

Vol. 100
Issue 5

The Guidon

March
2026

Hays High School | 2500 E. 13th St. | Hays, Kan. 67601



NO POKES
Increasing numbers of people
bypassing regular vaccinations
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ON THE COVER



Cover photo by Alijah Arias & cover design by Kennedy Fischer

ORGANIZATIONS

World Language Club encourages students to learn other languages through recent events

By Allison Stecklein
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While World Language Club has existed since 2022, it has changed throughout the years that it has been a student organization, with this year being a fresh start for the club.

Sponsored by German teacher Codi Fenwick, the club is a student-led organization that allows members to learn languages that are not taught at school, as the school only offers German and Spanish. Alumna Rylie Fairbank began the club in spring of 2022.

After Fairbank graduated in May 2023, the leadership changed for 2023-2024 and 2024-2025. Last spring, junior Awa Diop and sophomore An Li taught short language lessons once a month to make the club more interesting.

"I joined because I enjoyed teaching Chinese and learning about different languages," Li said.

This year, sophomore Abigail Yehle, whose first language is Japanese, has taken the lead.

"I thought it would be good to teach other people about the Japanese language, as it is a language that would be easier to learn when you see someone speaking it," Yehle said.

For the club's first major event this semester, members created bookmarks with the theme, "Degrees of Love," which they distributed during lunch periods on Feb. 11 and Feb. 12.

Yehle designed the bookmark in five different sections, with each featuring a different language with an illustration representing a country on the front. On the back, it had short phrases in those countries' languages that related to love, along with the translations. Languages featured included Arabic, Chinese, German, Japanese and Spanish. Helping Yehle were Li, junior Paul Acker, junior Sara Bassam Ali and senior Lizbeth Romero Molina.



Photo by Keileigh Sadeghi (Indian Call)

LANGUAGE LESSON

Displaying a chart of Japanese characters, sophomore Abigail Yehle explains the language to students attending World Language Club's Feb. 13 trivia activity in the Hospitality Room. The club sponsored the event to entice students to join World Language Club.

"The benefit of giving out bookmarks with the theme of 'Degrees of Love' is it allows students to learn more about how people express love in different countries," Li said.

The bookmarks also promoted the club's trivia event on Friday, Feb. 13 during Advisory. The questions focused on the information on the bookmarks and on fun facts about the countries. Participants got snacks, and the trivia winners, who were sophomore Danika Leiker, sophomore Keileigh Sadeghi and freshman Bailey Beltran, received Cerv's Snoball coupons.

According to Yehle, the event was meant to interest more students in World Language Club. Anyone interested in joining the club can contact Fenwick at cfenwick@usd489.com.

"Goals I have for the club are to be able to teach some people Japanese and also to learn more about other cultures I do not know about," Yehle said.

STAFF SPOTLIGHT

Earlier this semester, foreign language teacher Jessica Nickum gifted many of her colleagues a small key memento to remember the old Hays High School building at 2300 E. 13th St.

What inspired you to make these?

"Honestly, the people who I work with gave me the inspiration. I noticed a lot of them had a deep attachment to the old HHS, and it was very emotional for them to leave it behind. Then, there were the kids. They kept using the word 'lore,' and so, 'Key Lore' was born - 'A key from the past to open doors to the future.'"

How did you make these keys?

"The teachers were asked to turn in their old keys [when we moved]. I did some investigation and learned their fate of complete destruction.



teacher
Jessica Nickum

Then, I 'acquired' the key box. I then went onto this thing called Amazon and browsed for a long time. I finally found some silver arrowheads and silver feathers with rocks, aka crystals. The arrowheads seemed on brand, and the feather with crystals were to bring some good vibes into the new space."

When did you make the keys?

"I assembled them over Winter Break, and I broke one of my beautiful fingernails. Fret not, I am never too far from super glue, so I fixed the nail and continued the good work."

How did you distribute them?

"I sent a form to the staff to see who wanted one. I have handed out about 40, but I have many more. Turns out, we had a lot of keys."

Reporting by Alijah Arias

CAREER EDUCATION

CULINARY CREATIONS**Culinary Arts courses provide real-world experience with competitions, sales**

By Delia Dixon & Kennedi Fischer
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With new commercial and residential kitchens, five culinary arts classes – Culinary Essentials, Culinary Arts, Baking and Pastry I, Baking and Pastry II and Culinary Workplace Experience – provide opportunities for students to learn baking, cooking and more.

