista’s attendance area will be required to transition from their current schools to Buena Vista for their sophomore year, but still have the option to apply to other high schools in the district.

“Currently, our district has identified approximately 100 ninth grade students each at Bryan and South who are attending their current neighborhood school and will transition to their

new neighborhood school, Buena Vista for 2022-23,” OPS spokeswoman Bridget Blevins said.

The district will also phase out sixth grade in its elementary schools and integrate them into its middle schools in the 2023-24 school year.

Carrie Carr and Thomas Lee were announced as the principals of Buena Vista and Westview High School in January and started their positions in June.

Buena Vista, located at 60th and L Streets, and Westview High School, at 156th and Ida Streets,

will start with freshman and sophomores only and will reach its capacity of approximately 1500 students two years later.

The district is pushing students in the high school selection process to focus more on the college career academies and pathways offered at the high schools.

“It has also made students more serious about learning about careers that match their interests since that will help determine the best high school to attend,” Bryan Middle School counselor Stephanie Suhr said.

Some students are looking forward to the new schools, such as eighth grader Yaneli Lopez-Escobar who plans to attend Buena Vista.

“As schools get older, they seem to be more run down, so I like the idea of a brand-new school,” she said.

All sports will be offered at both of the schools. Football will temporarily be categorized as Class B, but once the schools reach full capacity, football will join the Metro Conference as Class A.

TEACHERS | Stress causes burnout

education, OPS has been consistent in their number on resignations and retirements over the past three years.

According to Blevins, the district reported 289 resignations during the 2018-19 school year, 239 during the 2020-21 school year, and 320 during the 2020-21 school year, which is about a 4% resignation rate over the last three years.

In comparison, the Bryan High resignation rate was slightly higher than the district’s with 5% but followed OPS’s trend with 12 resignations during the 2018-19 school year, 6 in the 2019-20 school year and 15 in the 2020-21 school year, according to head secretary Nanette Varley. Nationally, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported over a million teachers resigning since 2019.

Of the 42 teachers that were surveyed, only three said they plan to leave at the end of the year. While some are still undecided, majority of teachers plan on returning and many of their reasons were similar to art teacher Rebekah Pilypaitis’s.

“I’m staying because I love what I do and I love our students,” she said.

Bryan administrators have been actively trying to combat the national issue of low teacher pay. They have implemented different incentives and activities to promote higher morale, such as having more staff celebrations and more staff recognition like staff member of the week and month.

“I think they’re doing a really nice job of trying to increase morale around the building,” English teacher Jill Stephenson said. “They’ve had get-togethers and parties, and they’ve been supportive in lots of other ways.”

Retaining current teachers and making them feel at home is Ortega’s goal amid the national cry for changes in education.

“We continue to work hard to create positive climate and culture where staff want to work and where substitute teachers enjoy coming to work,” Ortega said. “We know that our current staff are our best recruiters, and what they say about our school can help recruit other teachers here.”

MLK contest participants get creative with their art

Ulises Munoz-Villarruel
Reporter

The annual MLK contest is a competition that encourages high school and middle school students from the Omaha area to adopt principles from social and human rights warriors throughout history to their life and and present it in an original way, via a speech, song, a poem, etc.

Social Studies teacher Nicholas Clawson encouraged students to join the competition as a way to express their creativity and feelings in a competition. The four students joining are Mi’Khel Thomas, Don Hannon, Julie Iraheta-Umana and Daphne Valadez. Both Julie and Daphne will be working as a duo.

“I try to encourage them to sign up and then I try to coach them,” Clawson said.

There are different categories in what a student can choose for the competition. Short essay, spoken word, vocal music, instrumental music and dance are all categories that can be chosen by students.

Hannon, a senior, will be playing the piano, rapping and singing about problems with taxes, police brutality and racism.

“Its important to me, because I live that everyday life of being a black student and young [black]



Playing the piano, senior Don Hannon practices for the Martin Luther King Jr. contest in January. Hannon will be playing the piano while performing a song he wrote.

male,” Hannon said.

His original plan was to sing a J. Cole song, but instead he will be singing a song he wrote. Hannon also plays football, basketball, and does track, so this performance may or may not come as a surprise to some.

“I don’t think it will [come as a surprise], because most people already know I play a lot of instruments.”

Junior Mi’Khel Thomas will be talking about problems in the community, like equality and increasing people’s pay. Thomas placed third at the competition last year.

“I feel like it’s a big problem within the community and it’s obvi-

ously not complete equal yet, within certain areas,” Thomas said. “I feel like that’s something that should’ve been fixed.”

Valadez and Iraheta-Umana will be performing a speech in which they will talk about topics like immigration and the problems immigrants face.

“I wanted my voice to be heard,” Valadez said. “I think it’s something not a lot of people focus on.”

The grand prize winner will receive \$1,000 and their trophy. The competition will be at the Holland Performing Arts Center and will start on January 17, 2022, which lands on Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

Conflict only leads to conflict

Fighting solves nothing. It has become so common-place in recent years, that there’s even social media pages dedicated to it, but it does nothing for anyone who may be involved. It only gets everyone in a whole lot of trouble and causes more problems.

Fights have always been a problem in schools, that’s something that’s never going to change. But in recent years, it’s gotten more out of hand, especially when you factor in the rise of social media.

Nowadays, there are even social media pages purely dedicated to fights, so someone might fake a fight with an innocent bystander just to get their 15 minutes of fame.

