



# JAMS JOURNAL

JOHN ADAMS MIDDLE SCHOOL

NOVEMBER 2024

VOLUME 7 : ISSUE 1



## WHAT'S INSIDE?

**SCIENCE SCANDAL:** The drama behind the field trips (pg. 2)

**TIMES ARE CHANGING:** Out with the old, in with the new bells (pg. 4)

**SOLVING Pi with Ai:** Using Ai for school work (pg. 14)

**CELEBRITY CLONES:** Is it all just copy and paste? (pg. 22)



## CREEPIN' IT REAL

Halloween History Inside and Out (pg. 12)



## CAUGHT ON CAMPUS

School spirit started spectacularly (pg. 17)



## PLAYING WITH FIRE

Dragons create false alarms (pg. 5)



## AFTER-SCHOOL AGENDA

Student life after the bell rings (pg. 20)

The decision had been made on February 1st, almost six months ago. By now, everybody has heard it: No more Science Magnet trips. Or is there?

That's the question plaguing students and parents alike.

“Class trips as part of the Science Magnet are not canceled. Class trips are postponed for one year until a process of student requirements is established by the teachers and the capacity to conduct trips is increased,” said Science Magnet Association Vice-President, Rebecca MacFarlane. What's really going on?

As Carl Sagan once said, “You have to know the past to understand the present”. In the past, JAMS Science Magnet was a highly funded group, with dedicated students. In fact, to go on trips in the past, one would have to attend six of the many seminars hosted by JAMS Science Magnet, as well as the summer science institute. Only those who were dedicated to science were able to go. But, since students were unable to attend seminars for other reasons, it was deemed inequitable, and the requirements were removed.

JAMS Science Magnet used to have funding galore. In 2016, the JAMS

Science Magnet Association, which fund raises and pays for trip scholarships and such, had \$281,323 in revenue. According to the IRS website, it dropped down

to just \$20,509 as of 2020. The main reason for this drastic change is COVID-19. This doesn't even account for the expenses. They just simply didn't have the money to do as much as they used to. They also get funding from the school district, which was cut from 80,000 to 58,000. Fund-

ing aside, there are plenty of other reasons for trips not happening this year.

Teachers who organized the trips weren't paid extra for their time outside of school, and often spent prep period working on the trips rather than preparing assignments. Due to its status as a non-profit or-

*We ran into some difficulties with what's expected from kids and parents around those trips.*

**Ms. Chacon**  
JAMS Principal

# The Polarizing State Of Science Magnet Trips

A look into what happened to the Science Magnet trips.

By ANDREW ALLEN

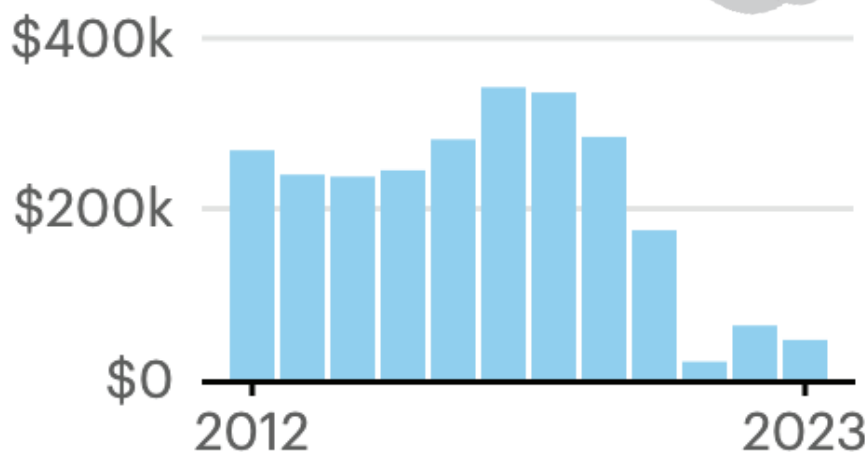
## DAY TRIP IDEAS:

- Collaboration with SMC faculty to measure tree circumference
- SMC tour of sustainability/compost/garden
- Natural History Museum
- Los Angeles Zoo
- Science Center - new space shuttle building or kelp forest exhibit, body systems
- SMC planetarium
- NASA GLOBE observer data collection - various locations
- Beach
- Heal the Bay activities and Aquarium
- Ballona Wetlands
- TreePeople/Coldwater Canyon

ganization, the Science Magnet Association was unable to compensate them. Some teachers have expressed concerns that students sometimes behave as though they are on vacation, displaying entitlement and not adhering to established rules. The teachers don't want all that responsibility, caring for hundreds of students overnight. Due to these reasons, teachers decided that there should be prerequisites for attending trips, but that brings back the issue of equity. With little time to create a whole new system, Ms. Chacon proposed to pause trips for a year, while they figure out what will become of Science Magnet.

There will be no overnight trips, but trips in general are only postponed and not canceled. However, they will be quite different. As mentioned previously, requirements to go on trips were being discussed. One proposed idea was a points system, where students would get points for doing activities and having good behavior. Another idea was to have a grade requirement, where students would have to have a high enough science grade to attend. But these still don't handle all of the issues with the trips, and thus it was decided: there would never again be overnight trips. No more Catalina, no more Yosemite, and no more Astrocamp.

This caused outrage among parents, who came to the Science Magnet Association meetings upset, but the Sci-



Science Magnet Association revenue from 2012 - 2021 Source: Nonprofit Explorer



ence Magnet Association is only in charge of fundraising, so there was nothing they could do about it. Just because there will be no overnight trips this year doesn't mean it's all over, though. The JAMS Science Magnet program has proposed replacing overnight trips with shorter, mandatory day trips that are fully integrated into the curriculum and will last the entire school day. For 6th-grade students, each trip will be 2-3 hours long, with two trips planned in a single day for one overall experience. At this time, no day trips are planned for 7th or 8th graders. However, 8th-grade students will participate in lab sessions at Santa Monica College, in collaboration with college professors.

There has been no official announcement about the postponement of trips. With limited information from credible sources, students may not know and still expect those long, expensive trips. Science Magnet trips are postponed until things settle down. While we wait for Science Magnet to calm down, we hope that students can also adjust their behavior to prevent similar issues in the future.



JAMS students experience unforgettable adventures. From exploring the natural beauty of Yosemite's trails to discovering the wonders of science at AstroCamp, students engage in hands-on learning, teamwork, and

outdoor fun that make these trips memorable and inspiring educational experiences.

As our school community navigates through a few recent changes, we want to ensure that students and staff feel supported during this transition. The new schedule, prompted by a state audit, is designed to benefit students, though we understand that adjusting to it may come with some challenges. One of the determinations was that we couldn't offer AM PE anymore, PE has to be during the school day, so as a result of that, we began working on a collaborative process. We even asked for student voices on it, and one of the things that came out of it was that we want kids to be able to see their teachers more often, and that comes with its challenges when we change to a hybrid schedule, which is what we have now. We cut a little bit of the time out of advisory, which is a little sad because we're cutting intervention time. Advisory is a time for kids to work on math and do some Dreambox and catch up on work. But with any change, change is hard, and there are some challenges. People are still getting

## PRINCIPAL'S MESSAGE

-Andrew Allen



**Ms. Chacon**  
JAMS Principal

used to the schedule, but I do believe that it's in the best interest of kids to have to see their teachers every day.

My goals continue to be the same around creating an environment where mid-

dle school students can thrive around being kind, connected, and compassionate. Just really thinking about the developmental age of students and how we respond to the way that they react or the way that they behave on campus. Really being able to teach them those explicit skills to be able to thrive not only at JAMS, but in society.

As we look forward to a fresh start this school year, we're excited to bring back clubs and extracurricular activities for students. The beginning of the school year last year was really taken over by the audit, so we didn't really get a chance to start clubs, there was just too much going on. But the goal is that clubs start on October 11th, and we sent out the interest form to students, and the interest form to teachers, so that we can come together and make sure teachers are offering what kids want. But also not being intruding or imposing on what teachers can or can't do. The goal is to have three cycles of clubs. I think the first one is going to last eight weeks.

# A NEW RING FOR A CHANGE

How the JAMS community is adjusting to the new bell schedule.

By ELDEN FUR

**B**RRIIIING! Everyone knows what that sound means. It is probably the sound everyone wants to hear, the school bell. JAMS has gone through some schedule changes. Last year it was straightforward; with the exception of Fridays and AM classes, school started at 8:35 AM and ended at 3:00 PM every day. But now it is very different. Six periods on Mondays and Tuesdays, three on Wednesdays and Thursdays. "What time does school get out?" That's a good question. Now that JAMS is a few months into the new schedule, how has it turned out?

According to the JAMS website, last year, the California Department of Education studied the SMMUSD district and found a few problems. One of these problems was the bell schedule at JAMS as it did not have enough minutes for PE during the school day. It was no longer accepted to have AM and PM PE classes, so the school made some improvements. After countless hours of effort from the JAMS community, this is where it is. The now available AM classes are

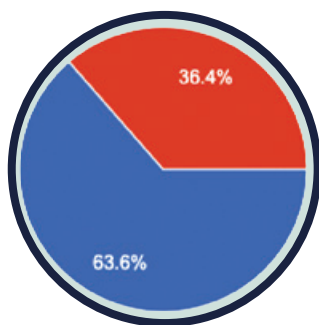
Core classes which include English, Math, Science, and History. These classes are available to students who have more than one elective or do not do ISPE. For instance, many Spanish immersion students have an AM class so they can have another elective along with Spanish.

The students at JAMS have mixed feelings about the new schedule. After surveying 250 JAMS students, over 64% said they liked the new bell schedule. Students prefer the new schedule for various reasons, including the later start time or having more access to teachers.

