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# The Voice

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Issue 4

## Inside Look at Pythons' Prom Dance

**By Namari Shepherd, Class of 2024**

The stars shined brightly upon our Pythons as PMSA seniors sparkled at this year's prom, which was definitely one to remember. The theme was Enchanted Forest, and it took place at the beautiful venue of Victoria in the Park in Mt. Prospect. About 215 came together at the prom, which included PMSA seniors and their guests, for one last night to celebrate the closing of their PMSA chapter and the opening of their post-high school experiences. Everyone was dressed to impress as they danced the night away.

Before the dance began, students dined with peers and were served a choice of chicken marsala or eggplant parmesan. These delicious dishes allowed downtime for Pythons to fuel their energy and show off their outfits before they hit the dance floor.

Then it was time to turn things up a bit. The DJ started the music, and without hesitation everyone headed to the dance floor. The music was diverse and enjoyable for all audiences and ages. The LED dance floor kept up with all the energy. Even Ms. Huels, Ms. Salinas, and Mr. Bokar, sponsor of the Class of 2024, broke out in a dance and showed the seniors how it was done. Hardly anyone could bear to stay seated at this high point, as we whirled, twirled, stomped, and rollicked to the beat.

In addition to dancing, students were open to getting drinks at the non-alcoholic bar, having their pictures taken with friends at the photobooth, and hanging out on the balcony. Many thanks to Mr. Bokar and Mr. Brown for making the prom a success.

Several students played a big role in the prom's success, including Priscilla Martinez and Amy DelaRosa, Class of 2024 Presidents. Letzy Bahena-Aviles and Karol Hernandez Morales led the team in designing amazing centerpieces for the tables. A HUGE shout out to Amayrani Martinez for organizing and planning seating arrangements.

A few mosh pits and photoshoots later, it was time to crown the 2024 PMSA Prom King and Prom Queen—Christopher Aleman and Gabriella Corral.

**(Continued on  
page 2)**

# Enchanted Forest Prom Dance

## (continued from page 1)

### Christopher Aleman, Class of 2024

**Q: How did being announced Prom King feel?**

A: "It was honestly pretty surprising; I thought the campaigning was really close and competitive."

**Q: In your own personal experience, what did it mean for you to win Prom King?**

A: "The win itself wasn't the most rewarding part for me, but the love that I received that night was the highlight of the experience."



### Gabriella Corral, Class of 2024

**Q: How did you feel when your name was announced as Prom Queen?**

A: "I was really shocked because I honestly wasn't expecting to win, but I was really, really happy."

**Q: What advice would you give to our lower classmen who may be interested in running for Prom Queen for their senior year?**

A: "Just be nice. Be kind to everybody. I think that's what matters. Being nice is what gets votes."



### Chris Aleman and Gabriella Corral, Prom King and Prom Queen 2024



# PMSA's Annual Talent and Fashion Show

## By Brianna McCoy, Class of 2026

PMSA's Talent Show on April 30th was an amazing time for students to show off their incredible skills. Friends and family came out to support their loved ones.

Students of PMSA showcased abilities that ranged from singing to dancing to performing in bands. This year, the talent show was combined with the fashion show to create an event of tremendous creativity and a chance for everyone to shine.

The fashion show included four different walks: air, water, nature, and fire. The fashion show was stunning, and the models made the show spectacular.

The talent show was no different, and everyone who participated did amazing. Each person did a great job showcasing their widely different talents and it was so refreshing seeing people who you walk past every day in the hall show that they can do something extraordinary.



## Stand-out winners

Starting with the fourth-place winner in the Talent Show and her amazing singing performance that moved people to tears: Kaitlyn Lopez. She put on a great show that night and the audience obviously agreed. Her voice was so beautiful, and her song choice suited her so well. She sang "My Boo" by Usher; it was amazing. Although it only lasted three minutes, it was one of the most memorable of the night.

The third-place winner was the amazing band that consisted of Christian Echeverria, Kayla Kelly, Max Lopez, and Ethan Lopez. The band totally swept the audience away with their insane performance of the song "Crazy Train." They totally deserved their spot as winners!

The second-place winners were Priscilla Martinez and Lesly Arceo with a folklorico dance. Their dresses and performance were beautiful, a great way to show their talent for dance and cultural identity. They earned their spot as winners.

The first-place winner was Jayla Mahoney who performed a hip hop dance that was full of energy and life. You could feel the energy radiating onto the crowd from the cheers and chants. Jayla even brought out a few of her friends at the end for an added bonus, bringing even more life to the performance.

The Talent Show this year was a huge success! I'm glad that everyone who participated got to put on an amazing show!

I hope they received flowers because they deserved them for making the night such a memorable moment for our school!