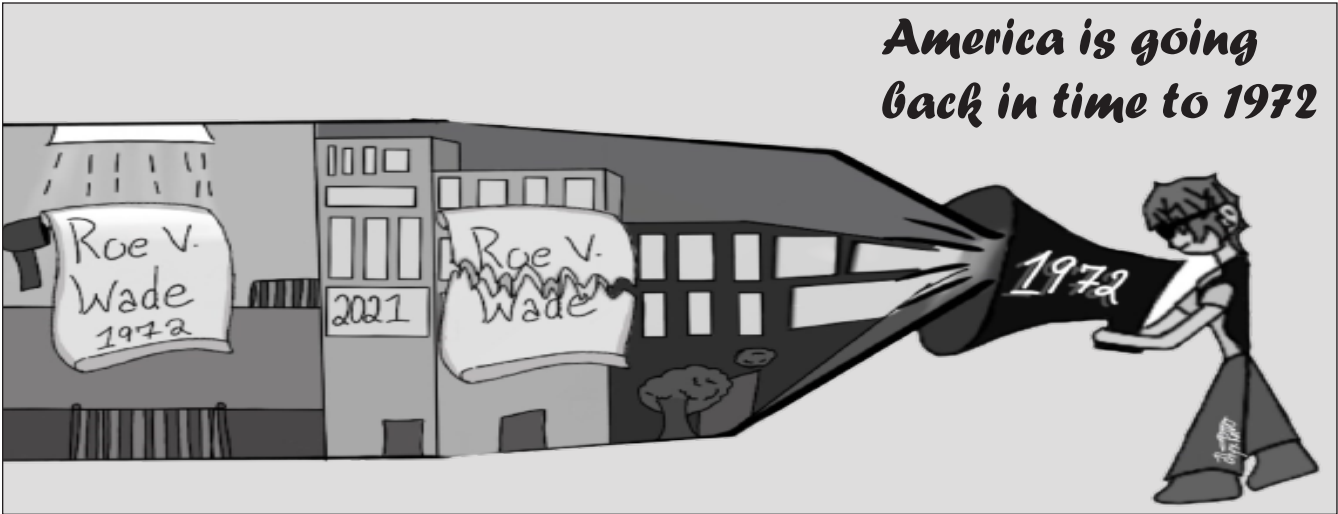
These pages continue the spread of the “fight culture” which in the end, also continues the feeling of unsafeness in the school environment. People shouldn’t have to feel unsafe in school, which means we need to do better in stopping fights.

In order to help stop fights, we should be teaching students how to solve their conflicts without violence of any sort. This needs to be taught early on in their lives, not just once they reach high school age. If a fight does happen, it affects more than just the people around them.

There are lots of ways to solve issues you might have with another student, one being using words. Walking away from the person trying to get a rise out of you can also help prevent fights. You could also talk to a responsible third party if you really feel like you can’t talk with the person without getting into a physical fight.

We need to cancel this “fight culture” and teach students how to properly and safely solve their problems with others, because once students graduate and leave high school, they are in the real world and the real world will kick their butt.

Students are the future of our society, and we need to teach them how to resolve their problems without fighting to help ensure a brighter and safer futures for everyone.



Pro-Choice or Anti-Choice: the real abortion debate

Amber Roth
Co-Editor in Chief



There are two sides to the abortion debate: pro-choice or pro-life. Everyone picks a side, but in doing so, they are making a CHOICE, and that’s what the whole abortion debate really boils down to: pro-choice or anti-choice. Being pro-choice doesn’t mean you’re going to run around getting abortions left and right, it just means you want the ability to CHOOSE. And in making abortion illegal, you are stripping millions of people across the country from their right to choose.

On Dec. 1, a case was brought to the Supreme Court that has potential to overturn Roe v. Wade, the case that legalized abortion. The case, Dobbs vs. Jackson Women’s Health Organization,

centers around a Mississippi law that would ban almost all abortions after 15 weeks of pregnancy.

They’re arguing that the ban should be upheld, because “the US Constitution does not support a right to abortion.” But by that logic, women shouldn’t be able to vote, presidents shouldn’t be able to be impeached, half the people in this country shouldn’t have any rights, because the Constitution didn’t “support” those rights either.

Just because something is not explicitly stated in the Constitution does not mean it is not a right. It would’ve been impossible for the framers of the Constitution to include every single right that people have; that’s why amendments exist, to amend the Constitution to ensure that people get those rights they deserve.

Making abortion illegal also increases the risk of maternal death. The

maternal mortality rate in America is already at 20.1 deaths per 100,000 live births, the highest of any developed country. If it was banned, it would increase by 21%, according to a study from University of Colorado Boulder.

If people really cared about lowering abortion rates, they would put more funding into places that offer things like contraceptives. If access to contraceptives becomes easier and more affordable, then the rate of unwanted pregnancies would decrease. If unwanted pregnancies decrease, then abortions would also decrease, because there would be no need for them.

Abortion is a constitutional right, and any law that places restrictions on it is unconstitutional. Women have the right to choose what they want to do with their body, and if it’s made illegal, you are taking away our constitutional right to choose.

BOOKS UNDER ATTACK

Parents, senators try to remove books from school libraries

Amber Roth and Jade Johnson
Co-Editor in Chief and Reporter



Books are meant for learning. They can teach kids lessons and help them become more educated. But if people are trying to ban books, then they are taking away that opportunity from the kids.

Recently in Virginia, parents argued to ban two books, “Call Me by Your Name” and “33 Snowfish” because they viewed them as too “sexually explicit”. Both books deal with topics like sexual assault and LGBTQ+ kids. A Virginian senator even said that the books should be burned.