Seventh-grader Teo Mann said, "I would not change the new bell schedule even if I could because of the later start time." On the other hand, 36% of students said they did not like the new schedule. A popular reason for disliking this is having a shorter lunch. Eighth-grader Jade Martinez says the bell schedule makes her feel rushed because of the short classes. Students also seem to have more homework because of the shorter classes and that they see teachers more often.

Teachers also have opinions about the new bell schedule. Seventh-grade history teacher Ms. Hale said, "I love

**Do students like the new bell schedule?**



**NO**

**YES**

## Do teachers like the new bell schedule?

*"No, I do not like the new bell schedule. I do not like having class periods start and end at different times throughout the week and I do not like having the school day end at different times."*

**- Ms. Scotland**  
Humanities teacher



*"I love the new bell schedule. It cuts down on having to change bell schedules due to holidays etc., I'm enjoying the block schedules only once a week. Also, I'm not having as many discipline issues with the shorter classes. The campus feels a lot calmer and not as many bathroom breaks during class."*

**- Ms. Hale**  
Social Studies teacher



the new bell schedule. It cuts down on having to change bell schedules due to holidays and other days off. I am enjoying the block schedules only once a week. I am not having as many discipline issues with the shorter classes. I feel

that campus is a lot calmer and not as many bathroom breaks are being taken." Other teachers have different opinions on the bell schedule. For instance, Ms.

**Jade Martinez**  
8th grade

Scotland, a 6th-grade humanities teacher, says, "No, I do not like the new bell schedule. I do not like having class periods start and end at different times throughout the week."

Parents in the JAMS community also play a major role in the schedule. With class ending at 3:15 on Mondays and Tuesdays, 2:55 on Wednesdays and Thursdays, and 2:50 on Fridays, some

parents, like Emily Fur, find it confusing to coordinate pick-up times. Other parents dislike the new schedule because students get more homework because of longer classes, which can cause scheduling problems with

after-school activities. Although it is complex, some parents like the new schedule. Parents say that the later start time is beneficial because it is important for middle

schoolers to get more sleep.

Although the new bell schedule seems complicated to some, now that we are in the thick of it, people are adjusting. Having a later start time for middle schoolers has been proven to have a positive effect on student habits. Although it has been a big change, the JAMS community is getting comfortable with the new bell schedule.





The pulling of the fire alarm and how its gone from a safety mechanism to a practical joke.

By ALENA COX

The shrill sound of the fire alarm echoes through the hallways of John Adams Middle School. “Attention... Attention...” Students look up from their work, but instead of panic, there’s only annoyance. Of course, someone pulled it again. It’s a routine: the alarm goes off, the teacher checks, there’s no smoke. Sometimes teachers don’t even bother to check. The loudspeaker crackles to life, and the annoyed voice of an office worker comes on: “False alarm...” It’s never real. Nobody cares. It’s always technical difficulties, or someone using the fire alarm as a joke to get out of class.

The fire alarm is a life-saving tool that would inform us if a fire started anywhere in the school. The only issue is that sometimes people take it as a joke. There have been technical difficulties, but there are also people who pull it for no reason. Acceptable reasons, like misunderstand-

# The Boy Who Cried FIRE ALARM

ings, happen, but there are also unacceptable reasons, like using it as a pass to get out of math class. One day this year, the fire alarm went off twice during the school day: once during AM, and once during third period due to technical difficulties. After that, it was the talk of the school, and people got distracted. Now, the fire alarm is just a distraction to students.

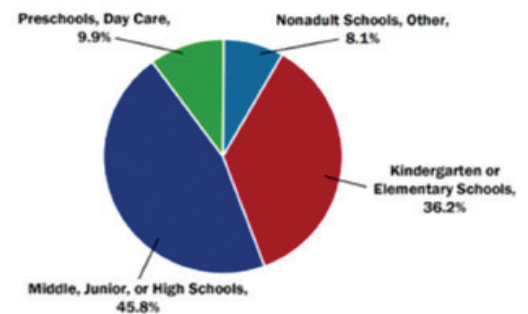
People no longer panic when the alarm goes off. This is concerning because if a real fire occurred and people didn’t react, it could be dangerous. The fire alarm pulling is like “The Boy Who Cried Wolf,” except the wolf is the fire. If the alarm is continuously false, nobody will believe it. Then, if a real fire happens, people might ignore it, putting lives at risk.

Everyone knows the sound of the alarm; it’s annoying, and afterward, one’s ears ring and ache. But it’s important. Maybe it’s an excuse to get out of class, but it isn’t relaxing. The sound causes headaches and annoyance. Hearing the alarm distracts students and annoys teachers. Now, students start talking, and the teacher has to fight to get the class back on track. Mistakes happen, but jokes or reasons to be obnoxious are not okay. No one wants to be focused on work only to be interrupted by the fire alarm, losing focus and creating chaos again.

If someone pulls the alarm as a joke, the law states: “False Fire Alarm or False Report of a Fire – California Law. California Penal Code § 148.4 PC defines the crime of making a false fire alarm or false report of a fire. The offense is a misdemeanor punishable by up to one year in jail and fines of up to \$1,000.00.” Being fined or sent to jail isn’t pleasant. Also, as a student, you don’t want pulling the fire alarm on your permanent record, which colleges and jobs look at in the future. If one wants a good job or college opportu-

nity but has issues like that on their record, their chances may be significantly reduced.

According to statistics, fatalities in school fires are rare. The three leading causes for school structure fires are incendiary or suspicious (32%), cooking (29%), and heating (9%). The most common area for school fires to start is the bathroom. Last year, in the boys’ bathroom, some students lit paper towels on fire, setting off the alarm. What’s scary is that fires can spread in 30 seconds. That’s not much time, and if people ignore the alarm, those 30 seconds could be fatal to classrooms or surrounding rooms near the fire. Fire is fueled by wind or extra oxygen, which many schools have due to air conditioning. Along with that, movies often show fires hitting things like gas tanks or electronics, causing explosions. Although that’s not always the case, schools have many items that could ignite and feed a blazing fire.



The percentage of times different schools have caught fire. (Source: FEMA)

## FIRE FACTS

- Fire fighting was an Olympic sport in the 1900s
- In 8 minutes, a fire can grow by 64 times
- A candle flame burns up to about 1,000 degrees Celsius
- No one knows who made the fire hydrant, because its patent was destroyed
- Earth is the only known place where fire can burn
- The number one cause of fire is cooking, specifically unattended cooking



Students walk to the field to participate in a fire drill. Photo: Alena Cox

## FRESH FACULTY FACES



**M**s. Gonzalez, a dedicated math teacher with deep roots in Santa Monica, attended SMMUSD schools from kindergarten through high school before earning her Mathematics degree and teaching credential at UCLA. She taught high school math for 24 years, including 20 at SAMOHI, and later adapted to teaching middle school students virtually through the district's Independent Studies program. A fluent Spanish speaker, Ms. Gonzalez uniquely taught Algebra in Spanish to SAMOHI's Immersion 9th graders. Outside of school, she enjoys spending time with family and friends.



**M**r. Herbert is our school's new custodian. Before joining JAMS, he worked as a manager at Sprouts Farmers Market. Outside of school, Mr. Herbert keeps busy with his family and various side gigs, including Uber and DoorDash, and he's passionate about sports, particularly football and basketball. He also coaches his 11-year-old son, Zaire, which reflects his commitment to mentoring and teamwork. Make sure to say hello to Mr. Herbert when you see him on campus and help him out by throwing away your trash.

## Do you think your opinions on political issues are influenced by what your parents believe?

As the U.S. presidential election was this year, students are reflecting on the influence their parents may have on their political beliefs. Some feel their views align closely with their family's, while others believe their perspectives differ or are shaped more by peers and media than by their parents' opinions.



*"My parents help me realize many truths I wouldn't have time to discover on my own. However, they also have biases because they're human."*

**Vance Staples**  
8th grade



*"I believe that their views mainly influence what topics I tend to think about more frequently, and hence, their importance."*

**Lorenzo Borgia**  
8th grade



*"I think that their views shape how I think about political candidates. If they talk about someone/something a lot, I will start to think of a person the same way."*

**Avery Harris**  
8th grade



*"I think I have the same beliefs as my parents because that is the perspective I have heard most."*

**Phoebe Brooks**  
7th grade



*"I think their views shape mine because I trust that what they believe is right and that they have a good sense of political understanding."*

**Charlie Nord**  
8th grade



*"What they say about politics is mainly the only view I get so it's usually my opinion too."*

**Sophie Coil**  
6th grade



*"They put me in a perspective of a democrat from their interpretations of political situations but now that I'm older, I'm seeing things from a different angle."*

**Jared Abramson**  
8th grade



*"I don't just agree because they are my parents, I choose it because they explain it to me and agree with what they think about it."*

**Jaquin Hummel**  
6th grade







Seventh grader Estani O. practices his penalty shot during lunch. Photo: Elden Fur



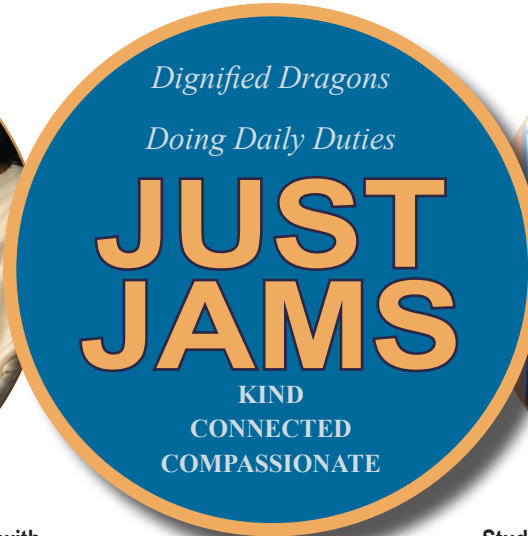
Signing a Red Ribbon Week poster, JAMS students declare they are drug-free. Photo: Mr. Miranda