# *Almost Maine* Actors Gain Confidence through Theater

**By Evelyn Guillen, Class of 2026**  
**Photos by Ms. Marcia LaPorte**

The *Almost Maine* play was performed on April 12, 2024, at Proviso Math and Science Academy. The mini storylines beautifully depicted the ways people learn to love one another.

In short time spans, we were able to see the emotion each character felt about the situation that was happening--from a man not being able to feel pain, to a woman sneaking into a stranger's yard to see the Northern lights. Along with this, we saw the loving and friendly connections among actors and crewmembers.

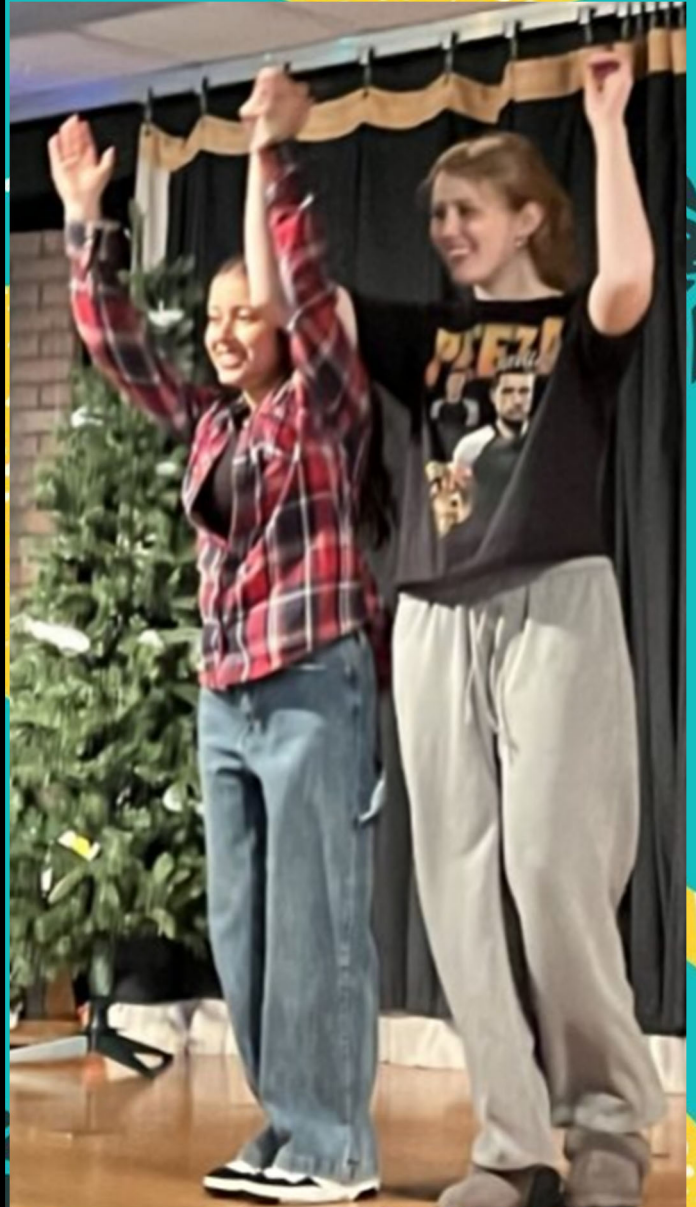
Many of our senior actors believe this play was an excellent way to end their high school career. The friendships that began between them over the years brightened their overall experience and hardships of high school life. All of them said that the *Almost Maine* play displays everything they appreciate, especially when it comes to falling or failing in love.

All the students shared that theater has brought them confidence. The school plays and musicals, (ESPECIALLY this play) allowed them to step out of their comfort zone, playing as characters that they do not relate to in the slightest.

I learned how performing on a stage in front of a larger audience could be extremely nerve-wracking and stressful for teens. They have had to learn ways to control their anxiousness and remember lines and moves in an upcoming scene. These techniques have helped students accomplish presentations, other performances, and lengthier debates/talks more successfully.

I am extremely happy to have seen this play, to have gone behind closed doors and witness everything come together. Beforehand, I saw them do the last-minute finishing touches and meditation warmups to make sure everybody was ready to excel and perform to the best of their abilities.

I was able to see a group of teenagers connect with one another and come together as a family to put on an amazing show for others to enjoy.



# Falling and Failing in Love

## *Almost, Maine*

**By Thomas Newhouse, Class of 2027**

This year the school's spring play was called *Almost Maine*. It featured a series of short stories of how people from Maine (in a town not on the map due to some issue) fell in or out of love. They have known each other since they were young. Sometimes a person acted weird with another, such as when a traveler named Glory, played by Anna Galvan, Class of 2025, set up a tent in East's (played by Jeremiah Martin, Class of 2026) backyard to see the Northern lights. Some used to date before and were trying to find new love. The story showed us how the people of Maine found love in unconventional ways.