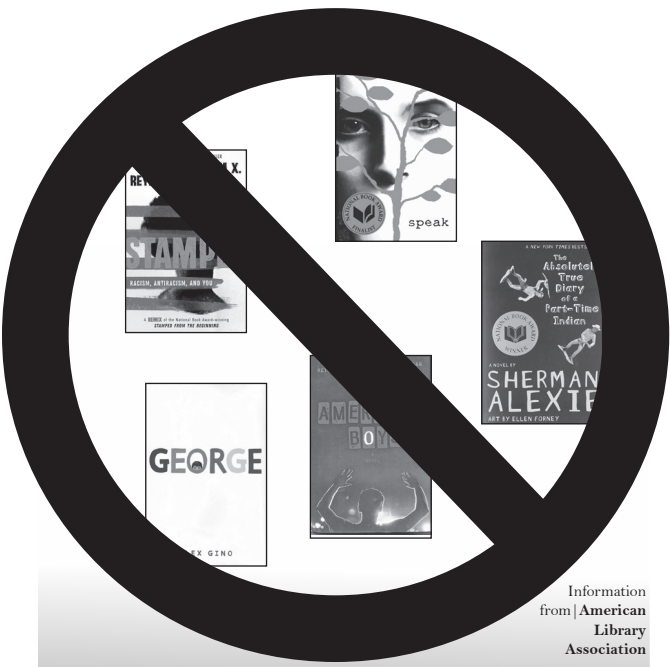
Trying to ban books is not a new trend. Over the years, people have tried to ban books like “Of Mice and Men”, “Catcher in the Rye”, “The Kite Runner”, etc. Often times, people protest these books because it goes against their own racist, homophobic and misogynis-

tic beliefs.

It’s not a matter of a book being too explicit, it’s a matter of personal interest. There are plenty of other books that are just as explicit that aren’t being banned. If someone who is super religious is against the LG-BTQ+ community, of course they’re not going to want their children reading a book about gay people. But religion has no place in schools, not unless that school is a religious school.

If you’re going to try and ban a book, at least have a legitimate reason as to why you want it banned. If you’re basing it solely off the fact that it goes against your personal beliefs (whatever they may be), then that’s not fair to other people who may not share those beliefs.

Instead of trying to ban books, we should look at reorganizing the library system to make sure books are in the correct schools, if they aren’t already. A third grader should not be able to get their hands on a book like “Kite Runner.” As long as books are in the hands of the correct age group, there is no reason to try and ban them.



Top 5 Most Banned Books of 2020:

1. *George*- by Alex Gino
2. *Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You*- by Ibram X. Kendi and Jason Reynolds
3. *All American Boys*- by Jason Reynolds and Brendan Kiely
4. *Speak*- by Laurie Halse Anderson
5. *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*- by Sherman Alexie

Infographic by | Amber Roth

Boys' Ralston Tournament: Tonight

Girls Platteview Tournament: Tomorrow



BRING IT ON

Wrestling teams gear up for weekend

Olivia Wallace
Life & Style Editor

Both the boys and girls will be hitting the mat this weekend, but they will be at different locations.

The boys' team will be at Ralston High School tonight at 4:30 for the Ralston Tournament. There, the boys will face off against seven other schools: Ralston, Bellevue West, Crete, Elkhorn South, Fremont, South Sioux City and York.

"York and Elkhorn South are going to be pretty stout," head coach Jason Susnjar said. "They have been one- two the last couple years at that tournament."

Trying to add more W's in the win column, they have been running drills day in and day out to prepare for tonight.

"In practice, he's [Susnjar] been making us run a lot, go live a lot," senior Chase Pokett said. "Overall, this year has been harder compared to the past two years I've been wrestling."

Susnjar is excited for the tournament and feels the boys will have a good showing.

"I think we can compete there," Susnjar said. "The past two years we've gotten third, so I think we can make that next step to contend for the Ralston title or at least be in that conversation."

Part of the reason Susnjar thinks they will do well is that the team has good chemistry and has been committed to

getting better and doing their best.

"This could be the first time since I've been the head coach, in the wrestling room that we have no problems as in attitude, as in behavior and things like that," Susnjar said. "I'm not saying we have all 4.0s and perfect attendance and all that stuff, but in the practice room, I never have to question anybody's commitment, their effort, anything like that."

While the boys are at Ralston, the girls will be back at the school tonight preparing for the girls' Platteview Invitational tomorrow morning. There will be 24 teams competing at the invite including schools such as South Sioux City and Westpoint who have had girls competing for several years.

One obstacle that the girls will face at this tournament and future ones like the Winnebago tournament on Dec. 28, is that there are only five girls on the team. Other teams have had girls wrestling for them for several years and have bigger female teams. South Sioux City has 27 girls on their roster and Westpoint has 12.

The girls earned 24th out of 25 teams at the Friday Night Fracas and 14th out of 15 at the Crete Invite. However, freshman Taylor Kress went 1-3 earning 4th place at the Crete Invite. And while there haven't been many official wins in the record book, Susnjar is proud of the girls and sees many wins every day as they learn more and get better.

"You can see them at practice and even in the matches, you can see like a light bulb go off, like, Boom! There's a double leg, and then you can see them attempting to hit it," Susnjar said. "The execution may not be great right now, but that's what we're building for. The W's will start coming."

CORRECTION: There was an error printed in the girls wrestling story last issue. It said "The teams will be managed by two coaches being more focused on the girls which are coach Ryan Hanson and coach Vincent Rice." *The Orator* would like to apologize for this error. It should have read coach George Hansen and Eric Rice.

Seniors Tobin Wingender
and Kelsey "Sie" Simon

Photo by | Olouwatobi Noukpozounkou

GIRLS BASKETBALL

Girls to rebuild program, culture

Dallanara Sibrian-Miranda
Reporter

Due to many challenges including injured players, academic eligibility amongst other things, the girls basketball team has struggled with rebuilding the season after the damage done by COVID-19.

Even though Mitchell tried to have the girls' basketball team last year, the season ended up being cancelled anyway due to COVID-19, which had a

big impact on the team.

"Being committed to the change is a heavy time investment," head girls basketball coach Nicole Mitchell said. "Many of the girls had to personally decide if they were willing to invest their time and commit to changing the culture."