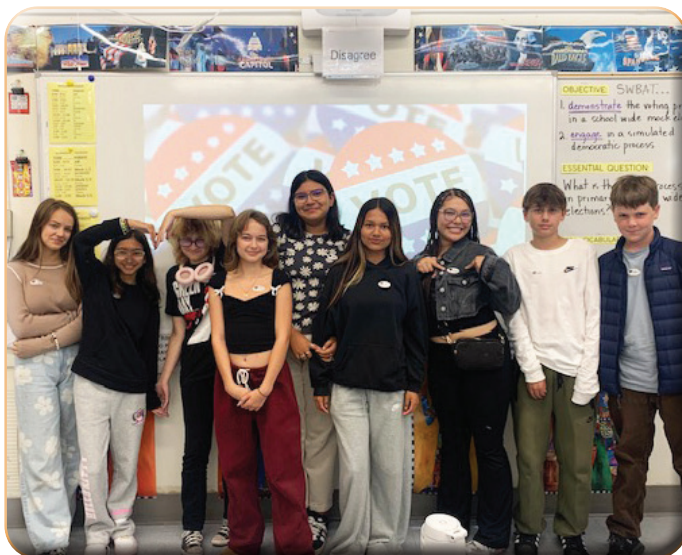
Brikenna B. showers an adorable service dog with affection. Photo: Mr. Miranda



During history class, Ms. Robinson works with 6th grader Damien S. while reading from the textbook. Photo: Kahlan Roberts



Students like Emile T. work on the field for an experiment in Ms. Jurewicz's class. Photo: Kaitlyn Nosho



Ms. Murphy's class participates in a mock vote to practice using their voices to understand the rights of American citizens. Photo: Ms. Murphy



Ms. Scotland discusses the classwork with Ililta T. and helps her during humanities class. Photo: Liza Hall



# New ASB Leaders Ready to Bring Excitement to JAMS

Co-presidents Ryan Chapman and Derek Knott aim to boost school spirit with events, food trucks, and student-focused ideas

By ANDREW LEE

The new ASB officers for this school year have been elected, and they're ready to make the 2024-25 school year awesome! ASB's plans include holiday events, food days, craft fairs, and sports activities. This year's

ASB co-presidents are

Ryan Chapman and Derek Knott. Ryan Chapman, one of the new co-presidents shared, "Some of my favorite ASB activities are getting to work in groups with my friends to plan events. One of the most memorable moments was, obviously, getting elected as co-president. I also enjoyed planning the food truck days. As president, we want to lower prices at the student store and hopefully make the dress code more appealing to students. We're open to any ideas anyone has or things they want us to do." Ryan is excited to take on his role as president and thanks everyone who voted for him.

Derek Knott, the other ASB co-president responded when asked about his favorite ASB activities, he said, "My favorite events would probably be Step It Up and Ultimate Frisbee." As co-president, Derek said, "I want to help improve the dress code, bring in more food trucks, and give a speech at graduation."

Ryan and Derek have many plans for this year, and students can look forward to more food truck days and potentially lower prices at the student store. Both enjoy working

with their friends to plan events for the student body.

Ms. Beeman-Solano, who has been the ASB advisor for several years, also shared her insights. When asked about

her favorite ASB activities, she said, "I'm really proud of our cultural celebrations. We hold advisory presentations to teach students about customs, traditions, and historical figures." Another question asked was about her most memorable moments in ASB. She mentioned, "There have been so many memorable moments, from big events with hun-

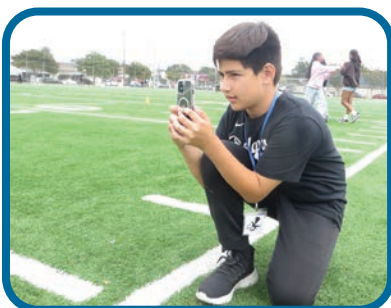
dreds of participants like Step It Up and Food Truck Day, to quieter moments like Pokémon trading and chess competitions." As an ASB advisor, she said, "I plan to teach ASB students to be strong leaders who know how to make solid plans, execute them, adapt when unexpected challenges come up, and reflect on ways to improve for future events." Lastly, when asked what

she hopes students will learn in ASB, she responded, "I want them to learn to be public servants and stewards. That often means working hard through lunch and advisory so the rest of the student body can have a good time. ASB students don't always get to enjoy the raffle, food truck days, or parties they help organize."

We look forward to all the fun activities this year's ASB team has planned.

*I plan to teach ASB students to be strong leaders who know how to make solid plans.*

**Ms. Beeman**  
ASB Advisor



ASB student Tony Vega captures action shots of students competing in the football throwing contest. Photo: Elden Fur

## New ASB Officers

Meet the newly elected Associated Student Body officers for the 2024-25 school year.



**Ryan Chapman & Derek Knott**  
Co-Presidents



**Jonathan Medina**  
Vice President



**Irene Lee**  
Secretary



**Mena Rames**  
Treasurer



**Noah Kirschenstein**  
Historian



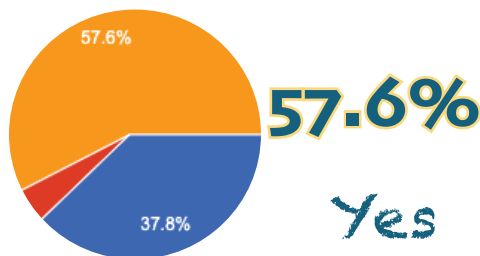
## Survey Results

# Trend Tendancies

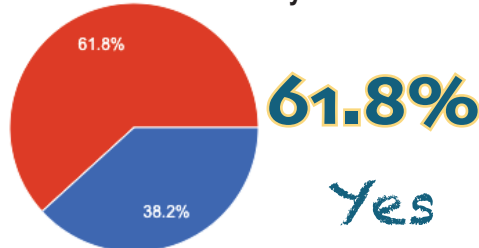
Rapidly changing trends and the reasons behind them.

By STEFFI GRIFFITH

Do trends move on quickly?



Do you find yourself waking up to a new trend every week?



Do you feel trends move on too quickly?

"Yes, I would say trends move on quickly. Sometimes it depends on people remembering them and they continue to stick around while others don't. Then a new trend begins and the cycle happens again."

- Rosemarie Mollo  
6th grade



"I would probably say, yes, because of social media. I mean, I don't know, but probably."

- Oliver Frost Lorenzo  
7th grade



"Yes, trends move on very quickly. I usually see a new trend all the time."

- Brynn Walker  
8th grade



According to the University of Maine, there are 4.8 billion users of social media worldwide, representing 59.9% of the global population. Social media has blown up over the last couple of years, but trends have been around for a long time. They don't even have to be dance trends on Tiktok. They might even be social media clothing trends or mega-viral songs on social media platforms. The trends we have right now are very similar to other trends we had many years ago.

Throughout the years there have been clothing trends. On social media worldwide, people show their new clothing, sparking a trend to go across the internet. These clothing articles and styles are only popular for a couple of weeks and then they are overtaken by more and more clothing. The trends are very quickly moving and flowing. There are also many stores deemed "popular" and those stores have their moment but again are pushed back because of another store. In a survey of the JAMS Community, 29.6% said Brandy Melville was the most popular clothing store, and 27% said Lululemon was the most popular store. In a couple of months, there are most likely going to be different answers because of the rapid changes in our society.

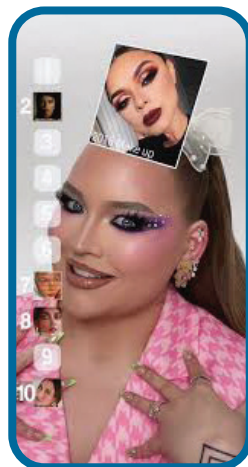
Another form of social media trends is dance trends. These TikTok dances go viral for a couple of days then get overtaken by another dance trend the next week. One example of this is the popular apple dance that took rise when the brat album came out. Another form of social media trends are makeup trend. There are so many beauty influencers on social

media and they are always telling viewers to buy things like makeup, beauty gadgets, skincare, and promoting expensive products. There are also so many emerging brands that go viral there is always a new product to review.

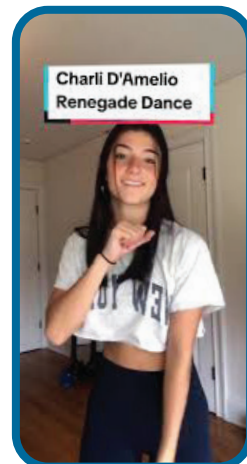
The last form of trend is music trends. Many songs that go viral in the media are short-lived. Usually, these artists get their songs to some sort of trend, like dancing or just a type of movement the person in the video does. Then the songs blow up and are viral for a couple of weeks then it's a new song going viral. People are also very easily influenced to buy tickets to go see artists like Sabrina Carpenter, Benson Boone, Noah Kahan, Kanye West, Eminem, and many more.

The reason for this is that influencers sometimes go to some of these concerts or just listen to an artist's music. If these influencers are popular enough they will create a chain reaction and more and more people will start to listen to their music. Saskia Heller said, "Taylor Swift is my favorite artist because she has great music and all my friends listen to her so I have now been converted into a "swifty".

Trends are just part of daily life in this day and age. The rapid change aspect of them is just another way the world is changing and growing. That doesn't mean our world needs to play into overconsumption though. As a result of trends, our society goes through so many objects even if you could never use all of them in a lifetime of usage. Whether it's clothes, doom scrolling on TikTok, or a new favorite song, trends help us see what's happening around the world.



Niki tutorials doing a makeup challenge.



Charli D'Amelio doing a viral TikTok dance.