I thought the play was nice. The way they did the scene change was interesting, and the whole show was amazing. It gave us a point of view from different relationships. The way they cut the story and gave us a bits of pieces about a wedding event happening in town had some nice wordplay. My favorite part of the play was when one woman named Hope (played by Marissa Garza, Class of 2026) just came from the airport. She came to her old boyfriend's house long after he proposed to her without giving him an answer. I was kind of happy that Hope talked about her problem with Daniel (played by Clarisabel Gualpa Sanchez), but did not realize that it was her old boyfriend who was already married. Overall, it was a great show, and I would recommend it.



# Robotics Team Attends UIC for Fast-Paced Competition

**By Leilani, Ortega, Class of 2027**

This year's Robotics competition on March 27-30 was at the University of Illinois at Chicago. I was so excited to go since this was my first year in Robotics. Once we got there, we sat in the auditorium as our team got the robot ready for competition the next day.

That day, my friends and I decided to go inside the pit, where everyone was working on their robots. Most teams had handouts featuring their logo, pin, and sticker. We collected so many of them! I have a jacket full of them! The next day we got the robot through everything it needed to go through about 10 minutes before the deadline. The goal was to get the robot to pick up a foam circle from the floor and throw it. It's not as easy as it looks! Since I wasn't part of the build, I sat in the auditorium and observed the robots compete against each other in the games while cheering as loudly as possible for our PMSA team! Go Pythons!

I liked to watch it because it was fast-paced and interesting. Even though our robot ended in 42nd place out of 50 entrants, the experience was amazing. After we left the competition, we gathered for a small after-party for the Robotics team to show support and celebrate.

The Robotics team has about 30 members and its PMSA sponsors include Mr. Syed, Ms. Krejci, and Mr. Birch. They meet everyday after school until about 6 pm.



# Engineer Turned High School Teacher— Mr. Abdur-Rehman Syed



**By Guillermo Melendez, Class of 2024**

Engineering teacher Mr. Abdur-Rehman Syed stands out for his passion and determination to ensure students find enjoyment in engineering and math. He is certified to teach high school math, as well as engineering. When there is a need, he teaches freshmen or sophomore math.

Having graduated from the University of Illinois at Chicago with a Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering, Mr. Syed worked as a proposal engineer at an MEP (Electrical-Mechanical-Plumbing) construction company named Construction Skills Est. in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

After a couple of years of working, he wanted to return to school to get his Master's in engineering. However, his younger brother, a social worker who had been working in a public school for several years, convinced him that there was a vital need for math teachers. His brother knew that Mr. Syed had gotten into engineering because of his inclination and success with math. His brother also knew that Mr. Syed cared deeply about giving back and having an impact on improving society.

After much discussion and thought, Mr. Syed decided to change track and go into teaching. Finally, in 2018, he completed his Master of Art in Teaching with an endorsement in high school math.

He started as a student teacher in Proviso West from March through May 2018, after which he accepted an offer from Guildford High School in Rockford, Ill, where he taught math for three years. Just after he accepted the offer from Guildford, Proviso West requested he stay for the 2018-19 school year.

However, since he had already accepted the position at the other school, he had to turn down the Proviso West teaching position, even though it meant he had to relocate to Rockford, away from his family.

In August 2021, he applied for the mathematics position at PMSA.

"However, when I applied for the math position, they told me they had plans for hiring an engineering teacher," Mr. Syed said.

Dr. Luna was the Math and CTE coordinator for the district and she informed him that he had the credentials to get endorsed to teach engineering. "So they hired me as engineering teacher, Mr. Syed said. "Interestingly, I believe, I was competing with Mr. Bokar for the math position at PMSA. I am proud to say that PMSA administration made the right decision in choosing Mr. Bokar over me because Mr. Bokar is amazing. I would love being in his class and going to school all over again."

# Engineer Turned High School Teacher— Mr. Abdur-Rehman Syed (continued)

Mr. Syed was excited to teach something he's passionate about to students, and he eagerly created an environment where students could express their creativity and learn valuable life skills. With his love for teaching others, Mr. Syed pushed students to problem-solve in his classes. For example, during the 2022-23 school year, he taught a math class in the PMSA library. In this math class, he instructed students to write math problems on the windows. Using the well-known burger chain In-n-Out, he used math problems with order receipts so that students could think **and** problem solve.

"I did not invent anything new," Mr. Syed said. "I used a math task created by Robert Kaplinsky to engage students."

Mr. Syed also believes in making class fun and engaging. His engineering class has a more hands-on approach. For example, students build robots in his Principles of Engineering class. Moreover, they program it to accomplish various open-ended tasks. For their final project, students created a basic elevator system, soccer ball goal detection light up system, or automatic marble sorter, among other innovations.