In Culinary Essentials, the prerequisite for additional culinary classes in the Family and Consumer Science Department, students learn cooking techniques, food safety and menu planning over a semester while preparing a variety of dishes, including breads, cookies and soups, all in the program's professional kitchen setting.

"Students enjoy the food they prepare, but many products also support the school and community," teacher Nicole Linenberger said. "Classes frequently prepare food for catering events, the Hays High food pantry and staff appreciation."

After Culinary Essentials, students can enroll in Culinary Arts, which is a yearlong course intended for students who want to be culinary professionals. In the advanced class, students learn more advanced planning and techniques.

"It [Culinary Arts] is such a fun atmosphere in a class that can help you with amazing life skills," senior Oaklye Wichers, a teacher assistant during the class, said. "My favorite part is seeing all of the creations. They constantly go beyond expectations and create some really cool stuff."



Photo by Dexter Sullivan (Indian Call)

MAKING THE DOUGHNUTS

On Jan. 23, sophomore Jazlynn Henry and senior MacKenzie Seelhoff pour syrup into a bowl to make maple doughnuts in Culinary Workplace Experience.



Photo by Lizzy Vajnar (Indian Call)

PREPARING THE FILLING

Senior Zoe Maestas scoops cream filling into a piping bag held by junior Keiara Hook on Oct. 16 in their culinary class, as they make a dessert.

Both of those classes, plus the other three classes, have competitions, ranging from five to seven competitions a year, depending on the class and the unit. Competition themes have included beef jerky, cupcake wars, international cuisine, sushi challenges and "Chopped" mystery basket competitions, based off the Food Network show. Each competition is judged by a panel of administrators, faculty, staff and students.

"I have loved interacting with others over food," science teacher Thomas Decker, who recently judged a sushi competition, said. "I enjoy the act of tasting, responding and questioning."

In the other three advanced classes, Baking and Pastry I, Baking and Pastry II and Culinary Workplace Experience, students run a commercial bakery, the Hays Culinary Arts Kitchen, and they cater meals for different events as well.

"These opportunities allow them to continue advancing their culinary skills while gaining authentic experience in planning, production and service," Linenberger said.

Goods can be purchased and orders can be placed on the Hays Culinary Arts Kitchen Facebook or through Linenberger at nlinenberger@usd489.com. Money made from orders is used for ingredient costs, kitchen supplies and other resources.

"My favorite part [about teaching culinary classes] is watching talented students grow in confidence and skills in the kitchen and seeing them take pride in creating something meaningful with their hands," Linenberger said.

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PUBLIC HEALTH

TAKE THE SHOT – OR NOT?

Despite studies showing effectiveness, vaccination rates continue to decline

By Alijah Arias
27aarias@usd489.com

Before vaccines became widespread, diseases such as polio, smallpox and tuberculosis harmed or killed millions of people. Pools were closed in the summer out of fear of polio, a cough could signal tuberculosis and a fever could mean smallpox.

Since their inception, vaccinations against communicable diseases have reduced illnesses and deaths, although controversy surrounding vaccinations has been growing in recent years.

While the controversy is more recent, vaccinations are not new. According to *www.immunize.org*, in 1796, Edward Jenner “first speculated that protection from smallpox disease could be obtained through inoculation with a related virus,” which he tested in 1798 by inoculating an 8-year-old boy with “cowpox pustule liquid recovered from the hand of a milkmaid” who had contracted cowpox. Jenner’s work led to more developments, with vaccine technology continuing to advance in modern times.

So, what are vaccines? In short, vaccines are preparations administered into the body, such as by injections or sprays, that stimulate the body’s immune response to protect against diseases that may harm or may kill a person.

When a person gets a vaccination, the individual’s immune system immediately responds, as it “recognizes the invading germ, such as the virus or bacteria; produces antibodies; and remembers the disease and how to fight it,” WHO says.

A vaccine contains a weakened version of the infection it will prevent, but this dose is not harmful most of the time. One main ingredient of all vaccines is an antigen, which is a substance that induces an immune response, resulting in the production of antibodies, or protective proteins the immune system uses to fight against bacteria or viruses, according to the WHO. If or when a person encounters the disease, the body has antibodies already to fight off the infection.

“Vaccines help the body learn how to defend itself from disease without the dangers of a full-blown infection,” the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) says. “The immune response to a vaccine might cause tiredness and discomfort for a day or two, but the resulting protection can last a lifetime.”