Mitchell worked hard this year to recruit players, from making phone calls to freshman girls who were interested in basketball to having an open house

Mitchell plans to continue to build and maintain relationships within the school and throughout the Omaha community.

"One thing I am seeing and hearing are the girls building a sisterhood and having fun learning and playing basketball with their sisters," Mitchell said. "We are young and hungry with the heart to compete and grow."

When asked why she felt it was important to build back she said that

it was simple because no players equal no program and that "Bryan Athletics need new life". Even though scores have been rough, the girls have been creating team bonds.

"No matter how the season is going I always strive to get better," junior point guard Stephany Hernandez said. "It's not about the wins or losses. There's always time to improve their game. It's all about who has the most heart out there on the court."



Photo by | Raquel Burton

During the varsity girls basketball game against Central, junior point guard Stephany Hernandez hustles down the court to make a point.

Winter Sports

Now that it's cold out side, winter sports have arrived. Here are the scores so far and upcoming athletic events.

Justin Diep
Co Editor-In-Chief

VARSITY BOYS BASKETBALL
12/2 @North (L) 53-68
12/4 South (L) 55-65
12/9 Gretna (L) 45-47
12/11 Papio South (L) 48-82
Upcoming Games:
12/17 @ North 7:15pm
12/18 Lincoln Northeast 2:00pm
12/20 Metro @TBD
12/21 Metro @TBD
12/27 Metro @TBD
12/28 Metro @TBD
12/29 Metro @TBD
12/30 Metro @TBD
1/4 @South 7:15pm
1/7 Westside 7:00pm
1/8 @Central 7:15pm
1/14 @Burke 5:30pm
1/15 Lincoln Pius X 1:00pm

Head Coach: Galen Gullie

VARSITY GIRLS BASKETBALL
12/2 Jamboree (Central) (L) 8-95
12/3 @ Burke (L) 14-85
12/4 Burke (L) 10-64
12/5 North (L) 13-51
12/9 Gretna (L) 2-63
12/11 Papio South (L) 10-83
Upcoming Games:
12/17 @North 5:30pm
12/18 Lincoln Northeast 12:00pm
12/20 Metro @TBD
12/21 Metro @TBD
12/27 Metro @TBD
12/28 Metro @TBD
12/29 Metro @TBD
12/30 Metro @TBD
1/4 Sioux City North 5:30pm
1/7 Westside 5:30pm
1/14 @Northwest 7:00pm
1/15 Lincoln Pius X 2:30pm

Head Coach: Nicole Mitchell

SWIMMING
12/2 Bellevue East (L) 16-89
12/4 @Benson Invitational 6th Place
12/7 @Northwest Boys (L) 27-68 Girls (W) 26-68
12/11 Bryan Girls Invitational (6)
12/14 Benson (T)
Upcoming Meets:
12/30 OPS Invite @ Burke 3:00pm
1/4 @South 4:30pm
1/8 @Brownell Talbot Invitational
1/11 @Millard South vs Multiple Schools 4:30pm

Head Coach: Drew Butler

VARSITY BOYS WRESTLING
11/30 Scrimmage
12/3 @Nebraska City (L) 21-55
24th Place
12/7 @Lincoln Northeast Triangular (W) 51-22
12/11 @Crete Invitational 5th Place
12/14 Bryan Triangular 1st Place
Upcoming Meets:
12/17 @Ralson 3:00pm
12/30 @Bennington 9:00am
1/8 @Wisner-Pilger Tournament 10:00am
1/11 Gross 7:00pm
1/14 Metro @TBD 9:00am
1/15 Metro @TBD 9:00am
1/19 @Bellevue East 7:00pm
1/20 Bryan Invitational 4:00pm
1/25 @Lincoln Triangular 5:30pm
1/29 @Papilion-LaVista vs Multiple Schools 9:00am
2/12 @TBD Districts 9:00pm
2/17 @CHI Center State 9:00am
2/18 @CHI Center State 9:00am
2/19 @CHI Center State 9:00am

Head Coach: Jason Susnjar

VARSITY GIRLS WRESTLING
12/3 @Nebraska City Invitational 24th
12/11 @Crete Invitational 14th Place
12/14 Bryan Triangular 3rd Place
Upcoming Meets:
12/18 @Plattview Invitational
12/28 @Winnebago Invitational
2/17 State @CHI Center TBD
2/18 State @CHI Center TBD
2/19 State @CHI Center TBD

Coaches: Eric Rice, George Hanson

BOYS BASKETBALL

REMATCH TIME



Photo by | Michaela Painter

During the varsity basketball game against Gretna on Dec. 9, senior point guard Terril Brown dribbles down the court while trying to keep the ball away from his opponent, Gretna's point guard, number 24 Alex Wilcoxson. The Bears went on to lose the game by a close margin of 45-47.

Olouwatobi Noukpozounkou
Senior Editor

It's time for a rematch. The Bears will face off against the Vikings once again tonight after a 53-68 loss two weeks ago during the Jamboree. Same place: North High. Same time: 7:15 p.m.. Different day. Different mentality.

"That was our very first game," senior center George Back said. "I feel like we're going to be more prepared, more motivated. It's going to look very different. Hopefully we'll come out with the dub."

Omaha North, who is currently 3-2, had more success in field goals made and more rebounds in that Dec. 3 game. This time around, head coach Galen Gullie has gone back to the drawing board and has had the team watch film so that they can understand what to do to beat North tonight.

"They [North] had a bit more experience," Gullie said. "They made a bit more game winning plays than we did,

but I feel like over the course of time we're going to get there and get over that hump. When we're mentally locked in on every possession, we can do some great things."

Since their earlier match up, the boys have had more practice and experience playing games together. And while they haven't won yet, they were competitive, coming within an average of 15 points of winning for each game.