# UNLOCK YOUR INNER CHAMPION

## JAMS Library Invites Students to Take on the Gold Medal Reading Challenge: A Three-Year Reading Adventure Across 24 Literary Genres

By KAITLYN NOSHO

The JAMS library committee has launched a brand-new reading challenge, and they are inviting everyone to participate. The Gold Medal Reader Challenge is a school-wide reading

challenge created by Ms. McLaughlin, the school librarian. It is a three-year challenge that recognizes students who read across up to 24 genres of both fiction and nonfiction. It encourages diverse independent reading and recognizes grade-level ELA reading. "The Gold Medal Readers must exercise reading outside of their preferred genre. So, in a way, the Gold Medal Readers are like athletes who can do a lot of sports, not just specialize in one event," stated Ms. McLaughlin.

Students who read all 24 of the given genres will receive a gold medal. Those who read 16 or more will receive a silver medal. Individuals who read 8 or more will receive a bronze medal. Once completed, the student will receive a certificate that corresponds to the amount of genres read. In addition to collecting knowledge and learning about empathy, students who complete this challenge will be publicly recognized in the May Medal Ceremony.

Every time a student finishes a book, they fill out a Google

Form. This form, found in the Library Google Classroom, officially logs books. To fill it out, one must submit a picture of oneself reading the book, and provide a few short descriptions about it. For example, the student must tell why that book fits into a certain genre, and how the book is similar and different to their own life. After that, the student can mark that book on their record.

The library team has also started monthly book clubs. These clubs are designed to help with reading challenges, but everyone is welcome. Each Wednesday, students gather in the library to confer and share their opinions on a book. The last Wednesday of the month is a pep rally-type celebration with snacks for students who filled out at least one official Gold Medal Reader Google Form.

The Gold Medal Reader Challenge is more than just a reading program; it's a chance for JAMS students to explore new kinds of books and grow as readers. By trying out different genres, students open their minds, learn empathy, and discover a love for reading that lasts. With monthly book clubs and awards at the end of the year, the challenge brings everyone together to make reading fun and rewarding.



Elden F., David O., and Alexander T. review the Reading Challenge document following their library visit. Photo: Mr. Miranda

All materials are listed in the Library Google Classroom. For any additional information, please reach out to Ms. McLaughlin in the JAMS library.

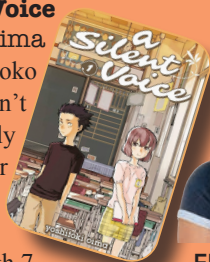
## The Bookmark

### A Silent Voice

by Yoshitoki Oima

Shoya Ishida bullies Shoko Nishimiya because she can't hear. Will Shoya be a bully forever or will he make up for his cruelty? You can find out by reading the series,

volumes 1 through 7.



Elysa Hart  
6th Grade

### Sword of Summer

by Rick Riordan

In this story, Magnus Chase dies, and he arrives in a Norse afterlife as an Einherjar discovering he is related to deity. Will Magnus and his friends stop Fenius Wolf from leaving his island or will they be too late?



Hailey Noshko  
7th Grade

### Coraline

by Neil Gaiman

A thrilling Narnia-like nightmarish tale in which a girl unlocks a door and finds another world. She is tempted to make a home with another mother and father who have more time for her. Will she choose the promise of something "better"?

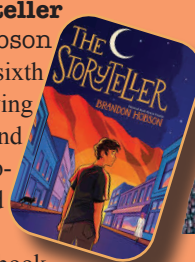


Kat Chablouh  
8th Grade

### The Storyteller

by Brandon Hobson

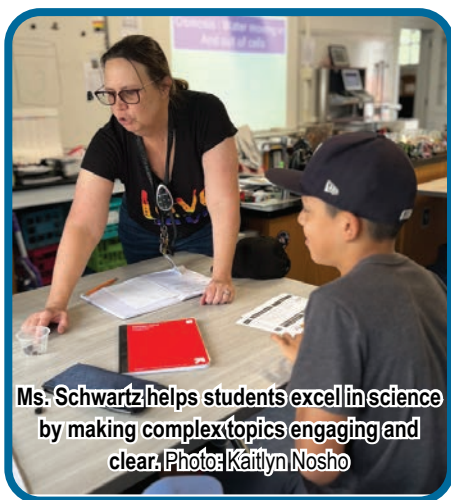
Hobson tells the story of sixth grader Ziggy who is trying to understand the recent and long-ago past, the disappearance of his mom and his ancestors' Cherokee magic and lore. A great book for those who like adventure.



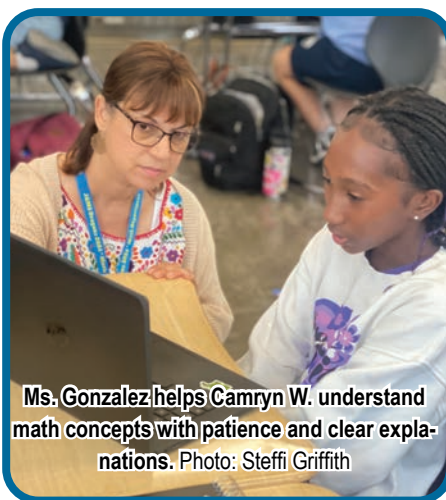
Ms. McLaughlin  
Librarian

JAMS students recommend these book titles that can be found in the school library. Check them out! - Ms. McLaughlin

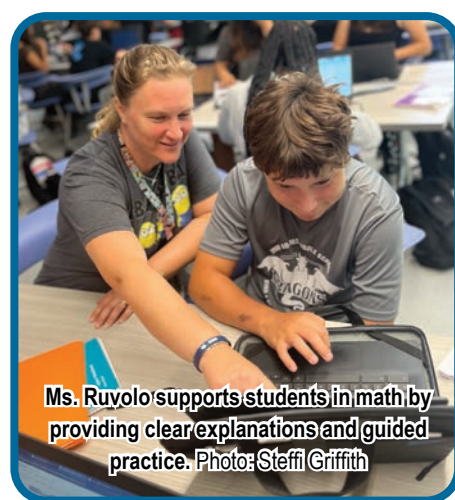




Ms. Schwartz helps students excel in science by making complex topics engaging and clear. Photo: Kaitlyn Noshko



Ms. Gonzalez helps Camryn W. understand math concepts with patience and clear explanations. Photo: Steffi Griffith



Ms. Ruyolo supports students in math by providing clear explanations and guided practice. Photo: Steffi Griffith

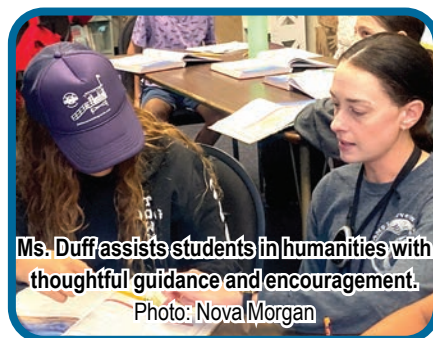
In the 1900s, kids often started their day by walking five miles to school. According to the British Broadcasting Company, if they misbehaved, they were punished by being hit with a paddle, spanked, or assigned hard labor. Now, most people go to college; however, back then, only one percent of students attended university. Over time, schools have become less strict and more flexible, using fewer physical punishments and more mental or disciplinary approaches.

The early 1900s were very different; World War I, the Great Depression, and the Spanish flu made those times unlike today. With all that, schooling has changed too. In 1905, the school year was 150 days long, but students only attended an average of 105 days. As a result, states with low attendance passed laws to make school mandatory, according to 120 Years of American Education: A Statistical Portrait.

In the 1940s, teaching in schools became more professional. For instance, schools became more organized and better funded. In 1920, schools spent about \$350 per student; this increased to \$1,000 by the end of the 1940s, according to the National Center for Education Statistics. The school

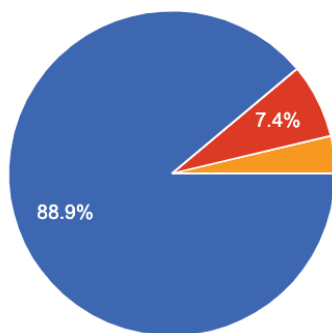
## From Paddles to PCs

By ANDIA BACAJ



Ms. Duff assists students in humanities with thoughtful guidance and encouragement. Photo: Nova Morgan

**How many teachers believe school was more strict in the past?**



- More strict in the past
- Less strict in the past
- Don't know

year extended to 170 days, and students, on average, attended 150 days. One-room schoolhouses were still in use but started to fade after World War II as cars became more common, according to Morning Ag Clips. Schools continued to use physical punishments, such as hitting students with a cane.

Starting about forty-four years ago, in the 1980s, a new age of teaching began. Many states no longer used corporal punishment. School funding increased significantly, to \$4,000 per student. Students started using computers in school for educational games, though not yet for instruction as they are used today. In the 1980s, punishments included detention and suspension, but some schools were still using corporal punishment. "When I was a kid, the principal had a wooden paddle," said Ms. Gonzalez.

Today, the majority of students don't need to be scared of being hit by their teachers. Most people don't walk five miles to get to school. Instead of relying on memorization, students are taught through problem-solving. Computers are used frequently in classes for assignments and educational games. Even though it's hard to get out of bed to go to school, it is a lot better than 100 years ago.



Kids at school in the 1940s.



Kids at school in the 1990s.



# SPOOKY Origins

The journey of Halloween through the ages

By DELFINA & CORDERO

According to the Guinness Book of World Records, the most jack-o'-lanterns ever lit on display is 30,581! The record was set in Keene, New Hampshire, in 2013, replacing the previous record of 30,128 set in Boston in 2006. However, how did this tradition of making jack-o'-lanterns even start? As a matter of fact, how did Halloween originate in general?