Some vaccines offer long-term or even lifetime protection, such as the vaccine for measles, mumps and rubella (MMR). Other vaccines provide protection that fades with time, such as for tetanus, which is needed every 10 years. Finally, some vaccines offer short-term protections, such as yearly flu vaccines.

“I prefer vaccines so that I don’t get other people sick,” sophomore Trip Burrell said. “When I get a vaccine, I feel a little dizzy but then it wears off.”

While multiple studies have proven vaccines are safe and effective, many people are against being vaccinated. John Hopkins University reported that the rates of vaccinations – including vaccinations for MMR; Diphtheria, Tetanus and Pertussis (DTaP); and Polio and Varicella – have decreased among kindergarteners each school year since 2019-2020 to 2024-2025. These lower vaccination rates have led to outbreaks of disease, particularly measles, in multiple states, with some reaching the highest number of measles cases since the disease was considered eliminated in the United States in 2000.

“I think people are misinformed, and I think people don’t listen or read actual research,” school nurse Jessica Roe said. “I think that it causes a lot of fear and hesitancy to vaccinate.”

Adding to this controversy, in January, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reduced recommendations for children from 17 vaccines to 11 vaccines. Recommendations are Chickenpox, Diphtheria, Haemophilus Influenzae Type B, Human Papillomavirus (HPV), Measles, Mumps, Pertussis, Pneumococcal Disease, Polio, Rubella and Tetanus. The six no longer recommended are COVID-19, Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, Influenza, Meningococcal Disease and Rotavirus. While these are federal recommendations, states do not have to adopt them.

“As of right now, the state of Kansas isn’t going to go down to the 11 recommended,” Roe said. “There’s proven research that the vaccines that are currently recommended, keep people safe.”

Still, even while the government reduces the recommended vaccines, many people believe in the importance of staying vaccinated, not only to protect their health, but others’ health.

“I feel it’s important to get vaccinated to prevent health issues for other people that are prone to be ill and for the general safety of others,” senior Jazmine Johnson said.

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Ready for Spring Break?

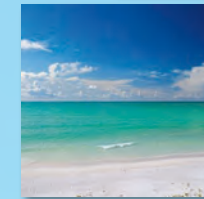
With Spring Break nearing, different travel options exist for vacations and staycations, but the key is preparation

Essential Spring Break Travel Tips

- . Pack only the essentials: if flying, You can bring one personal item (backpack, purse, etc.) and one carry-on bag on most flights for free; checking bags costs extra!
- . Have needed contact information and personal identification.
- . Stay aware of your surroundings at all times.
- . Stay together if traveling with others and stay in public.
- . Keep your phone away, rather than letting it distract you.
- . Keep your belongings secure and do not let them unattended.
- . Know public transportation etiquette if using those systems.
- . Know local laws and understand local customs.
- . Immerse yourself in the local culture, dining, etc.
- . Be prepared for anything and have fun!

Most Popular Spring Break Vacations

1. Cancun, Mexico
2. Miami Beach, Fla.
3. Key West, Fla.
4. Clearwater Beach, Fla.
5. Cabo San Lucas, Mexico
6. Siesta Key, Fla.
7. Padre Island, Texas
8. Jamaica
9. Playa del Carmen, Mexico
10. Puerto Rico

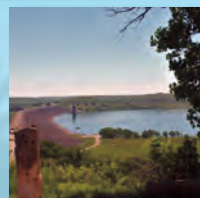


Information from U.S. News & World Report "Best Spring Break Destinations" at <https://travel.usnews.com/rankings/best-spring-break-destinations/>
 Images of Cancun, Key West, Clearwater Beach, Cabo San Lucas, Padre Island, Jamaica, Playa del Carmen & Puerto Rico courtesy of Adobe Stock

Popular Spring Break Staycations



Cedar Bluff State Park (40 miles)
 Wilson Lake State Park (50 miles)
 Salina, Kan. (97 miles)



Manhattan, Kan. (159 miles)
 Wichita, Kan. (183 miles)
 Kansas City, Mo. (268 miles)