"Not all engineering classes are the same," Mr. Syed explained. "They are not all about software. We have four unique classes offered for each year. All the classes are project-based and all are college level. They are challenging classes. Starting this year, one of the courses is approved as two dual credit courses, one for each semester, through Triton. Dual credit is college credit and high school at the same time. Like an AP class, minus the AP exam."

"The Introduction to Engineering Design, a freshmen course, is about the engineering design process," Mr. Syed continues. "The process that has been used to design everything around us. The modern world, as we know it, is a result of this iterative process applied over centuries. We learn 3D modeling CAD software and use 3D printers to print designs. We also have a laser-cutter this year. It is amazing. Ideally, this class is meant to inspire students to become entrepreneurs and start their own business by applying the design process to solve real-world problems."

The Principles of Engineering class, a sophomore course, is the ideal engineering class for students, Mr. Syed explained. It includes lots of building, hands-on projects, teamwork, various mechanisms, mechanical advantage with simple machines, gears, sprockets, robotics, programming, and circuits.

Engineering Design and Development is an engineering research course for juniors. This requires a capstone project, where students team up and research a real-world problem. Thereafter, they apply the engineering design process to solve the problem. They use the engineering principles and skills learned in the previous courses, to design, plan, and build a physical prototype. This year, eight groups presented at the May 31 Junior Symposium. Aerospace Engineering is the fourth-year course. This is a world of its own, where students learn about the history and physics of flight, rockets, satellites, and other applications.

Engineering courses provide students with a taste of something that could one day be their career. Mr. Syed encourages students to give these courses a try, even if they're not sure they might like it. On the personal side, Mr. Syed got married while doing his Master's. He had an arranged marriage. "And no, we were not forced into marriage by our parents," Mr. Syed said. "My wife has been a source of encouragement and improvement through the years. We have three beautiful children."

As an additional piece of advice, Mr. Syed has read a few math education books. He recommends every math teacher and principal consider reading *Building Thinking Classrooms in Mathematics* by Peter Liljedahl.



Problems Blog

**How Much Does A 100x100 In-N-Out Cheeseburger Cost?**  
September 6, 2013



# From Design Engineer to High School Teacher--Mr. Nowak on the Fourth Floor

## By Anonymous, Class of 2024

Bradley James Nowak is a first-year teacher of Integrated Math 3 and Accelerated Integrated Math at PMSA. He was born and raised in Bartlett, Ill. He graduated in 2021 with a Bachelor's degree from the University of Dayton as a Design Engineer and is currently pursuing his high school teaching license. He is taking an alternative licensure program through Saint Xavier University that lets him get his teaching degree after getting a different degree in college. So he will essentially have two degrees.

He worked at Christopher B Burke Engineering, located in Rosemont, Ill., from 2021-2023. Some of his tasks included designing water systems, pipelines, and detention basins. The project that stands out the most was one in Texas after Hurricane Harvey in 2017 in which he worked during 2021. His job included assessing the amount of damage to all the houses caused by high water levels, so that the state could pay each of these house owners accordingly.

"Engineering is solving problems with a methodical problem-solving approach," said Mr. Nowak.

After working as an engineer for two years, he was prompted by a wish to have a greater impact on others' lives and that's why he switched to teaching. He came to PMSA wanting to be a part of the community, where everyone is close-knit and friendly to each other. The transition from practicing engineering to teaching math hasn't been easy for Mr. Nowak who has spent long hours lesson-planning, but he reports he is finally getting accustomed to the new job.

"I'm happy to be here, said Mr. Nowak. "I want to use my personal skills and try to make an impact on people."

Mr. Nowak describes working as an engineer as a fantastic job, very profitable, and would recommend pursuing it to those who like science or math. For those interested in the field, he recommends taking some engineering classes.

He advises students not to be afraid, to go outside of their comfort zone.

"Try new activities and make some new friends," Mr. Nowak said.

To those heading to a post-secondary education, he assures them that it is "a time for you to find who you are and become who you want to be."

Some of his hobbies include indoor rock climbing, playing guitar and piano, basketball, watching Ultimate Fighting Championship (mixed martial arts), practicing Mixed Martial Arts and doing puzzles. He also has two brothers, mom and dad, and a dog named Daisy.



## Alumni Spotlight: Breaking Barriers Past Closed Doors—Aerospace Engineer's Trek Beyond PMSA

### By Kai Clark, Class of 2024

Justin Clark, a 2014 PMSA graduate and African-American aerospace engineer, who happens to be my big brother, describes his challenges, accomplishments, and memories.

His most memorable moments at PMSA were playing William Barfée, a humorous character, in Putnam County Spelling Bee during his senior year as the crowd roared, as well as taking his senior trip to Cedar Point where there was a T.G.I. Fridays on the beach, where he laughed the most he ever did in his life.

"When you're going through high school, it's hard to see how important it is to enjoy the time you have there because it goes so fast," said Justin.