Two thousand years ago, every October 31 to November 1 in the area that is now Ireland, northern France, and the UK, the Celts celebrated their New Year. According to Twinkl.USA, the Celts were a collection of Indo-European tribes who mostly farmed and hunted for food. In the Iron Age, the Celts were recognized as "the Cult of the Severed Head" or "the Cult of the Human Head," who practiced the ancient celebration of Samhain, marking the end of the harvest and the beginning of winter.

The festival lasted two days, and during that time, the Celts believed that they would be able to com-

municate better with the spirits that roamed among them. The website LibGuides.com describes this perfectly: "It was believed that during this time, the living would be able to communicate better with the dead, as celebrants believed that the barriers between the physical world and the spirit world break down during this time, allowing more interaction between humans and denizens of the Otherworld." The Celts would wear costumes and light bonfires to ward off the spirits. The Festival of Samhain eventually took the name "All Hallows Eve," which later developed into Halloween.

Today, kids go trick-or-treating for fun, but in the past, it was to survive. There are many theories on how trick-or-treating became a tradition for Halloween celebrants, but one theory from \*History.com\* states that poor children and adults would knock on doors begging for

food and, in exchange, offer a prayer for the dead. Another theory suggests that the Celtic people left out food offerings to appease the spirits that

roamed. However it started, by the 1950s, trick-or-treating had gained popularity. Candy businesses capitalized on parents' concerns about the safety of treats from strangers, selling candy in packs so parents could know what their kids were consuming. KitKats, M&Ms, Hot Tamales, and candy corn were all popular choices for Halloween during this time.

Halloween is not how it used to be, and its popularity has increased over the centuries. It used to be a New Year's festival meant to ward off bad spirits, but now more lighthearted traditions prevail. People celebrate by going trick-or-treating, carving jack-o'-lanterns, dressing up in costumes, and much more. Nonetheless, the history of Halloween is still important because, without the Festival of Samhain, or the Celts in general, we wouldn't even have this spooky celebration.





# HALLOWEEN COSTUME CONTEST WINNERS

## SCARIEST

**Makena Sofia Fitez**  
as a plague doctor

## FUNNIEST

**Vance Staples**  
as Forrest Gump

## CUTEST

**Camila Reynaga and Jayleene Solorio**  
as angels

## MOST REALISTIC

**Emile Teschereau**  
as Mr. Saling

## HANDMADE

**Esteban Olivares**  
as a vending machine

## STUDENT GROUPS

**Alma Badelt and Callie Amin**  
as pink Starbucks drinks

## STUDENTS GROUPS

**Sofia Ugarteche, Sophie McCowan,  
Bryce Kyle, and Liza Hall**  
as Winnie the Pooh & Friends



# Celebrating Life and Death

The vibrant traditions of Dia de Los Muertos

By DELFINA CORDERO

Dia de los Muertos is a day where people come together and celebrate their loved ones who have passed. However, how is holiday celebrated? Here's one way that people take part to honor Dia de los Muertos. Usually people set up an altar, or "ofrenda". To set up an altar it is required to first, choose a suitable location for the items. Then, cover the base with a favored tablecloth or fabric. After that, place the largest pieces on

the base; these could include big bowls for offerings, big skulls, etc. Next, place a series of candles. Celebrants also decorate their altar with flowers, for example marigolds which are used the most. Adding the pictures of deceased loved ones is crucial. Finally, most people put items that were meaningful to them or items that have meaning behind them, such as something they liked or something that was theirs.



Students enjoy a lively game of loteria to celebrate Dia de los Muertos.

Photo: Kahlan Roberts



Students in Mr. Cierras' class set up an ofrenda for Dia de los Muertos.

Photo: Delfina Cordero



# AI in Academics



The use of AI at school and the effect it has on students

## Do teachers recommend using AI?

By KAITLYN NOSHO

Out of more than 200 million writing assignments reviewed by AI detection tools over the past year, one in ten were flagged for using artificial intelligence.

An article from EducationWeek by Arianna Prothero shows that three in 100 used AI to generate the majority of it. Now, what is AI? AI commonly refers to a computer-controlled robot that is able to perform tasks commonly associated with humans. There are multiple students at JAMS who use this form of modern technology for a variety of reasons.

Using AI for assignments can be good when it is used responsibly. If it is used to brainstorm ideas or to get help understanding the work, it will help students to learn and retain information. If a student feels stuck on a question, AI can provide immediate answers and feedback. This is especially helpful for students who feel shy about asking teachers questions and getting additional help from them. AI can explain the material and clarify any confusion that students may have.

With that said, if AI is used to search up answers and write entire essays, students will not learn any of the material.

If that is the case, they will not know what to do when they are tested on it. Additionally, the responses given by AI may have stereotypes, social inequalities, and general misinformation. When it is trained on outdated information, it can be very misleading. These things could be a huge problem and block future opportunities. So, it is always helpful to double check the information an AI chatbot gives you.

According to a recent survey, 25% of students at JAMS use AI on a somewhat regular basis. There are numerous reasons as to why this is. AI can be addictive due to its ability to find what users want and give it to them in a way that makes them eager to keep using the program. For example, when students complete their homework, they will frequently have questions about it. For math assignments, AI can explain the step by step process of the equation to get the answer. For English and Social Studies, it can provide outlines for reports and presentations. It can correct grammar and paraphrase sentences so they are more clear. Also, it is efficient. Just over a quarter of the students surveyed mentioned that its quickness was beneficial because it saves time to do other activities. Students mentioned using this free time to hang out with friends, play vid-

“

*I have used PhotoMath to understand the steps to solving a complex problem to help me solve other problems...It can be a great learning tool!*

**Ms. Ruvolo**  
Math Teacher

*"I think math apps like Photomath can be super helpful to check your work or to help you when you don't know how to approach a problem."*

**- Ms. Alexopoulos**  
Math teacher

*"Asking AI about something is like asking Google, but with the results being summarized for you. The flip side of this, though, is that you are letting something else do your thinking for you."*

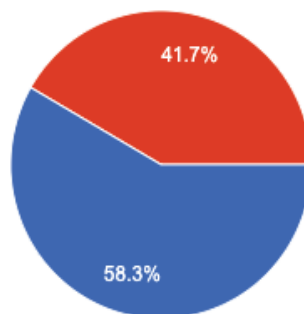
**- Mr. Avedian**  
Science teacher

*"No. I don't think AI can help without giving the answers."*

**- Ms. Mathews**  
English teacher

*"I feel it can be a very powerful tool. We need students to learn how to use it as a source for enhancing their work and not just doing their work."*

**- Mr. Cierra**  
Social Studies teacher



**58% of students think that AI is beneficial.**

efficient. Just over a quarter of the students surveyed mentioned that its quickness was beneficial because it saves time to do other activities. Students mentioned using this free time to hang out with friends, play vid-

## BY THE NUMBERS

JAMS Survey, Statista, National University

**86%**

of students worldwide admit to using AI in their studies

**55%**

of Americans use AI regularly

**58%**

of students at JAMS think that AI is beneficial



eo games, and simply relax.

Teenagers have the potential to increase their social connection to AI as they begin to rely on it more. On August 16, 2024, an article by Ziying Yuan, Yujing Duan, and Xiaoliang Cheng was published on National Center of Biotechnology Information, an official website of the US government. A research project determined that emotional interactions between humans and AI bots were regulated by media dependence. They found that there was a positive correlation between human-chatbot interactions and social interactions. This is important because it shows how much people rely on technology. As mentioned previously, making a habit of immediately turning to AI whenever an issue arises can cause people to become dependent on it. When someone becomes dependent on it, then they will try

to use it in more aspects of their life. This will lead to learning incorrect information, which can and will be very harmful.

Students at JAMS have reported using AI for different reasons. For instance, to get additional help understanding their lessons. "Some AIs show the steps to solving math problems. Or, students could look at for-

have multiple steps and complicated equations. They require precision and patience.

There is no way to rush through work like that. "AI helps students finish work faster, and if they know the content then there is no problem," expressed a 7th grader who wanted to remain anonymous.

Using AI in academics has both its risks and its benefits. When used responsibly and with good intentions, it can be a valuable tool for understanding topics and providing extra help. It can explain concepts and provide feedback.

The only thing is, AI doesn't know everything. The information that it is trained on can be incorrect, outdated, or have social inequalities. It is always beneficial to double check responses and ideas from these chatbots.

## PROS

- Explains how to solve a math problem
- Brainstorm topic ideas for a report
- Adaptive assessments and lessons
- Automatic grading
- Instant feedback
- Easy access to lots of information

## CONS

- Easy for students to cheat
- Overdependence on technology
- Can contain biased answers
- Might contain outdated information
- Technical difficulties can disrupt learning
- Lack of human interaction

mats to write a paragraph," stated 8th grader Felix Allen. AI can provide topic ideas, outlines, correct grammar, and more. Out of the 228 students, 33% reported using AI to help them complete an assignment. Some said that they use AI because the work can be long and tedious, even if they know the material. Namely, some math problems



In November, AVID students get a special visit from a veterinarian where they learned about career readiness. Photo: Ms. Murphy



It's Fun Friday! AVID students enjoy an exciting game of kickball. Photo: Ms. Murphy

## AVID at JAMS

In AVID, students have enjoyed a series of engaging events designed to support their growth and strengthen their community. Our school counselor presentation focused on setting personal and academic goals, helping students build a path toward success. Fun Friday, held on the second Friday of each month, allowed students to relax with board games, cards, chess, puzzles, and even a game of kickball. The first AVID Guest Speaker Series event of the year brought in a criminal defense lawyer to share insights into the legal profession, with a veterinarian visit in November. AVID Family Night was another highlight, with 80 family members and students gathering for a potluck celebrating the AVID community and the support it provides.