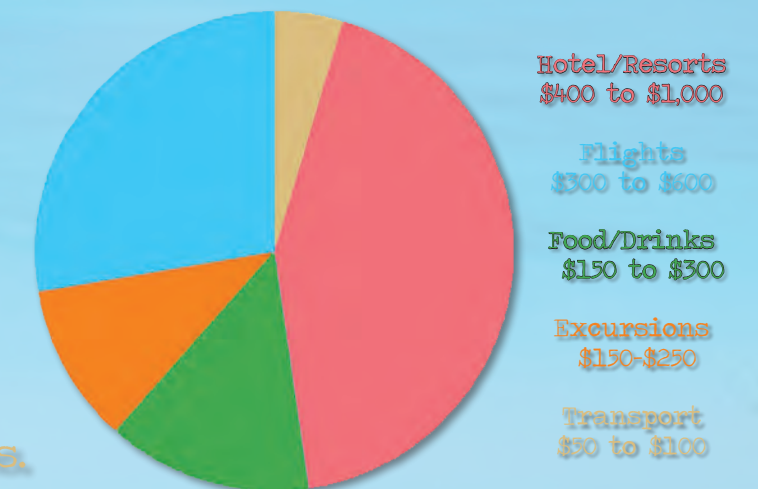


Reporting by Lily Butler

Images of Cedar Bluff State Park, Wilson Lake State Park, Manhattan, Kan., & Wichita, Kan. courtesy of Adobe Stock

Average Costs for Spring Break

- . A typical Spring Break vacation costs between \$1,025 to \$2,325.
- . Travelers can save money by booking trips early and finding all-inclusive packages.



Information from Go Blue Tours at <https://goblueetours.com/how-much-does-spring-break-cost/>

Praises

- Luck
- Car stereos
- Spring Break
- Trisha Paytas
- Warmer weather
- U.S. women's hockey team
- Making sourdough
- Fiona Gallagher
- Roblox guests
- Work crushes

Protests

- Minecraft bedrock skeletons
- Third nine weeks slump
- U.S. men's hockey team
- Studying for the ACT
- Tropical trees
- Unsweet tea
- Hangnails
- Essays
- Small talk

Staff Recs

Alijah Arias

- "Come Together" by The Beatles
- "The Hitman's Bodyguard"

Joslyn Bates

- "Baby Steps" by Olivia Dean
- "Hop"

Lily Butler

- "What I Got" by Sublime
- "The Butterfly Effect"

Brooks Dixon

- "Welcome to New York" by Taylor Swift
- "Anyone But You"

Delia Dixon

- "Love You Madly" by CAKE
- "Crazy, Stupid, Love"

Kennedi Fischer

- "I'm On Fire" by Bruce Springsteen
- "Zootopia"

Jacob Ridgway

- "Migraine" by BoyWithUke
- "Coonskin"

Brayden Staley

- "Fortnight" by Taylor Swift ft. Post Malone
- "Weapons"

Allison Stecklein

- "Up Up & Away" by Kid Cudi
- "Chad Powers"

Jessica Augustine

- "Bleed on Paper" by Eric Church
- "The Godfather"



Cartoon by Khandi Guzman

Being vaccinated benefits you, but also your larger community

Vaccination negligence has led to the recent revamp in measles cases in our country. Vaccinations prevent the spread of diseases like measles, but this is only effective when at least 95 percent of the population participates, according to Harvard Health Publishing.

By American citizens neglecting their responsibilities to get vaccinated against serious diseases, they are not only jeopardizing their own health but also placing vulnerable individuals at risk.

Misinformation seems as contagious as spreadable diseases, with distrust forming around the validity of vaccines. For instance, many parents fear that their children may develop autism from getting vaccinations. A study in 1998 claimed that increases in vaccine rates was tied to higher autism diagnoses. However, this study used insufficient data from just 12 children, the researcher was found to be fraudulent and the paper was retracted. Studies since then have consistently disproven any link between vaccines and autism, but misinformation is still being distributed.

Part of the misinformation has unfortunately been spread by the federal government. On Jan. 5, the Centers for Disease Control reduced recommended childhood vaccines from 17 to 11, eliminating Hepatitis A and B, Influenza, Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV), Rotavirus and some Meningitis vaccines. Experts have spoken out against this, saying that the change puts more children at risk, but the Trump administration has cited "peer" nations that recommend less vaccines than the United States. However, scientists have stated that recommendations are unique to each country and should not be mirrored by countries with different healthcare accessibilities and populations.