"I feel like we've done some reevaluating and we realize we can be a good team," junior point guard London Williams said. "We just have to be consistent on and off the court."

They have been focusing on being "all in" on all aspects of the game.

"I tell them all the time that we can't have lows," Gullie said. "If we're not competing and practicing to the best of our ability every single day, we're going to be taking steps backwards and we always want to take steps forwards and always progress, mentally, physically, on the court and off the court."

They have also been working on building team chemistry to have more success.

"I learned that it takes more than one person to win," Lam Kuang said. "Everybody needs to play their role. We need more effort, more communication, we need to not get in our heads, just play hard and battle."

Gullie knows these young men can accomplish this.

"Everybody on our roster has a key piece, a key role," he said. "Every single person knows their role and every single person understands what they are capable of and everybody is good at certain types of stuff to help us bring this program forward."

After tonight's game, the boys will host Lincoln Northeast who is 4-0, tomorrow. The last time the Bears played them it was last year, and it was a back-and-forth game that ended in 79-85 loss. Lincoln Northeast will also be facing off against Lincoln High tonight while the Bears face North.

Building a team from the shallow end

Swim team gains new athletes, teaches them to swim

Olouwatobi Noukpozounkou
Senior Editor

After a season of having only three swimmers on the team, one would think that the boys' and girls' swim team won't have much success in the next year with getting members for the following year. But that's not the case.

The swim team was able to bounce back from the lack of players, and get back into the groove of things. Surprisingly enough, over half of the swimmers that joined didn't even know how to swim at the start of the

season.

"The new swimmers are doing really good," senior Ruby Nelson said. "They're learning fast and their times are improving every meet. This year is definitely better than last year since we do have a bigger team, we're able to have a couple relays."

The practices have become separated by skill level. The beginning levels swimmers sometimes wear flippers and learn the basics, which sometimes means balancing water in a cup on their forehead while doing backstroke.

While the advanced

swimmers do more concrete exercises like 30 sets of 50's of the selected swim stroke(s).

"I think of it as a good thing being one of the only returning swimmers," Nelson said. "We're just able to help out more with the new swimmers."

Out of the 18 swimmers on the team, only four of them have swam on the team previously, and half of the 18 couldn't swim.

"The team dynamic is very chill," senior Naylea Hernandez Lopez said. "It feels good being on a team that's so carefree and doesn't mind helping us."



Top photo by | Raquel Burton, Bottom photos by | Caroline Lesac

Top: During the boys invitational meet, the girls cheer on the boys and yell at them, pointing to the other side of the pool and telling them to go. Bottom Left: Doing breaststroke to the other end of the pool, senior Micah Heyens attempts to beat his opponents. Bottom Right: Once the buzzer to sounds, junior Reni Cimtoribus will dive off of the platform and into the water to get a good lead on her opponents.

not GAME^OVER



Photo courtesy of Jose Corona

Playing a death match game in “Valorant,” a popular first-person shooter game, senior Jose Corona warms up before playing a competitive five verses five match on Dec. 10. Corona plays against others on line regularly and has earned an Iron I ranking in the game, but is working on achieving Iron II.

Playing video games could lead to scholarships

Adriana Valadez Cue
Reporter

Esports has become a major category for upcoming college and high school students. As students who have a passion for gaming and are exceptionally good at it do not get all the opportunities, they could have access to as it is not seen for major importance. With that it is causing the industry to grow more with each day aa more people join it.

“To have the opportunity to get scholarships for it you need to be a high-ranking player who shows growth and potential,” Bellevue University Esports coach Cory Cool said.

Schools who do offer esports are: Bellevue University, University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL), Iowa Central Community College, Wayne State, Midland University as well as many other schools.

The esports program works exactly like most other collegiate settings within the athletic department, but they don’t need to go through a rigorous physical fitness session like other

physical sports need to. The players need to go through ranking to see where their skills are placed at and make sure they can compete in a tournament.

The main purpose of the esports program is to grant students who have a passion and talent for serious gaming an opportunity to secure a four year college degree, while supporting it and competing within it. It mainly leads into games as Valorant, Counter-Strike: Global Offensive (CSGO), Rocket League, and Fortnite.

As for scholarships, players need a way to be able to be discovered or found in some way for colleges to see where the players rank and compete in games and competitions. The website used where colleges can find players is berecruited.com. It allows for players to make a profile to show where they rank and all the games they play for colleges to find them.

“I’ve been playing competitive games for over six to seven years with my friends and when an email went out about teams wanted for the competition we went

for it,” Trent Kuls Midland esports team player said.

Trent Kuls also said, “It was very hard to try and find one as my high school did not offer anything for esports so we emailed every college that did offer them to see what offers we may be able to get as competitive players.”

Players from Midland University competed in a free local tournament at the Mid America Gaming Expo where they played with friends and other teammates against various teams like Wayne State and UNL.

Many schools do not offer it as much because it is not a physical sport. The schools who do offer it have it also in athletics so they can be within an athletics program.

The esports industry has been gaining a bigger popularity as communities like FaZe, a popular esports organization, is going to become a publicly traded company. That leads to sites like Twitch and YouTube where many creators have a platform where they carry on doing esports for money prizes or charities.

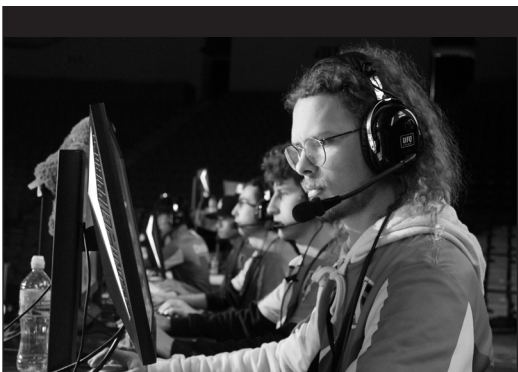


Photo by Justin Diep

Warming up, University of Nebraska-Lincoln’s esports team prepares for their Valorant tournament game against el YeeT, another e-sports team, at the Mid America Gaming Expo on Nov. 21. UNL won the tournament overall beating eL YeeT 13-6 in the final match.