Joel C. Koury provides an interesting lecture to AVID students about the role of a defense attorney in criminal justice. Photo: Ms. Murphy



Students in AVID relax with some games for Fun Friday. Photo: Ms. Murphy

# Embracing Imperfection:

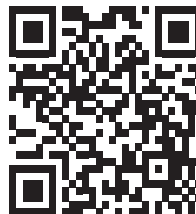
By ANDREW ALLEN

This year's Reflections Art Contest, themed "Accepting Imperfection," invited JAMS students to express their creativity and embrace life's imperfections through various artistic mediums. Jill Jurenka, the program coordinator, explained that the contest aligned with the PT-SA's mission to support student well-being through engaging activities. "The JAMS PTSA puts on the Reflections Art Contest every year to encourage students to explore the arts and express their ideas and feelings in creative ways," Jurenka said, emphasizing the importance of self-expression in student development.

Students submitted work in film, music, visual art, literature, dance choreography, and photography, all inspired by the contest theme. Beyond fostering artistic expression, Jurenka noted the program's impact on community and confidence building. "Reflections brings together students who share a passion for the arts and helps build friendships," she said. JAMS built excitement by hosting art-making stations at lunch and celebrated participants with a gallery exhibit and special event, allowing students to gain new skills, deepen self-understanding, and experience the joy of sharing their voices with peers.



Scan the QR code to view the virtual Reflections Contest Art Gallery



## JAMS Students Celebrate Creativity in This Year's Reflections Art Contest



**AMELIA WOLFE**  
1st Place in Photography



**MIA PATRICIO-RAMIREZ**  
1st Place in Visual Arts



## Seventh-Grader Wins Yearbook Cover Contest with Message of Self-Acceptance and Unity

By LIZA HALL

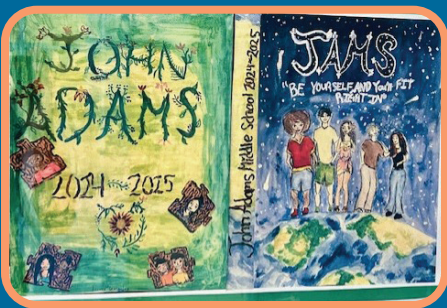
JAMS held its annual yearbook cover contest, inviting students to showcase their creativity around this year's theme: "Be Yourself and You'll Fit Right In." The contest encouraged students to express their unique perspectives, celebrating individuality and inclusivity.

Seventh-grader Aurora Gonzalez won first place with her inspiring design, which captured the spirit of embracing one's authentic self as part of the school community. Her work was chosen by a panel of teachers and staff, who praised her artistic vision and message.

Aurora's artwork will be proudly featured on the cover of this year's yearbook, symbolizing the school's commitment to self-acceptance and unity.



**AURORA GONZALEZ**  
Yearbook Cover Contest Winner





# CAUGHT ON CAMPUS



## DRAGON DAYS

To kick off the school year, JAMS celebrated school spirit with themed T-shirts and exciting activities, including a Student vs. Staff volleyball game and a pep rally in the PAC.



## SPIRIT WEEK

During Spirit Week, students dress up each day to match a different theme. The themes for the week include Twin Day, JAMS Gear Day, Jersey Day, Decades Day, and Pajama Day.



## ART FIELD TRIPS

JAMS art students elevate their learning experience by going on class field trips, where they explore various art installations and features around Santa Monica.

All photos by Ms. Joyce.



# CAUGHT OFF CAMPUS



# The Pencil Predicament

Exploring why 70% of JAMS students choose mechanical pencils, while online buyers lean toward traditional wooden options

By LIZA HALL

Seventy percent of students at JAMS prefer mechanical pencils over regular wooden pencils. In 1822, Sampson Morgan and John Isacc Hawkins invented the mechanical pencil because they wanted a pencil that lasted for a long time. When Sampson and John invented the mechanical pencil, they intended them to be used by artists to sketch pictures with even lines and precision. According to a survey, students at JAMS prefer mechanical pencils over wooden pencils because mechanical pencils have extra lead and erasers. Yet, why do students prefer these pencils so much more than regular pencils?

Wooden pencils, on the other hand, were invented in 1560 by an Italian couple, Simonio and Lyndiana, as a more comfortable alternative to graphite sticks. These pencils had a wooden covering, helping with writing pain and soreness in the hand. According to a JAMS survey of over 300 students, about 30% prefer wooden pencils over mechanical pencils and say they prefer them because of their durability. Avery Harris, an 8th grader, stated, "From an academic standpoint, I think that wooden pencils are better for learning. It's harder to fidget with them."

The question still stands, what pencil is better? According to Boston College libraries, "It is unclear what type of pencil is better for the environment. It's the age-old debate about wood products (renewable but still damaging) vs. man-made products (not renewable but also not directly killing trees). Ultimately, the volume of material used in pencil manufacturing is low enough that many other environmental concerns, such as the carbon byproducts of electrical generation, transportation, and heating, are much more urgent." This goes to show that there is no one answer to this

problem because they both have pros and cons.

There are also other factors that go into deciding whether a pencil is worth your time or not, such as comfort. Support helps with fatigue and pain when writing, so when it comes to pencils, mechanical pencils are better in terms of support.

*The practicality, convenience, and reliably sharp point of a wooden pencil makes it an obvious choice over a pestersome mechanical pencil.*

**Lorenzo Borgia**  
8th grade

As of October 2024, on the Amazon bestsellers list, the most purchased pencils are wooden #2 pencils, which have a 4.8 overall rating. Most customers like these pencils because of their durability, price, and ease in writing. The second most bought pencil on Amazon are BIC mechanical pencils, which also have a 4.8 rating. Most customers liked these pencils because of their writing precision and smooth finish. Overall,

most buyers like the wooden pencils better because of their cheap price and durability. This is different from students' opinions, mainly because students are not buying their own pencils so therefore price does not go into play as much. Yet, this still contradicts the fact that 70% of students prefer mechanical pencils, while buyers on the Internet tend to favor wooden pencils. This difference only adds to the pencil predicament.

Both types of pencils have their pros and cons, including factors like environmental impact, cost, and functionality. With mechanical pencils being very precise and smooth, with more support, and wooden pencils being very durable and cheaper. Overall, students at JAMS prefer mechanical pencils, but people buying pencils online seem to prefer wooden pencils. Ultimately, the choice depends on personal preference.

## BY THE NUMBERS

Sources: Amazon.com, Google Survey, Statista.com

**14 billion**  
pencils are globally produced every year

**15%**  
of JAMS students think that mechanical pencils are distracting

**0.7 mm**  
is the most common lead size for mechanical pencils

## Mechanical vs. Regular Pencils



"I prefer using mechanical pencils because they are refillable and the ones that I use have a bigger eraser."  
- Angelica Haung  
6th grade

"I personally like mechanical pencils. You can reuse them after they run out of lead."

- Daniella Hernandez  
7th grade





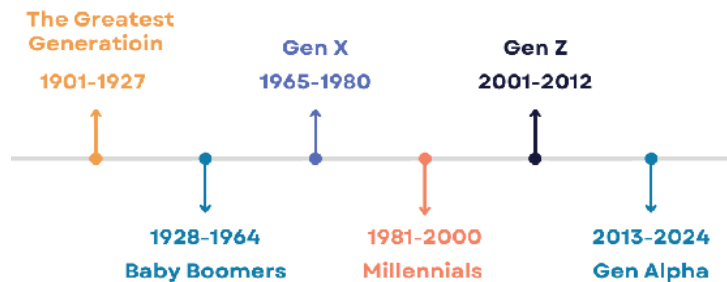
“Back in my day...”, “Kids these days...”--- these are phrases everyone has heard, whether it’s through TV or real life. It has become a running gag in society where older generations of people complain about how easy it is for “kids these days.” Sometimes they are jabs at younger or older people, and sometimes they don’t even know they’re doing it. This is a phenomenon known as “Generation Complaining”. So how many people deal with generation complaining, and is it a serious problem?

A generation is a group of people born in the same set of years. People love the ideas of generations. It is a fun way to joke about other people or complain about others, but originally they were created as a way to organize people based on when they were born. The people born from 1980 to 1996 are Millennials, people born from 1997 to 2012 are part of Gen Z, and the people born from years 2013 to 2024 are part of Gen Alpha. Each generation is tied to its own stereotype, from the oldest living generation, being The Greatest Generation (1901-1927) to the youngest living generation, being Gen Alpha (2013-2025). These are the generation’s stereotypes, and stereotypes are not a good representation of everybody in the stereotype. So take it with a grain of salt. Gen Alpha is known as “sloppy, iPad kids, but they can be very tech savvy and independent”. Gen Z are known as “self obsessed and addicted to their phones, but they build strong connections with people and have a good work life balance”. They are also known as being the most stressed. Millennials are known as “unmarried, difficult to work with people, who like avocados, but are creative and driven by purpose”. Gen X is known for “finding change hard, being self guided and independent”. Baby Boomers are known “to have high standards, love hoarding wealth, and are optimistic”. And the Greatest Generation is known for being old, sad and depressed, because of the great depression and World War II, because of this people give them immense respect. (Sources: GWI, Forage, CBS, FOX, John Hopkins University article, and student interviews)

# KIDS THESE DAYS

How the generations are constantly at odds.

By ELIZABETH MELBOURNE



“

*As the generations go on, I do believe they improve and get better in different ways. So I don't really understand people who judge other generations when they are just as messed up and wonderful as others.*

**Victoria Caceres Hashimoto**

8th grade

## Student Opinion

Bethel Belay, 6th grade



**Q.** Do you like generational jokes?

**A.** Generational jokes can be funny unless you are the butt of the joke.

**Q.** Do you care about what people say about your generation?

**A.** No, I am not appalled by the hate that my generation gets.

**Q.** Do you find generational jokes funny?

**A.** They can be kind of funny.

Older generations have always been complaining about younger people. Socrates, an ancient Greek philosopher, once said, “The children now love luxury, they have bad manners, contempt for authority, they show no re-spect for their elders and love chatter in place of exercise.”