But high school wasn't all fun and games. PMSA also prepared him for college. He got accepted into University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and majored in Industrial Engineering. This led to a job as an aerospace engineer at Woodward Inc. in Niles in 2021. Eighty percent of working as an aerospace engineer is working with design engineers, meeting with customers over blueprints for space parts, and writing instructions for designers of space parts.

"Part of being an engineer is that you always have to be creative and find new solutions with anything that you do, and it also takes a lot of convincing other people that your solution is correct," said Justin.

He fell into the field by accident because he originally wanted to study Industrial Design, but he realized it too late. He chose the wrong major, and our parents discouraged him from switching because they didn't want him to waste any more time in college.

During his time at Woodward, Justin came in as a level one engineer, but the company actually had him performing work at level two, yet failed to raise his pay for his over-achieving skills.

With anything good in the world, there comes challenges. As an African American male, Justin says "those challenges are twice as big." Discrimination in the workplace is real.

"When you're encountering prejudice in the workplace most times it's a lot more subtle than a stereotypical bigot calling you the N-word," said Justin. "There's a stigma surrounded around Black people—that they don't want to do the work, but they just want to get paid. I've never been a person to ask for a handout."

Justin researched the company's history of discrimination lawsuits. He discovered they had two lawsuits in two years, which alleged that they didn't promote people of color as frequently as Caucasians, they disciplined people of color more severely and more often, and they weren't as lenient with African Americans as they were with Caucasians.

Justin courageously took his case into his own hands and presented the discrimination he faced, along with the company's past discrimination practices, to higher powers. "It's nerve-wracking putting yourself out there, but I felt better because I was able to say what needed to be said. It made me feel more confident in myself."



Unfortunately, not much has changed since then, but the company respected what he said, even though they didn't give him a pay raise.

Justin explains a simple event that he went through that woke him up to how he approaches life.

"I was waiting for a Chemistry class at U of I and our professor was running late. Kids were standing outside the lecture hall for 15 minutes because they assumed the door was locked. I asked myself if anyone had actually tried to open the door. I didn't see anyone do it, so I went up there and opened it. Everyone followed me into the classroom."

That was when Justin learned to never assume anything.

"If you have something you want to do, just do it. If you are the first one to open a door and everyone gets in, then it feels good. That goes for anything in life."

## Sole' Stampley, Class of 2027, sings her heart out at voice auditions and tours

### By Sole' Stampley, Class of 2027

I belong to a choir called Uniting Voices of Chicago, an organization that helps children, ages 8-17, to develop new experiences through singing as one voice together. The group boasts 4,000 members across the United States, divided into neighborhood choirs. I belong to the Austin Neighborhood Choir.

One of the best features about this group is that we get to travel to exciting places. I just returned from a tour to Los Angeles this past May with 40 other teenagers from three neighborhood choirs—Austin Neighborhood, West Town Neighborhood, and Dimension Neighborhood, headquartered in the Chicago downtown Cultural Center.

Los Angeles was a beautiful, expensive, and exciting place to see.

We sang 10 songs, including "Ripple," "United," "Shosholosa" (a Ndebele folk song that originated in what is now Zimbabwe, but was popularized in South Africa, which means coming together as one), "Revelation 19," and "Siko Horepse Koukli Mou" (a happy Greek song that means Get Up and Dance, My Doll!). I had a solo part, along with three other students, in the song "As One," which was created by the Austin Neighborhood choir.

I was excited, worried, and stressed about whether I knew my music or not. On the other hand, I had choir friends and people I cared about, but sometimes, I admit I felt a bit lonely. Maybe I was a little homesick and missed my family. The only time I did not feel alone was when my choir and I were performing or when we went back to the hotel to chat. All I knew

On the second day, we performed at Disneyland! Before performing, we had an opportunity to go around the park and have as much fun as possible. My friends and I went on rides, shopped, and ate.

During our performance, our choir was not as nervous as we thought we would be. To be honest, it was like we were in rehearsals. After the performance, we got a chance to tour Disneyland again. That day we returned to the hotel at 12:30 a.m.

This was my third tour. Last year, our group sang in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and the year before we were in Puerto Rico.



I have also sung for the NAACP ACT-SO Youth Program, which was founded in 1978 by author and journalist Vernon Jarrett. The program is intended to provide recognition to young people who could demonstrate academic, scientific, and artistic achievement, allowing young people to gain recognition equal to that often achieved by entertainers and athletes. Auditions were held at the University of Chicago this past May. I came in third place. I was happy to see our school's Black Student Union come to these auditions to cheer us on. Two other students from PMSA also sang: Damiyah Nard, Class of 2025, and Kaitlyn Lopez, Class of 2024.

My passion for music has given me many exciting opportunities to see different parts of the world while experiencing the joy of singing my heart out. If you might be interested in singing and traveling around the world, the Austin Neighborhood Choir is always looking for new talent!

