

The Signal



The Official Newspaper of Fenton High School

Friday, May 8, 2020

Governor Pritzker visits Fenton for Press Conference

By Jenny Aguilar

On Friday March 6, 2020, students and staff of Fenton High School welcomed Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker, who was conducting a press conference regarding his recent budget proposal. Throughout the day, students were chatting about the prestigious visitor since the majority of them wouldn't have the chance to even see the governor, much less be at the press conference.

Two weeks prior, Governor Pritzker made his 2020 budget address where he announced a \$2.5 million budget proposal to help students with the cost of AP tests.

In the same address, Pritzker praises Fenton High School for its achievements in AP classes, specifically making the classes more available to all students.

He said, "We should follow Fenton's lead and make it easier for more students to earn college credit in high school."

To begin the press conference, Senior Crystal Martinez shared her own experience with AP classes and what it's like to be a first-generation American.

Martinez elaborates on the importance of AP classes, saying, "For me, AP classes [are] a way for me to be able to challenge myself, surround



Photo by Emily Trzmielewski

myself with people who can help me grow mentally and education-wise, and also letting me have a way to see how a college course could be."

After Martinez's eloquent speech, Governor Pritzker began celebrating Fenton's success with its AP classes, such as mentioning its title as AP district of the year from 2019. Pritzker then went on to the real point of his appearance at Fenton: to talk about the proposed \$2.5 million budget, which, in part, would further assist students taking AP tests.

Other speakers during the conference include, Illinois Senate President Don Harmon, State Representative Kathy Willis, and

Superintendent James Ongtengco.

While no new information about the proposed budget was revealed, many people do seem grateful about the added financial aid. Martinez believes that it will be beneficial to many students.

She said, "I'm lucky enough to be able to have my fees waived so I don't have to pay the full amount but some people do and it's a lot of money."

Another student who shares this same sentiment is Senior Dalia Alcantara.

She states, "I do believe that the extra money would benefit students. I know some kids take more

than just one AP class and would like to take the tests. Those tests are expensive so [the proposed budget] definitely would help students pay those tests off. And making it possible for students who can't afford the tests."

Alcantara and the rest of her AP Computer Science Principles class were lucky enough to be invited to attend the press conference.

Alcantara and Martinez also agree it's the honor to be present at the event but wish that there had been more student involvement. Martinez wished more students could have met the governor and attended the press conference. Pritzker was in the building for less than an hour.

Alcantara comments on the conference, saying, "I enjoyed hearing him speak, the only thing I didn't like was why didn't the students get to ask some questions? Like, I know my classmates and I would've liked to ask him some questions."

There is no doubt that the proposed \$2.5 million budget will have a greatly positive effect on students all over the state, Fenton being the example of what could happen at other high schools, but listening to the voices of the students being affected by these propositions could cause an even greater change.

Students United Annual Talent Show Builds Community

By Malien Tingpalpong

STUNT or Fenton's Students United hosted the Annual So You Think You're All That? Talent Show. Students and teachers alike sang, danced, played instruments, and performed their hearts out to a wide-ranging audience of the community. The acts were judged by a panel of students and judges. In the end, sophomore Joan Hitt won the talent show with her singing performance. Seniors Alejandra Garcia and Isayah Willis received second place for their duet, and junior Carolyn Stadnyk earned third place with her lyrical dance routine.

Senior Alejandra Garcia gained newly found confidence with her performance skills after performing for the community. She states, "I've always been scared to sing in front of people and share my voice to others, but as I started singing more I realized maybe it's time to put myself out there now."

Garcia explains despite the malfunctions that occurred that night with technological issues, she is still proud of the duet they sang together. Garcia elaborates, "Even though we got second, which I was super pleased with, I was still proud with our performance besides the malfunctions of the microphones, we still made it through our performance confident and strong."

The show featured a wide variety of acts showcasing student cultures and interests from dancing to rapping. Sophomore Hema Patel makes note of her favorite act featuring Mexican folk dancers saying, "It was something that I



Photo courtesy of Rick Kambic

haven't seen at Fenton's talent show ever. It was interesting to learn more about the dance and their culture."