That sounds much like what older people now are saying. In fact, it sounds a lot like what people have been saying, a year ago, five years ago, 10 years, 100 years, and even 2000 years ago. Older generations have always complained about younger people’s new luxuries, poor manners, and lack of respect. In a JAMS survey, 98% of people said that they were familiar with phrases like, “kids these days” and “when I was your age.” These phrases have been said millions of times by millions of people from different times, places and ages.

To better understand the perspective of JAMS students, a survey was conducted. Numerous students shared their views, with many commenting that ‘Gen Alpha is doomed’ or ‘Gen Alpha has brain rot’ However, others argued against the generational labels, saying that their only purpose is to divide people. The people who were saying this, often had a lot of opinions on the matter. One student claimed that it was “unfair to call Gen Alpha dumb because most of them are just young kids.” Another student argued that “Gen Alpha and Gen Z are addicted to their phones and screens” and that “some of the jokes aimed at these generations are valid.” This statement can be seen in a bigger context within the JAMS community because survey results say that 72.8% of the surveyed people said that they have seen similar points online. This has effects on JAMS students because the jokes are made at their expense. Countless times students have said that generations are just a way to separate people, like barriers. Generations are groups of people born in a set of years. It’s not the generation itself that separates people, it’s the time that they were born and grew up in. The conditions that make people the way they are change through time. So people born in different generations are different, and accepting differences is something that humans still struggle with.

## SOCIAL HOUR

Students at JAMS share their favorite local hangout spots for after school recreation.

By KAHLAN ROBERTS



*I like places like Starbucks and Bob's because I get to hang-out with friends, learn how to manage money, and get a little sweet treat after a long day of school.*

**Alma Badlet**  
7th Grader



As the final bell rings and the school day fades away, students enter the world of after school fun. “I really enjoy having the freedom to go places after school. It’s fun, and it helps me feel relaxed, plus I get to hang out with my friends,” said 7th grader Lucia Arndt. Along with Lucia, over 200 JAMS students go somewhere other than their homes after school. Scientists believe that going somewhere after school can even help one’s mental health. According to Youth.Gov, “Attending after school activities and regular participation can lead to improved social and emotional competencies.” This means that the time after school is perfect for kids city-wide to decompress and connect with their friends.

Although there are many places to go to after school, the obvious fan-favorite would be Bob’s Market. Just across the street on Ocean Park Blvd, Bob’s presents students with a wide spread of snacks, fresh food, and even a hot bar. Sixth grader Amelia Wolfe said, “Bob’s is great for hanging out after school because the food there is relatively cheap and there is lots of variety in the food.” According to a survey, 161 JAMS students also go to Bob’s after school, and agree with her statement. Bob’s is appreciated for its close location, and their quality snacks and fresh meals.

The next spot that students love is the new ice cream place, Handel’s. Also located on Ocean Park, Handel’s has been booming with business from not just JAMS students, but all of Santa Monica. Handel’s has numerous ice cream flavors, fresh cones, shakes, ice cream sandwiches, and banana splits! Not only that, but a small cone for only \$6.50 has about 3-4 scoops of ice cream inside. Even 6th grade school counselor, Ms. Cowgill enjoys Handel’s ice cream, saying that it is one of her favorite hang out locations.

Students at JAMS do love quality food, but what if it was farther away? Surprisingly, lots claimed that they take the long walk to Bubble Boba after school. Bubble Boba is much farther away, on Ocean Park and 29th. “Bubble Boba is a very good place to grab a refreshing drink and chill,” said 6th grader Mira Shah. Bubble Boba is a student favorite mainly for the range of milk teas, slushies, coffees, and different types of boba.

Some popular menu items are the brown sugar milk tea, and the strawberry banana slush.

What about the people who don’t go anywhere after school? Based on a survey, only 41 students of those surveyed don’t go anywhere after school. The majority of people who don’t go anywhere after school say that they prefer to just walk home, or go to a friend’s house. This is because places like Bob’s and Handel’s can get extremely crowded some days. Eighth grader Lorenzo Borgia said, “I usually prefer to go to my friends’ houses or my friends coming to my house because everything I need is right with me.” Most JAMS students could probably agree that they don’t go somewhere after school everyday.

After school is a time that all students get to experience, filled with laughter and joy. Doing activities or going somewhere after school can be good for one’s mental health, and social emotional health. All humans are born with a capacity for forming social connections, so put it to

use after a long and tiring school day. Hang out with your friends, and have a little fun, because all kids need to unplug and relax their busy minds. Whether you are going to Bob’s to grab a snack, or walking to a friend’s house, you should use

this social hour to create lasting memories and friendships that will last a lifetime.



**Eighth graders enjoy Handel’s ice cream after a long day of school.** Photo: Kahlan Roberts



**Bubble Boba is crowded with students after school.** Photo: Kahlan Roberts



## Where would you prefer to watch a movie: at home or in a theater?



*"I'd rather watch at home. I don't really like crowded theaters and people chatting and stuff like that, and I don't like interacting with people much."*

**- Abigail Centano**  
6th grade



*"I would rather watch at theatres because of the popcorn and large screen."*

**- Olive Allen**  
6th grade



*"Movie theatre, it takes a lot to make a movie in the movie industry. Also it takes money to make movies, and I'd rather watch them there."*

**- Mr. Fitz**  
Math teacher



*"I'd rather watch at home for comfort, because I can relax while watching movies."*

**- Jayden Cerceda**  
8th grade



*"I'd rather watch in a movie theatre because I can go with friends, and because there's a bigger screen."*

**- Leo Epstein**  
8th grade

# The Downfall of Movies

By FEVEN BELAY

Two hundred and thirty nine million people visited theaters all throughout 2024. In contrast, 359 million people total went to movie theaters in 2018, when movies were booming in the box office. Movie attendance rate has been decreasing significantly, mostly because the films are not interesting and appealing to look at. Big companies like Lions-gate, Marvel, Disney, 20th Century Studios, and others have been downgrading the look of movies, as well as the story the movie tells.



There has been a noticeable decline in movie quality and storyboard over the past five years according to critics and viewers. From amazing eye catching visuals like Blade Runner, to horrifying movies like The Ring, movies have been creative in detail and sfx. Sfx has a huge hand in movie creation. Sometimes, it can look a bit 'funky' looking, almost as if the characters look jelly-like, and don't fit in with the style. Bethel Belay, a 6th grader stated, "One of the movies I particularly didn't enjoy was Cats 2019, because you can tell where they added CGI, also the actor looked pretty weird." Normally, to create movies with CGI or special effects, they need a huge budget. But that has slowly been decreasing over the years.

Budgeting is one of the reasons for the quality drop in movies lately. It is reported that from 2019 to 2021 the budget for movies was commonly 15 million. Now, it may seem like a big number to an average person. However, fifteen million for a movie budget is considered a very low budget, (The reason why most corporations do this is because the more money they spend, the more money it has to make or else it will flop, and they will go bankrupt.) One example of this is Marvel. The top movies that are critiqued by the sfx quality from Marvel are The Flash, Justice League, Screenrant, a trusted news source stated "The MCU has widely inconsistent CGI quality within its projects. The erratic direction of Marvel movies leads to erratic results. You see incredibly sharp and real-

istic SFX work in one scene, and then two minutes later, the SFX work looks choppy and rushed."

However, the movie build itself is not all to blame. Storyboard and casting actors for different characters have also been a recent problem. Mostly, casting directors will choose A-list popular actors that don't even fit the story, instead of letting small, newer actors shine. But not every A list actor wants to be pulled for these roles. Contracts, (like the ones Disney and other companies use) can sign an actor onto a company for years with no way out (ex: Robert Downey JR with the Dr. Doom movie.) The compensation for these actors is actually a lot less than expected. CNN, a popular news source, reported "23.73 per hour. That's how much the US Bureau of Labor Statistics reported as the average pay for California actors."

According to the Motion Pictures Institute, movie quality and actors are not the only reasons for movie popularity declining. "The rise of streaming services has led to a decline in theater attendance. According to the Motion Picture Association, global theater attendance dropped by 4% in 2021, partly due to the availability of films on streaming platforms." Motion Pictures Institute wrote. Streaming services have blown up in the last couple of years, from only 5-6 main ones, to over 200 varieties. With so many choices to watch movies at the comfort of one's household rather than paying to watch in theaters, these places have started to become more and more empty. "I would rather watch at my house with my friends/family than at the theaters." said Kat Chabbouh, an 8th grader.

All of these issues combined greatly harm the movie industry and popularity. From actor strikes and long lasting contracts, sloppy/choppy looking sfx, budget issues, it raises a question. How can movies be fixed?

# Real Vs. Reel The Celebrity Authenticity Dilemma

By LIEL TEWODROS

With celebrities frequently posting updates, social media has become a stage where they must balance their authentic self with the demands of their public image. Fans increasingly expect transparency from their favorite stars. However, this expectation is complicated by the pressure to maintain a carefully curated persona that aligns with their career goals. Celebrities who share too much risk losing privacy, while those who share too little may seem inauthentic.

Public personalities must navigate not only the expectation of constant social media presence but also the commercial pressure to monetize their lives. In a 2024 interview with Essence titled “Beyonce Practices Self-Care Through Privacy: ‘I Stay True To My Boundaries. No Amount Of Money Is Worth My Peace’”, Beyonce stated, “One thing I’ve worked extremely hard on is making sure my

kids can have as much normalcy and privacy, ensuring my personal life isn’t turned into a brand.” This dedication to preserving her family’s privacy while keeping a public persona illustrates the fine line that must be drawn between disclosing just enough information to engage followers and avoiding excessive criticism. This article in general highlights a tension that remains relevant in today’s social media landscape (the challenge of balancing privacy with public expectations.) Despite that obstacle, she puts her family wellness first, highlighting the psychological toll that celebrities may experience in their first attempt of integrity.