# American-Asian Pacific Islander

## Performances Enjoyable

**By Megan Salamatin,  
Class of 2027**

I enjoyed the experience of my first performance in PMSA as the people made it extremely fun.

I met Raynuel Tupas, Class of 2024, who convinced me to participate in the show as I was somewhat hesitant.

Rehearsing and performing was extremely enjoyable because of the people who came from a similar background as me. I got to know some quickly because we spoke the same language at home (Tagalog).

Raynuel's performance "Kaleidoscope World" is popular here in the States and back home in the Philippines. I enjoy poetry and that song consists of mostly that. I grew up with my parents playing songs just like that one.

**By Brandon Salas, Class  
of 2027**

In the Asian American Pacific Islander assembly, my friend Max Lopez, Class of 2025, was playing the song "Kaleidoscope World" by Francis M on the guitar. They were singing a song from the Philippines.

There were also students who were doing a dance, but then out of nowhere they started to have a battle called Tininkling, a traditional Filipino dance. They used a long stick that was black. Then they were all fighting just one person, and they had different color shirts, which meant different groups.

There was a solo by one of my classmates, Megan Salamatin, Class of 2027, who sang a song in Tagalog, spoken in the Philippines. Even though I couldn't understand what she was singing, I could feel what she meant by the tone and pitch of her voice. It was meaningful. I also liked when they were talking about the history during their singing.

Overall, I think the assembly was wonderful.

**By Daniel Becerra, Class  
of 2027**

When I went to the Asian American assembly, I saw one of my classmates Megan Salamatin, Class of 2027. She sang a song "Bakit kung sino pa" in Tagalog, the language of the Philippines, that was incredibly good.

I also saw my other friend Milo Gittings, Class of 2024. He was a part of the martial arts scene, which was my favorite part of the assembly. Overall, I enjoyed the assembly and expect to see more of these over my coming years in high school.

Then I saw my other friend Obafemi Adebajo-Fagunwa, Class of 2024. He was also part of the martial arts scene. He performed so well during that skit. Martial arts is a big part of the Asian American heritage. It is very cool how they jump. It is also very cool how they know how to kick extremely high up and do incredible stunts.

The Asian American assembly was my favorite one this year. I say this because I liked all the parts, but I wish it had even more fighting.

# Asian-Pacific Islanders Performance (continued)

**By Mariana Mares, Class of 2027**

The AAPI (Asian American and Pacific Islander) Heritage Month assembly was a vibrant celebration of culture, unity, and education. The assembly started off talking about the Philippines and it helped us understand how the world is today.

It highlighted mainly music in the Filipino community, which was wonderful to see. We also heard other songs by one of our peers with angelic-like voices. We also got a taste of Tinikling, a traditional Filipino folk dance that originated prior to Spanish Colonialism in the area. It involved at least two people beating, tapping, and sliding bamboo poles on the ground against each other in coordination with one or more dancers who step over and in between the poles.

Adreana Fabian, Class of 2024, was wonderful to see on stage, as she put out a great performance.

We were showcased many more beautiful songs and we learned more about the Lavant region along the eastern Mediterranean shores, roughly corresponding to modern-day Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and certain adjacent areas.

We learned about Palestinian identity.

We got to see a visual representation and learn about Tanabata (star festival), which involves a Japanese tradition in which people write their wishes on small, colorful strips of paper (tanzaku) and hang them on the branches of a small decorative bamboo tree. It's widely celebrated all over Japan, typically on the seventh day of the seventh month (July 7).

Our peers were parading on the stage, demonstrating the culture to us. We were also showcased multiple songs and were given direct translations of their meanings. For example, a Chinese song which directly translates to the moon and stars.

It's clear that events like these are cherished by all, as they offer opportunities for learning and connection. To everyone who shared their culture with us so proudly and beautifully, you should feel immensely proud of your contributions.

Your performances and presentations not only entertained, but also educated and inspired us all. Thank you for making this assembly possible!

**By Leilani Ortega, Class of 2027**

Raynuel Tupas, Class of 2024, started off the assembly with his band that sang "Kaleidoscope World" by Francis M. It stuck out to me because it wasn't just a one-person band, but rather like a little concert.

Eunice Ho's, Class of 2024, performance was impressive because of how she played the piano and sang "The Moon Represents My Heart" in Chinese at the same time. She has strong talent in both areas. It was a pretty song, and I enjoyed it so much.

Megan Salamatin, Class of 2027, sang "Bakit Kung sino pa" by Lloyd Umali. I thought it was cool how it was in a different language. Her voice sounded so pretty and elegant. The crowd was intently listening to her.

Gloria Pieniazek, Class of 2027, sang "Kesariya" by Arjit Singh. It was from a Bollywood movie called *Brahmastra*. I really liked how upbeat it was and how it stood out from the rest of the songs. She wore an Indian outfit called a churidar.