Colleges & Universities with E-sports programs

Local

Midland University



Bellevue University



University of Nebraska-Lincoln



University of Nebraska-Kearney



Iowa Central Community College



Top E-sports Schools

Maryville University



University of Akron



Northwood University



Harrisburg University



Winthrop University



Red (Taylor’s version)
Taylor Swift

★★★★☆

Olivia Wallace
Life & Style Editor

Taking control of what was originally her work, but owned by her managers, and making it her own is all that Taylor Swift wanted to do in her newly recorded “Red, Taylor’s

Version” album. Mission accomplished. This album is even better than the first. Hearing it rerecorded and hearing her tone of voice and how it has changed over the course of 13 years gives a better look into her life and how she has matured. Additionally, this one is even better because fans know that she’s the one profiting from it. It gives an empowering feeling know-

ing she took the reins and is controlling her own life and it’s heard in her music. The 10-minute version of “All too well” exemplifies her new tone and how she is taking control over who she is and her life. And while the song is an unprecedented 10 minutes long, it tells her full story. She had this plan when she originally wrote the song for the first version, but it got cut down to 5 minutes

29 seconds. This time she released what fans have always wanted from her—something raw and real. In adding the extra 4 minutes and 31 seconds to the song she added more lyrics that connect her with the heartbreak that she had. The new version of “We’re never getting back together” also showcases her re-crafted version of herself. It’s more like, ‘This is my breakup. I need to

deal with it; get away from me. I need my alone time,’ in comparison to the original which was more blunt and not as strong. While she is a powerful singer, she doesn’t really reach the listener emotionally. The vocals don’t tear up the listener’s heart like they should for breakup songs. It doesn’t leave listeners crying in their pillow, consumed by their own relatable feelings.

Arts Calendar

Here is a look at Arts and Entertainment events and releases coming up.

MUSIC

TWICE, Doughnut
Released: Dec. 15

The Japanese girl pop group recently dropped a teaser video from their last album and left some littler easter eggs for the new song. The song was their first song to make it on the Billboard 100, entering at number 83.

Roddy Ricch, LIVE LIFE FAST
Releases: Today

After blowing up on TikTok, Roddy Rich finally gave his fans what they asked for, his second rap album. His new single ‘Late at night’ is also on the album.

The Lumineers, Bright-side
Releases: Jan 14.

A long three year hiatus from making any type of music, The Lumineers are back with their third studio album. This album is set to be one of their ‘best pieces of work so far,’ and is also said to be releasing on Jan. 1

MOVIES

Spider-Man: No Way Home
Releases: Today

Gliding through the popular social webs, the upcoming movie has Doctor Strange helping Peter Parker. But when one of his spells goes wrong it forces Peter to see what life truly means.



Sing 2
Releases: Dec. 24

After the first movie ended with Buster Moon getting help from his group of singers, the second movie starts with the group getting more singer to help pay Buster’s bills.

A letter for Jordan
Releases Dec. 24

Before the passing of his father in the line of duty, he writes his son how to live a ‘decent’ life despite not having a father figure in his life when he grew up. The movie will feature Michael B. Jordan.

AROUND TOWN

Dear Evan Hansen
Dec. 28- Jan. 2

The six time award winning, 2 1/2 hour musical is coming to the metro area for the fifth time. The show will be performed at the Orpheum Theatre starting on Dec. 28. Tickets may be purchased at ticketomaha.com.



Omaha provides holiday cheer

Ulises Munoz-Villarruel
Reporter


While Omaha isn't the biggest city in comparison to places like Chicago and Kansas City and teenagers often

complain there isn't much to do here, the metro area does have a number of holiday themed activities for people of any age to enjoy.

Here are five options that range in price from free to

\$35 to help cure anyone's cabin fever this winter break. These activities can be done solo or with a group of friends or family members, so bundle up and get out there. Omaha is waiting.

1. Santa's Rock 'n' Lights



Location: Werner Park, 12456 Ballpark Way Papillion, NE

This is an almost mile long drive-through holiday light show. Drivers can listen to Christmas music during the whole ride if they tune their radio 88.7. This activity runs until Jan. 2. Admission is \$25-\$35 per vehicle.

2. Country Christmas

Location: Bellevue Berry Farm & Pumpkin Ranch

3. Holiday Ice Skating

Location: Motto McLean Ice Arena, 5015 S 45th St. Omaha, NE

Hit the ice for \$7 including skate rental for an open public skate with seasonal music playing. Holiday skate will run from 1-3:15 p.m. Dec. 21-23.

4. North Omaha Light Display

The North Omaha lighting display will be showcased

5. Holiday Festival at the Forest

Location: Fontenelle Forest, 1111 Bellevue Blvd N, Bellevue, NE

Like years past, Fontenelle Forest has converted their great hall into a winter wonderland and has created a Trail of Lights for guests to trek through and enjoy nature in winter. Tickets are free for members, \$11 for adults and \$8 for children ages 2-17 and children 2 and under can enter for free. This will run through Jan. 2.