Some celebrities find it difficult to maintain their genuineness, while others seem to have no trouble adjusting to their fame. Stars such as Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson, for example, adeptly manage their public identities while still fostering real relationships with their fanbase. This can be displayed when Dwayne surprises a fan who had claimed to be his “biggest fan” during the premiere of Fast & Furious: Hobbs & Shaw in 2019. He often offers intimate anecdotes and sneak peeks into his life, presenting a likable figure that many can identify with. He can interact with his audience because of his transparency without feeling overshadowed by criticism. Likewise, Selena Gomez, another prominent figure, has used their position to advocate for self acceptance while being open about her struggles. Selena fosters a sense of genuineness that her followers value by openly sharing struggles, as seen in her documentary, My Mind & Me. She candidly discusses her mental health journey and admits that “I’ll be honest, I didn’t want to go to a mental hospital. But I didn’t want to be trapped in myself, in my mind anymore.” This helps create a community of supporters. This shows that celebrity authenticity is not always necessarily intimidating if it’s managed at a decent level.

To navigate these pressures of authenticity, many celebrities adopt various strategies that assist in maintaining boundaries around what aspects of their lives they share publicly. This can involve curating their social media presence to highlight

achievements while selectively omitting personal struggles. Moreover, some choose to work with publicists to navigate the expectations of the industry, ensuring that their public persona aligns with their true self. By employing these strategies, celebrities can create a balance that allows them to engage with their audience without sacrificing their privacy or mental well being. This careful management of their image reflects awareness of the toll that fame can take.

In the end, the pursuit of the “real” in a world where the “reel” rules the roost reveals the flaws in celebrity culture. Celebrities must constantly balance sharing enough to connect with fans while still protecting their privacy. Whether it’s Beyonce’s focus on family boundaries, Dwayne’s relatable persona or Selena’s openness about mental health, being authentic requires a careful mix of transparency and limits. Ultimately the search for authenticity is a shared journey between the celebrities and their fans.

“

Someone that seems real is a person who shows their true personality.

**Alexander Choi**  
6th grader



## Stars Speak Out

“

*I feel personally that I am just too fragile for it. I am certainly not immune to FOMO (fear of missing out), and I think that it is too hard to just look through other peoples’ lives and not compare your own.*

**Scarlett Johansson**



**Should celebrities openly share details about their personal lives?**



*“No, because celebrities might end up oversharing information about their personal lives.”*

**- Genevieve Daskivich**  
6th grade

*“Yes, as long as its appropriate and something they feel comfortable sharing.”*

**-Elizabeth Pash**  
6th grade



*“No, because celebrities could share information that can be way too personal.”*

**- Takuma Lee**  
6th grade

*“Yes, because people might want to know more about them.”*

**- Danielle Silva**  
8th grade







**W**hat could make an Olympic medalist give up her chance at gold? During her time in the Tokyo Olympics, 11-time Olympic gold medalist Simone Biles was going through her own mental misery—the ‘twisties’, she calls it. For context, the ‘twisties’ is a mental thing that is typically dealt with by gymnasts. It can set in during higher level techniques, and it becomes difficult for gymnasts to distinguish what they’re doing in the air. To put it simply, it’s when a gymnast forgets what they’re doing. For Simone, she couldn’t get a grasp on her flips. When she flew through the air, her mind wasn’t up there with her. In 2021, right before the female gymnast’s finals, Simone dropped out. This left the world shook—headlines flooded major news stories, all telling the same side of the story. But, what was Simone’s side? What was her story?

After spending three years in foster care, Biles was adopted by her maternal grandfather and his wife. Since the tender age of six, Simone has been training for her

# FLIPPING OUT

Simone Biles’ Mental Journey: Overcoming the ‘Twisties’ and Redefining Success

By NOVA MORGAN

sport, gymnastics. She found a love for it after a school trip, when she successfully imitated a few older kids who were practicing the sport. A coach saw how well Biles completed the feats; she wrote a note to her family saying that Simone should pursue the sport.

After years of training, appearing in several competitions titled The American Classic, and succeeding in many world-wielding competitions, she was (expectedly) picked for the All-American women gymnastics Olympic team for the 2016 Rio Olympics. Simone made history, earning herself four gold medals in the vault, floor-exercise, team segments, and all-around. It didn’t surprise anyone when she became a part of Team USA for the 2021 Tokyo Olympics. Though, during this time, Biles said she felt like “she was in jail with her own brain and body.” That she was overthinking her every move. Not only were ‘twisties’ weighing on her, but she also had other factors off the mat. Simone’s way of thinking during this time was to “I’ll push it down, shove it down, wait until my career’s over, go fix it,” but right before the women’s gymnastics finals, Biles dropped out. It all became too much for her.

During the four-year gap between Olympic games, Simone took time for herself. She went to therapy, and tried to make her head a better place. She also continued to train. It took a while, but Biles eventu-

ally got a handle on her ‘twisties’. At 26, which is rather old for an Olympic athlete, she returned to compete in the 2024 Paris Olympics. The rest of the world was on the edge of their seats, eagerly waiting to see how Simone compared to herself from four years ago. She stepped onto the mat, and blew the competition away. She fared greatly to her past self. When she flipped, her mind was right there with her, not being left behind. She left Paris with four different medals under her belt—three gold, and one silver.

Simone Biles has grown and evolved as a gymnast, both physically and mentally, since her start at age six. Simone and her journey properly illustrate mental struggles, and feeling as though one’s not good enough in something they’re usually great at. Countless gymnasts, other athletes, and even students deal with the ‘twisties’ in one or another. It’s an awe-inspiring journey, to say the least, and everyone can learn from Simone.



Simone Biles performing her gymnastics set at the Paris Olympics 2024. Photo: Tom Weller



Simone Biles, the director, and the cinematographer of her docuseries posing on the red (blue) carpet. Photo: Nova Morgan



# SPOT THE DIFFERENCE!

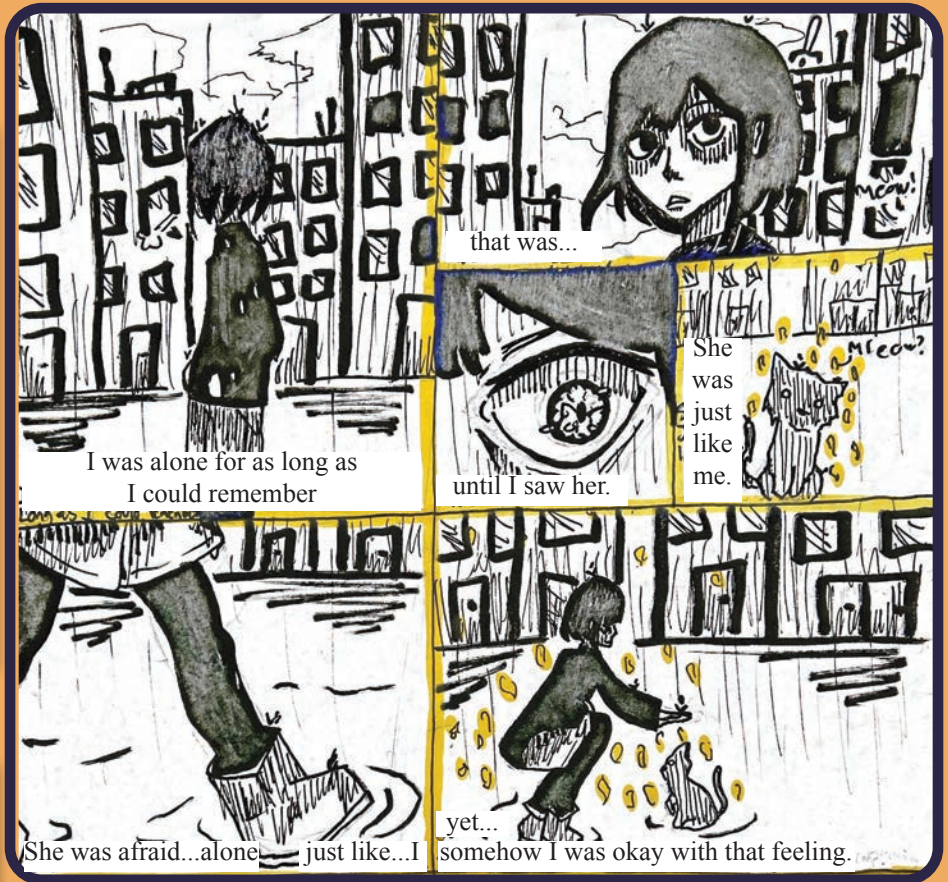


## ANSWER KEY

1. Pig in the background / 2. Notebook on the table / 3. Nike logo on the left girl's hoodie / 4. Earrings added to the girl on the right / 5. Cereal box on the right was removed / 6. Backpack strap added to the boy in the back left / 7. White sleeves added to the boy on the back right / 8. Shadow enlarged on the ground / 9. Face added in the crowd on the top right / 10. Purple water bottle's top changed color

# STUDENT COMIC

by Cameron Cohen  
8th grade



## The JAMS Journal

VOLUME 7 : ISSUE 1

Published by the students of  
John Adams Middle School  
2425 16th Street  
Santa Monica, CA 90405



### THE JAMS JOURNAL TEAM

**Top row:** Liel Tewodros, Stefanie Griffith, Andrew Allen, Liza Hall, Nova Morgan, Kaitlyn Noshko / **Middle row:** Andia Bacaj, Alena Cox, Elden Fur, Kahlan Roberts, Feven Belay, Elizabeth Melbourne / **Bottom row:** Andrew Lee, Delfina Cordero

**ADVISOR:** Mr. Miranda