# AP Season Fosters

## “Score-A-Phobia” with Rigorous Tests

### By Taylor Baymon, Class of 2026

It's been AP testing season this past May, a time when students prepared for the final AP exams. PMSA offers a plethora of AP classes, promising college credit for those who pass. However, these classes don't make it easy to achieve that credit, as AP curriculum is known for its rigor. It's almost impossible to avoid students from AP classes worrying about scores.

One perspective often left out of the AP conversation is the teacher's. The Voice interviewed two AP teachers about the AP season.

#### Interview #1: Mr. Gibbons

##### What do you teach?

AP US History

##### How long have you been teaching AP?

This is my third year.

##### Do you feel that your students are ready for the AP Test?

I think some of them are, but not all of them. Students who are doing their assignments and keeping up are prepared. That also tells me I have to make my assignments more engaging and exciting.

##### Did you do any final projects for the AP Test?

After the test, we are going to do a project on underappreciated US history, where students research some aspect of history that is not properly covered in my opinion. Students will pick their own subject.

##### What do you think can be improved for the testing?

The test is very high stakes. It's one and done. Maybe spacing the tests out and giving kids more time to write can decrease pressure.

##### What can the school do to improve the AP test?

Changing the start date of the school could help. The late start put our students at a disadvantage because we didn't have time for enrichment or extended dives into topics. Starting three or four weeks earlier could help.

Students should also not be pushed into taking AP classes if they're not ready and are not prepared to do the work.

At the end of the day, the school supports me, and when I need resources, they provide them. It's mostly about how much students want to succeed, and if they're willing to put in that extra level of work.

#### Interview #2: Mrs. O'Connell

##### What do you teach?

AP Gov

##### How long have you been teaching AP?

This is my third year.

##### Do you feel that your students are ready for the AP Test?

Some are. There's only so much a teacher can do in the classroom. There's a lot students have to do outside of the classroom, and when students are interested in doing that work they are not ready.

##### What do you think can be improved for the testing by the school?

We need a shift in thinking. When you're in schools with high pass rates, those kids are doing after-school study sessions all the time. I want to hold more study groups next year.

##### Do you think everyone should take AP--or only students interested in it?

There's an idea that anybody who wants to take an AP class should be able to take an AP class, even if their reading level is super low, and it's tempting because of the weighting of the GPA. When you have a lot of students who don't care about the class, the class

becomes less interesting than if you have 90 percent of kids who are interested. They motivate each other. It's hard to have those higher-level conversations when some don't care.



##### What is your class doing after the AP testing?

We have to do the Constitution and consumer education. I want to do a civics project.

# Remembering Memorial Day

**By Emma Garcia and Jasmine Perez, Class of 2027**

Memorial Day is an American holiday held on the last Monday of May, honoring those who died in war. It started out with flowers being placed on the graves of those who fell in battle during the American Civil War.



It used to be called “Decoration Day” because the graves of the fallen soldiers would be decorated by loved ones and other civilians who want to honor their memory for fighting for this country. It started being called “Memorial Day” since 1971, being observed as a national holiday across the United States.

It is also viewed as a religious celebration with services, parades, and speeches. Graves of veterans are mainly decorated with flags, flowers, and insignia, respecting those who died in defense of the country.

The laying of a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknowns in Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia, is one of the main ways Memorial Day is observed in the United States. It also unofficially marks the beginning of the summer season.

Memorial Day is a well-known and important holiday in the United States, crediting all the people who died to make sure this country is well-defended. It will continue being a nationwide holiday for a long time.

# Movie Review:

## *Leave the World Behind*

**By McKayla Williams, Class of 2024**

*Leave the World Behind* was directed by Sam Esmail and produced by the Obamas. The film portrays an apocalyptic scenario that includes a nationwide blackout and technology failures, which cause things such as planes to fall out of the sky and cargo ships to crash on the beaches. The cyber-attack even results in all communication and technology to shut down, causing the world to endure immediate chaos.

It was believed that this film has much more reality to it than meets the eye. People who worked behind the scenes stated how Obama's involvement made the film so real to what could happen. Even movie actors began to reevaluate their beliefs and claim there is much more fragility in our hands, yet we continue to ignore it. This is important to note because if you are interested in conspiracy theories, this will help provide answers to your questions.

One of my favorite scenes is when self-driving Teslas all crash, blocking the streets. This was my favorite scene because this is when the characters realize that they are unable to flee and are forced to try and survive instead of leaving. This scene left me at the edge of my seat because you can feel the characters' fear and tension when they realized there was no way out.



Another scene that I became extremely interested in is when hundreds of deer surrounded Ruth when she was left at a shed in the woods. This made me think of how usually humans are the ones hunting, but it was almost like the deer were hunting, or they were warning her about the danger she was about to face. It was also strange to see hundreds of deer all together. It was as if the deer realized what was happening and trying to escape and survive together.