More distrust comes from the lack of information on how vaccines work. Vaccines do not *create* the illness that they are designed to prevent, but instead, they teach the body to fight the virus. Vaccines contain small, weakened virus fragments to train the immune system to build antibodies, so if the body encounters the disease, it can defeat it. Furthermore, vaccinating yourself protects those who are unable to be vaccinated or those more vulnerable, such as young children, older people or those with weakened immune systems, such as cancer patients.

If your own health is not reason enough to get vaccinated against serious diseases, please remember the people with a higher risk of feeling the effects of harmful diseases. Vaccines protect more than just you. They protect the community. However, this protection is weakened significantly by every person who fails to contribute.

Opinion of the Guidon Staff

Agree: 9

Disagree: 0

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Information/Policies

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The *Guidon* is a student-produced newsmagazine published to inform and entertain the Hays High community, to record the history of the school and to serve as an educational tool for journalism students. Under the supervision of a faculty adviser, journalism students have the opportunities to inform, investigate, entertain, interpret and evaluate in an open forum – all accepted functions of the traditional free press – and have the responsibilities to provide accurate, fair, objective and truthful coverage. Should unintentional errors in content be made, they will be retracted in the next issue of the school year.

The views expressed here are those of *The Guidon* staff and do not express the opinions of the USD 489 Board of Education, administration, faculty or staff. Advertisements must meet content, deadline and size requirements, and acceptance does not constitute an endorsement from the student staff or by the school district.

The staff welcomes letters to the editor, as long as they are not libelous, an invasion of privacy, obscene or copyright protected. Letters must be signed and must include the writer's name, address and phone number.

The *Guidon* print edition earned the Kansas Scholastic Press Association All-Kansas Award in 2009, 2010, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2018, 2019, 2021, 2022, 2024 and 2025; received the National Scholastic Press Association Pacemaker Award in 2009; was an NSPA Pacemaker Finalist in 2009 and 2011; and received the NSPA First Class Award in 2012, 2018, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025.

Other policies are available upon request by contacting adviser Jessica Augustine at jaugustine@usd489.com.

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MOVIES OF THE MONTH

WITH JACOB RIDGWAY

Columnist reviews social commentary film, classic musical movie

“Wizards” (1977)

Despite being an animated movie and having a PG rating, this almost 50-year-old science fantasy film is far from something to show children.

Written, directed and produced by filmmaker Ralph Bakshi, who was controversial for taking cartoons from fun and silly animated shows for children to abrasive and rude social commentary for adults, “Wizards” features a post-apocalyptic Earth that was devastated by a nuclear war.

Immediately, a lot of parallels with the real world can be seen in the film. In particular, the connections to the Cold War, such as the paranoia felt during that time, are seen throughout this film.

In addition, the main villain’s goal of making mutated humans the dominant race above the elves, fairies and gnomes – yes, this film is kind of weird – echoes the rhetoric of extremist or totalitarian groups, such as the Nazis.



Jacob Ridgway
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On top of its strong messages about the real world, “Wizards” also offers a great story, good direction, entertaining characters and 2D animation that holds up exceptionally well today, despite being nearly 50 years old and made on a budget of \$2 million, which would be equivalent to \$10.6 million today – less than a tenth of the budget of the average modern Pixar film.

While it has some problems, including the pacing feeling sluggish at the beginning and then feeling rushed at the end, plus some risqué Bakshi jokes that just did not land for me, I still love this film. 8/10.

“Chicago” (2002)

If ever there was a musical film that best fits the word “style,” it would be “Chicago.”

This 2002 film is an adaptation of the 1975 Broadway stage musical by the same name, which itself was yet another adaptation of the 1926 play by the same name.

The film version “Chicago” follows stardom-seeking housewife Roxie Hart,

played by actress Renée Zellweger, who is arrested for the murder of the man she was having an affair with. During the film, Roxie attempts to prove herself as innocent while also rising to fame.

One clear strength of this film is the amazing vocal performances for the equally spectacular songs, with my personal favorites being “We Both Reached for the Gun” and “Cell Block Tango.”

Another strength is the film’s direction, which includes all sorts of flare and style that evokes the 1920s feel of the film and adds to how great this film is. Despite being director Rob Marshall’s first feature film, he knocked it out of the park with his direction. (His falloff as a leading director after this film should be studied in a lab, honestly.)

It is no wonder that this movie won Best Picture at the 2003 Oscars, being the last musical to win the award. 9/10, go check it out if you have not seen it.