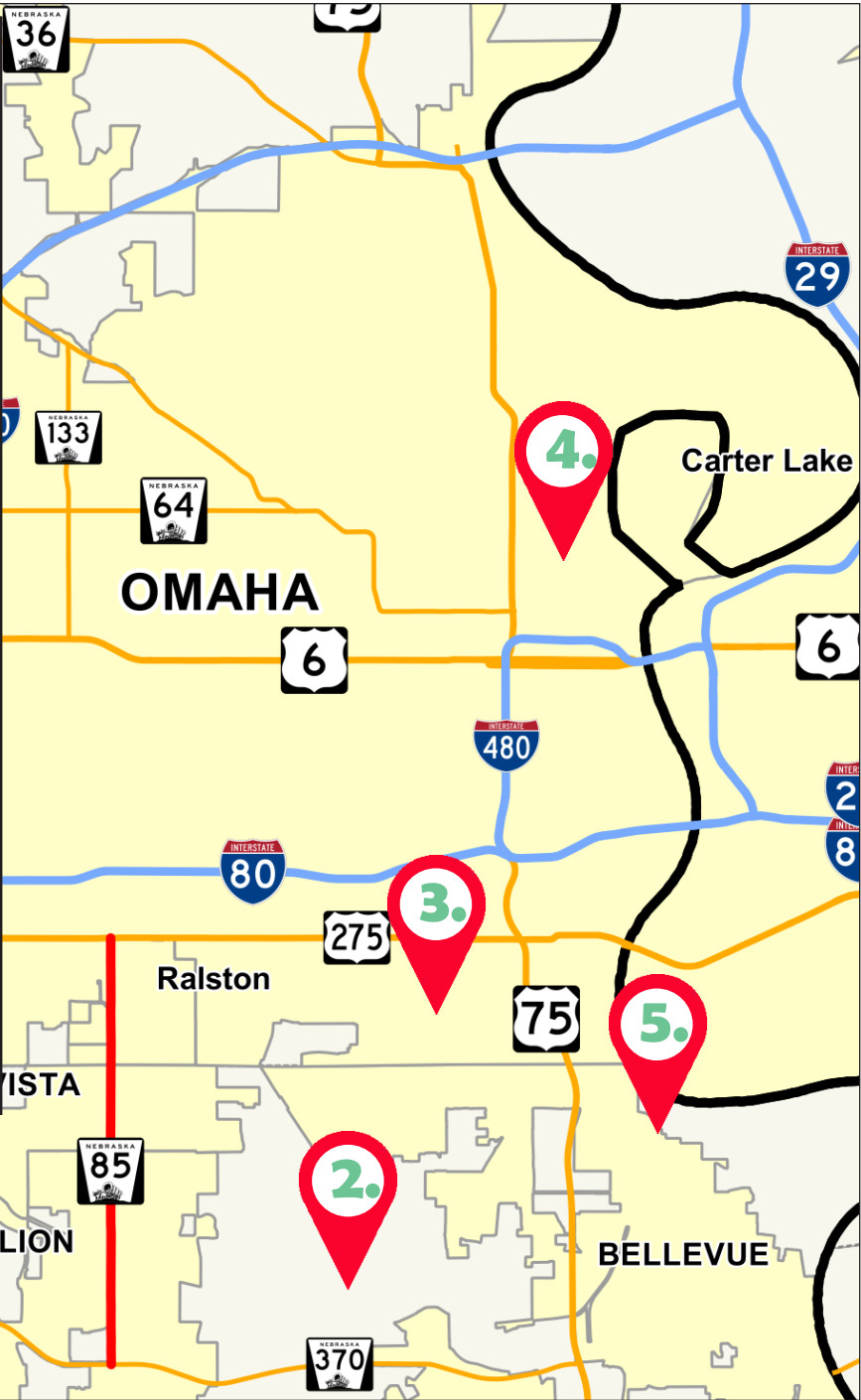


Photo by | Kris Duncan
Map by | Stratosphere

Last minute holiday shopping tips

Adriana Valadez Cue
Reporter

Holiday shopping can be an absolute nightmare, especially with the inflation rates raising prices and certain gift items being harder to find on store shelves.

According to Trading Economics, an organization that provides information on historical data and forecasts for more than 20 million economic indicators, exchange rates, stock market indexes, government bond yields and commodity prices, the inflation rate in the US accelerated to 6.8% in November, the highest since June of 1982.

To help combat that, there are a few things consumers can do to still obtain their loved ones' gifts without breaking the bank and without having to waste time going from store to store.

The first way to save money is to look at ads for different stores. Most stores have their ads readily available online. Look to see what is discounted or on sale. Many stores offer buy one get one half off sales or other incentives to save money.

Time is also something people are short of this season. Instead of spontaneously trying to zip to a store to get a new gaming console like the highly sought after Xbox Series X, Playstation 5 or Nintendo Switch, consumers should do their research first. Calling a store in the early morning hours and asking if they received a shipment of the desired item can save time and energy. It's also a good

idea to do this for other electronic items that are selling out fast like Google Homes, Amazon Alexas and AirPods,

Seeing as how quickly stock has been selling out, some stores, like Target, may be able to put a hold on the item for a short time period if called first.

Additionally, making a list beforehand of what one needs or wants to buy for loved ones and sticking to it can help reduce extra spending. Stick to the list and pass up all those extras.

That's a wrap: A step by step guide to gift wrapping


Olivia Wallace
Life & Style Editor

According to a People magazine survey of 2,000 people, 53% of respondents said the worst part of the holiday season is wrapping gifts, but it doesn't have to be that difficult. Here are six easy steps to preparing gifts to be given.

Materials needed: wrapping paper of your choice, tape, scissors and the gift

Step 1: Gather all materials, and set the gift inside the middle of the wrapping paper. Measure out enough paper to cover the entire gift. It is always best to have too much that too little paper. If it's too much, you can cut some off later.

Step 2: This step all depends on the size of the gift, but cut your wrapping paper to the desired width down the side.



Holiday gift guide: A look at Rolling Stone's list of top gifts for the 2021 season verses what BHS students are wishing for

Rolling Stone's top gift list

To help consumers with gift giving ideas, Rolling Stone magazine's editors come up with a Holiday Gift Guide each year. Here are the items topping their list this year.