I rate this movie 5/5 because it made me think about everything in the world and want to do more digging than what is usually provided to us by mainstream media.

I do believe the film is a warning put out by the former president, Barack Obama, considering the Obamas began movie production in 2020, two years after his last year of presidency.

# Music Review:

## *Beautiful Mind* by Rod Wave

**By Kai Clark, Class of 2024**

Studio Album *Beautiful Mind* by Rod Wave is a nostalgic, emotional, and lyrically advanced musical journey that is a mixture of R&B, rap, and soul.

Released in August 2022, this album showcases Rod Wave's artistic evolution in his storytelling skills through his unique blend of melodic rap and singing.

The album begins with a powerful track titled "Alone" that sets the tone. The song describes a breakup, but also makes the listener aware of not letting it eat you up. The artist makes it clear that it's okay to be alone. You just have to refocus on yourself, which is most important.

Rod Wave's beautiful message is accompanied by his soulful voice and a mix of piano and smooth beats.



One of the standout tracks on the album is "By Your Side," a poignant reflection of Rod Wave's success and acceptance of his past. In "By Your Side," Rod Wave takes a nostalgic view as he offers sample lyrics and melodies from "Hey There Delilah" by Plain White T's released in 2006. The incorporation of another lyrical song into his own makes "By Your Side" even more breathtaking. While this song showcases more of Rod Wave's singing ability, his rapping side is not to be overlooked.

"Keep Going" speaks to the listener in volumes. The authentic and unique flow of the artist contributes to the warm melody working together in a way that only a listening ear can grasp. Rod Wave places emphasis upon never giving up. His "grind don't stop and it never will." These are encouraging words to keep moving forward.

The diversity of sound, ranging from different piano chords to stringed instruments truly shows Rod Wave's versatility as an artist. Tracks like "Pieces" showcase his ability to seamlessly switch between melodic flows and more rapid-fire delivery. This keeps his listeners on their toes as they are constantly engaged and yearning for more of Rod Wave's soothing voice.

*Beautiful Mind* is more than just an album; it's Rod Wave's story of the trials and tribulations that connects with listeners who may be going through something similar. It is a roller-coaster of emotions with mounds of relatability. The album leaves a lasting impact, which makes it nothing less than a remarkable, must-listen album.

# Students in the Hall

## Who is your role model?

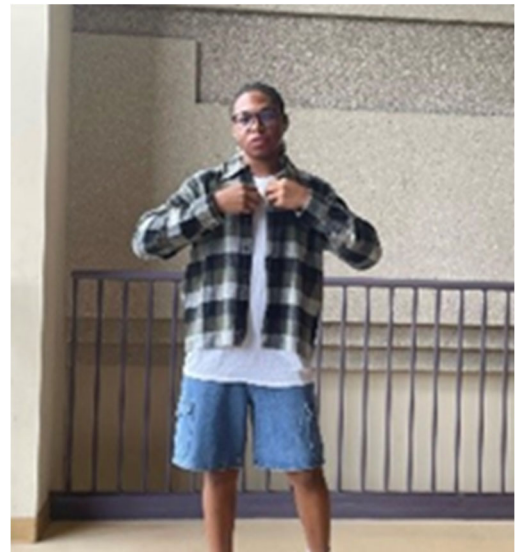
By Joshua Rivera, Class of 2024

### Maya Hansen, Class of 2024



My role model happens to be my mother because she was able to face all obstacles and challenges life threw at her. Watching my mother go through that gave me the strength to do the same.

### James Walker, Class of 2025



My role model is my mother. Even though she had children at a young age, she was still able to graduate valedictorian of her class in both high school and college. She graduated college twice. I one day hope to reciprocate what my mother did and make her proud.

# Students in the Hall

## Who is your role model?

By Joshua Rivera, Class of 2024

**Antonio Beavers Jr., Class of 2026**



My role model is Jesus Christ. I agree with his passion towards Jesus and the religion he stood for. He is my role model because I strive to be like Jesus Christ by the way he loved and cared for so many people, and I want to live life the same way.

**Julius Gutierrez, Class of 2027**



My role model is my mother. I think that my mother is hard-working and provides so much for my family. My mother inspires me to become a family man myself in the future and support my kids the way my mother supported me and my family.

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#### Mission Statement:

*The Voice* provides a full opportunity for students to inquire, question and exchange ideas. Content should reflect all areas of student interests, including topics about which there may be dissent or controversy. Student journalists, in concert with faculty advisers, will make the final content decision for *The Voice*. All student journalists must recognize that with editorial control comes responsibility to follow professional journalism standards.

# Featured Comic

## Newspaper Club in 316 every Wednesday