Do you have an old or new movie you want me to review? Email me at 27jridgway@usd489.com with your suggestions!

Area residents must support local businesses first for Hays to grow

In urban cities, you will find chain business after chain business, as places such as Academy Sports, McDonald’s and Target line the streets. In rural towns, you will find locally owned businesses, such as a small boutique or a grocery store.

As the largest town in the local area, Hays has almost mastered a balance, but there is some room for improvement, as both chain businesses and local businesses are important to the area economy.

For food, Hays has fast-food chains, such as McDonald’s, Subway, Wendy’s and more, and it has sit-down chains, such as Applebee’s, IHOP or Old Chicago. However, Hays also has great local restaurants, ranging from fast food, like JD’s Chicken, Taco Shop or Vernie’s, to Gella’s, Jalisco’s and Thirsty’s for dine-in.

For the dine-in side, it would be nice to have more options, as there are actually very few national restaurants in Hays. Many people wonder why Hays cannot get restaurants like Buffalo Wild Wings, Olive Garden, Texas Roadhouse or others. Having those as options would add to the offerings Hays provides.

On the fast-food side, there has been talk about getting a Chick-fil-A, but is it ever going to happen? I would not necessarily be mad if it did not because we have plenty of fast-food restaurants. And, something to consider is, if Hays would add a Chick-fil-A, it may take away business from local options we have, such as JD’s Chicken.

To make Hays grow, we need more support for the delicious options we have, rather than bringing in yet another fast-food chain. Instead of trying to lure more greasy, unhealthy drive-thrus by the interstate, it would be nice to see growth throughout the town, including local, family restaurants.

It is also important that residents support local entertainment venues. Hays has Centennial Lanes for bowling, The Fox for concerts, Hays Aquatic Park for swimming and Precision Valley for golf-related activities, but beyond that, there are few entertainment options anymore.

Last April, AMC Theatre shut down – and years ago, Hays actually supported two movie theaters, one at the mall and one at the Fox. The AMC Theatre was a spot that provided something to do for all ages, and since its closing, area residents have had to drive to Russell to watch movies at Dream Theater, which is volunteer run.

Hays could really benefit from having a theater open again, which there has been rumors of, but nothing has happened yet. It could also benefit from having other entertainment, or else, if the options continue to dwindle, Hays will just become another rest-stop town along I-70 with only fast-food restaurants, gas stations and hotels.

The bottom line is, for Hays to grow, area residents must support existing businesses, especially our local businesses, to start. Otherwise, we will not only lose those local businesses, but also never lure bigger businesses.



Joslyn Bates
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MINDSET

MIND GAMES

Athletes must prepare not only physically, but also mentally for games

By Brooks Dixon
29bdixon@usd489.com

The crowd is screaming, the clock is ticking, and the season is riding on the shoulders of one player. However, the battle is not just between the two teams; it is also inside the player's head.

Athletes train physically to perform their best, but the mental aspect of playing sports matters as much as – if not more than, at times – the physical aspect.

A 2023 Health Psychology Research study reported that 91 percent of student athletes said they felt stressed by their sports, with 58 percent reporting “extreme amount of stress.” According to UWill Mental Health & Wellness, the main stressors include feeling pressured to perform well by others, feeling pressured to perform well for college recruitment; fearing injuries and finding balance between athletics and other parts of life.

“[Stressors] from school and sports draw my attention away from what I need to be focusing on in games,” freshman Piper Harris said.

These stressors can take their toll on student athletes. Mentally, anxiety and depression have become the most common mental disorders in athletes, according to the British Journal of Sports Medicine. Physically, stress can also lead to increased sustained muscle tension. This tension can increase stiffness and decrease flexibility, making athletes more prone to injuries, such as sprains, strains and tears.

Because of the impacts of these different stressors, it is important that athletes find ways to adjust their mindsets to curb any stress. Sports Medicine professionals at St. Charles Health System (SCHS) recommend various ways for student athletes to prepare mentally.

First, visualization helps athletes to rehearse actions and imagine results so they calm nerves and react instinctively while playing. SCHS suggests spending 10 to 15 minutes before competitions to visualize “game scenarios, including successful plays, winning moments and unexpected challenges.”

Alongside visualizing good outcomes, positive self-talk benefits athletes by increasing confidence and decreasing anxiety. SCHS says athletes should write down positive affirmations and “replace phrases like ‘I can’t’ or ‘What if I fail?’ with affirmations such as ‘I’ve got this’ or ‘I am prepared and capable.’”