1. Apple Airpods
Retails for \$179.99
2. SINGSATION All-in-one Karaoke system
Retails for \$129.99
3. U-turn orbit plus turntable
Retails for \$329
4. Theragun Prime massager
Retails for \$299
5. Hatch Restore alarm clock
Retails for \$129.99

BHS student wish list

In a survey of 128 students, these are what they are hoping for most this holiday season.

1. Money or Gift Cards
2. Clothes
3. Shoes
4. Jewelry & accessories
5. Video game console, games or accessories

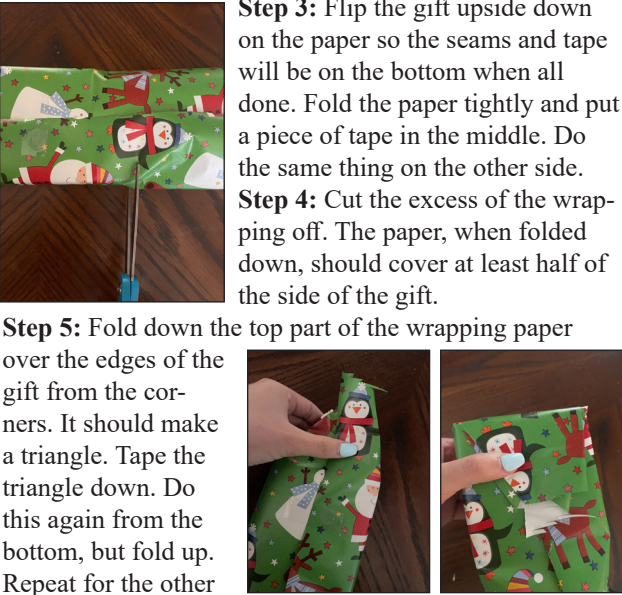


Step 3: Flip the gift upside down on the paper so the seams and tape will be on the bottom when all done. Fold the paper tightly and put a piece of tape in the middle. Do the same thing on the other side.

Step 4: Cut the excess of the wrapping off. The paper, when folded down, should cover at least half of the side of the gift.

Step 5: Fold down the top part of the wrapping paper over the edges of the gift from the corners. It should make a triangle. Tape the triangle down. Do this again from the bottom, but fold up. Repeat for the other side of the gift.

Step 6: Put a gift tag and a bow on the top of the gift to complete the job!





Gender Identity Rights in Schools:

Under Title IX, Public schools are required to address students by their preferred name and pronouns.

Information from | TransNebraska, a project of the American Civil Liberty Union Omaha Public Schools

According to OPS, a transgender student's identity is confidential, and will only be shared with school personnel on a need-to-know basis.



According to OPS, students have the right to use locker rooms/restrooms that conform with their gender identity.



Infographic by | Amber Roth

Local school districts clash on gender identity

Justin Diep
Co-Editor in Chief

School districts across the Omaha metro have varied policies regarding gender identity. While most districts in the metro don't have a formal policy, Omaha, Bellevue and Gretna Public Schools have policies set in place regarding gender identity. GPS's Parental Involvement Policy which was reaffirmed earlier this year by the school board, will require parental consent before staff can ask or call students by a preferred name or pronoun. The Orator spoke with a

few students from Gretna, and they all expressed that schools should respect students' wishes on how they are identified. "If that's something the student wants, then the teachers should allow that," Gretna sophomore Makaila Wadsworth said. On the other hand, OPS and BPS has enacted anti-discrimination policies that specifically address the issue of gender identity in the classroom. BPS was the first do so in 2015 and OPS followed with their own policy in 2017. Both districts have stated they will refer to students by their preferred named and pronouns. They

will also allow students to use locker rooms and bathrooms that conform to their gender identity. However, the American Civil Liberties Union of Nebraska stated parents do have the authority on what their child can be called in schools. "The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act says that parents have the right to know everything about their kids and review all records and documentation related to their children," ACLU of NE spokesperson Sam Petto said. "Parents are the ultimate deciders regarding their children, and a parent who refuses to allow a

school to use certain names or pronouns has the authority to do so." However, Title IX still protects students from discrimination by other students and staff members "Title IX says schools cannot discriminate based on sexual orientation and gender so the school should not be engaging in discriminatory behavior, once staff learns a student is trans, gender nonconforming or nonbinary." Petto said. Elkhorn, Millard, Papillion La Vista, Ralson and Westside school districts have stated they do not have a formal policy regarding transgender stu-

dents and how to address their gender identity. Some said they would work with students on an individual basis to respect their gender identity. Amid a nationwide debate on how to handle gender identity, Nebraska Attorney General Doug Peterson joined 19 other states in a lawsuit earlier this year against the Biden Administration for their interpretation of anti-discrimination laws. The attorney generals cited a fact sheet released by the Department of Education that stated misgendering someone could be grounds for a federal discrimination investiga-

tion. "The guidance purports [claims] to resolve highly controversial and localized issues such as whether schools must allow biological males to compete on girls' sports teams, whether employers and schools may maintain sex-separated showers and locker rooms, and whether individuals may be compelled to use another person's preferred pronouns," Peterson said. "The agencies have no authority to unilaterally resolve these sensitive questions, let alone to do so without providing the public with notice and an opportunity to comment."



Holiday cheer

Spread Holiday Cheer with gifts from NFM for everyone on your list.



FIFA 22 Xbox One



JBL Flip 5 Waterproof Portable Bluetooth Speaker



Monster Smart Illuminescence Indoor/Outdoor LED Light Strip



Madden NFL 22 PlayStation 4

nfm.com/holiday-cheer
700 S. 72nd St. Omaha, NE 68114
Sunday - Friday: 11am - 8pm Saturday: 10am - 8pm