“I try to stay positive when I am nervous by focusing on what I am good at,” senior Jude Hileman said.

After using visualization and self-talk, having pre-game routines signals athletes that it is time to focus. The key is, according to SCHS, to “develop a consistent pre-game routine that includes both physical and mental preparation.”

“I listen to music, and 30 minutes out from a game, I listen to one or two specific songs with a friend,” freshman Aiden Burd said about his football pre-game routine. “After that, we listen to the coach’s speech, then we go out to play.”

Next, meditation benefits athletes by training the mind to be present, rather than to drift off. LinkedIn Life Coach Paul Petrone wrote an article about how basketball player Kobe Bryant used meditation, quoting Bryant as saying, “It’s like having an anchor. If I don’t [meditate], it feels like I’m chasing the day, as opposed to being controlled and dictating the day.” For young athletes, they can meditate by taking about 10 minutes daily in a quiet environment to focus on how they are breathing and how their body is feeling in the moment.

Box breathing is one especially helpful breathing exercise, SCHS says. To do this exercise, “inhale for four seconds, hold for four seconds, exhale for four seconds and hold for another four seconds [and] repeat until you feel more relaxed.”


Likewise, Progressive Muscle Relaxation can help athletes release their tension and reduce their anxiety. SCHS suggests practicing this by “tensing a muscle group for five to 10 seconds, then slowly releasing the tension [and] moving through your body, focusing on each muscle group.”

While there are many techniques athletes can use, the important thing is that they do find ways that work for them.

“I prepare before I am even at the game,” junior baseball player Keenan Brazda said. “I think everything through before I get on the field. I try to empty out my mind and have a blank space. While most people listen to hype-up music, I like to listen to more calming music.”

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ATHLETE
SPOTLIGHT

Boys Basketball

senior Dawson Ruder

In his final year of basketball, senior Dawson Ruder has been a key player for the Indians. On Feb. 6, he earned the distinction of scoring 1,000 points while in high school, being only one of three athletes in program history to achieve that.

What do you hope your legacy is with the program?

"I am most proud of the relationships and connections I have built. While I value the championships we won and my personal accomplishments, I don't want those to define my legacy. I want to be remembered as someone people enjoyed being around."

What are your plans after graduation?

"I always planned to play college basketball, but recently that's changed. I love the game, but finishing my last season with my friends feels like the perfect way to end it. As great as my career has been, I'm at peace knowing it's coming to a close. I plan to study Sports Management in college."

Reporting by Brayden Staley

FACILITIES

Athletes involved in spring sports season have opportunity to use new facilities

By Brayden Staley
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In 2022, voters passed a \$143.5 million bond, which included a new high school and upgraded athletic facilities. While the stadium and the two gyms have been on display already, more new facilities will be showcased this spring.

Track and Field

Track and field has never hosted a home meet because of limitations on parking and space for the teams and events. However, new track and field facilities were added, so that Hays High can host a home meet on April 2.

"The location will be a benefit, just to have kids not have to walk all the way across the parking lot," head coach Kip Keeley said.

The bond also included an indoor track above the Maroon Gym, which will allow athletes to practice, even when there are inclement weather conditions, such as rain or wind.

"We have got great facilities, so anytime you have great facilities, it makes it easier to get good training in," Keeley said.

Keeley said that having the new track and field facilities will hopefully draw younger students into the program and will hopefully allow Hays High to host bigger meets.

"I think it will be good for the future because more people will be able to see our track on a daily basis, just walking through the school," Keeley said. "Younger kids will be able to watch high schoolers compete, and it gives them something to look forward to when they are in high school. We are also going to try to host regionals for sure and maybe try to get Fort Hays State [University] over here to host their home meet, too."

Softball

Like track, softball has not had a home field on the campus to host games; the team had its home games at Dusty Glassman Ballfields for more than 30 years. However, a new softball field was constructed between the existing baseball field and the middle school track.

"It will be a big move for us to have our own facilities that we get to use every day," head coach Abby Gillan said. "It will also be good for our athletes to not have to travel off campus."

To help curb issues with wet spring weather, the field used artificial turf, and the facility includes other advancements for the team.

"A part we are most excited about is that we have two large batting tunnels," Gillan said. "We also have two bullpens with two pitching lanes on both the home and visitor sides."

Tennis

While Hays High School had tennis courts, the tennis facilities were also upgraded, but the improvements were not included in the bond, coming at a cost of \$687,937.

Before the upgrades, tennis practiced and competed on four courts, just east of the old building, and while the new building was being constructed, the teams used FHSU courts.

"We will be able to practice after school, rather than 6 p.m. at Fort Hays, which will greatly benefit athletes," head coach Alicia Plante said.

The four old courts received renovations to repair cracks, restripe lines and replace posts and nets, plus four new courts were added.

"I am most excited about the number of courts available," Plante said. "This will allow for greater ability to split courts in practice between singles and doubles or JV and varsity to have more differentiation during drills."



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AWARDS

THE OSCARS

Film enthusiast provides predictions about winners at the upcoming 98th annual Academy Awards

By Jacob Ridgway
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Nominees for the 98th Academy Awards, also known as the Oscars, to honor 2025 films were revealed on Jan. 22, with the awards ceremony coming up on March 15 at 6 p.m. local time on ABC.

I have been following the Oscars for several years and am looking forward to this year's awards, so here are my predictions for the winners in each category.

Actor in a Leading Role

I preferred Michael B. Jordan in "Sinners," and he seems to be the frontrunner for this major award. I also quite liked Leonardo DiCaprio and Timothée Chalamet, though I am quite confident in Jordan taking this award.

Actor in a Supporting Role

I am not as confident about this award as the last one, but I am rooting for Jacob Elordi for "Frankenstein." His performance was not only my favorite for this award, but also my favorite acting performance of 2025.

Actress in a Leading Role

Emma Stone in "Bugonia" was probably my favorite actress performance of 2025, and while it is not impossible for her to win, it is more likely that Jessie Buckley wins for "Hamnet." This comes down to the type of movies that the Academy prefers. "Bugonia" is a black comedy thriller, while "Hamnet" is a historical drama, and the Academy favors dramas.

Actress in a Supporting Role

This is the acting award that I am most confident in predicting.

Teyanna Taylor in "One Battle After Another" turned into the film's star, which is extra impressive by the fact that she is only in about half of it. No other nominee comes close to her.

Animated Feature Film

This is one of my favorite categories, and one that I feel is a near given. "KPop Demon Hunters" took over the internet and is easily the most popular film out of the nominees. I will be flabbergasted if it does not win in this category.

Directing

I loved Paul Thomas Anderson's directing in "One Battle After Another" and Ryan Coogler's directing in "Sinners" almost equally and would be happy if either won, but I expect the award to go to Coogler. But, the film that really had the best directing is "Hamnet," directed by Chloe Zhao, though I do not expect it to win, based on the Academy's history of giving this award.

Film Editing

This might be one of my hotter takes, but I want "F1" to take this. While it is not an especially popular film, I think its editing was the best part about it and was better than "Sinners," which is the other film in this category that I would like to win, and honestly expect to win.

Best Picture

This award marks the night's climax. While I would love "Frankenstein" to win, as it is Best Picture in my heart, the only two contenders are "One Battle After Another" and "Sinners." If you have been paying attention, you know that I expect "Sinners" to win.

Scan for more Oscar predictions



Anticipated Albums

- BTS - "ARIRANG"
- Flea - "Honora"
- Melania Martinez - "HADES"
- Morrissey - "Make-Up Is a Lie"
- Charlie Puth - "Whatever's Clever!"
- Harry Styles - "Kiss All The Time. Disco Occasionally."
- Ye - "BULLY"



Future Films

- March 6
 - "The Bride!"
 - "Hoppers"
 - "Youngblood"
- March 13
 - "The Breadwinner"
 - "Reminders of Him"
- March 20
 - "Late Shift"
 - "Project Hail Mary"
 - "The Pout-Pout Fish"
 - "Wardriver"
- Feb. 27
 - "Holy Days"
 - "I Swear"



Witty Wisecracks

- What is March's favorite appetizer?
Spring rolls!
- Why is Daylight Saving Time Marty McFly's favorite time of year?
He can go "Back to the Future!"
- What do they call March 14 at Apple?
Apple Pi Day!
- What does a shamrock say to a leprechaun on March 17?
"Irish you a happy St. Patrick's Day!"
- Why did the flower break up with winter?
It just needed some more space to grow on its own!
- How do you organize the perfect spring party?
You 'leaf' it to the professionals!