Senior and STUNT President Karen Villegas began planning the large community event in early January. Villegas had the opportunity to host the talent show alongside Senior Megan Jobe, musing, "I loved hosting this year. It was good to get out of my own comfort zone, and I was relieved to have Megan hosting with me." Villegas comments on the talent of Fenton students stating, "I loved the acts, everyone is so talented and I hope many of them return next year."

Speech Team State Trip Deemed a Success

By Alexandria De Vito

Speech season has closed with a very successful cast of characters. Four members of the team qualified for state, Malien Tingpalpong, Kilien Tingpalpong, Jesus Amador, and Karissa Lara. Tingpalpong, a senior, came back to Fenton holding the title of State Champion in Original Oratory, which she says has been her goal since she began speech her freshman year. She says the opportunity to go to Peoria to compete for a third and final time is, "simply crazy."

Her coach, Coach Melissa Feinberg, says that her expectation for Malien this season was for her to never stop memorizing. Feinberg says that she and Malien have spent much time speaking together about the world around them; these talks are usually the basis of inspiration for Malien's speeches as well as other speeches throughout the team.

Feinberg says that her goal for the students is never for them to reach a certain level of competitive status, which sometimes can be damaging, considering that judging will always be subjective. But her goal will always be for the students to continue to improve past the point of a comfortable performance. Both coach Feinberg and Hendricks believe that the student's main priority should never be qualifying for state. That is definitely something

to work towards, but to only focus on that throughout the season is not the mindset the coaches want students to be in. Feinberg says that as long as a student never stops pushing towards becoming better, that's an accomplishment all on its own, sometimes that results in a state qualification, sometimes it won't.

English teacher and speech coach Nicole Hendricks is immensely proud of the team this year. She says that Fenton is a school that other schools look up to in the world of speech. Fenton is a smaller school, but has talented enough students to compete with the big dogs. She also stresses that seeing things from the students' perspectives is always an eye-opening experience for her, seeing things with fresh eyes will always be an inspiration that pushes her forward as a coach.

She loves to see the students work, she says their enthusiasm feeds the room, especially because it's material the students care about. Hendricks also recalls how her high school speech team affected her in high school. She understands how hard it may be on the students and admires their perseverance.

Karissa Lara, another state qualifier, also says the state experience was amazing, as well as an amazing learning experience. She



Photo courtesy of Nicole Hendricks

expresses how fortunate she feels to have performed in "an atmosphere of such talented individuals."

Lara also says that many, many hours went into prepping for state, practicing after school and even during class! One thing she struggled

with was letting go of insecurities in order to give more natural performances, but, she says, both coaches helped her become a different person for her performances, while still keeping her head in the game, which obviously proved successful.

AP English Takes Enlightening Field Trip to Hemingway House

By Malien Tingpalpong

On Wednesday, March 11, AP English 4 seniors went on a field trip to the Hemingway House in Oak Park to enhance their study of author Ernest Hemingway. The classes were separated into two groups in an alternating schedule. Each class enjoyed touring the Victorian-style mansion of Ernest Hemingway's childhood residence, taking in an in-depth biography of the Hemingway family's life in Oak Park. Groups were taken through the house, visiting the rooms of Ernest and his siblings, his parents' individual offices and studies, and the secret entrance to Ernest Hall's, Ernest's maternal grandfather, chambers.

Senior Natalie Natiello comments on the details of the home saying, "My favorite part was definitely getting to see every little detail of the rooms like the unique wallpaper and the delicate cribs."

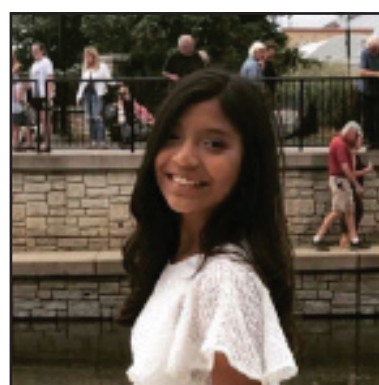
The tour emphasized parts of the Hemingway family's history not well known. Senior Karolina Zawitkowska explains her thoughts touring the house stating, "It was way cooler than what I was expecting. It's crazy to imagine that this was a regular house where people lived. I loved learning about his family, especially his mother because of her artistic background even if she and her son butted heads."

The class also visited the Oak Park Public Library, where a historian gathered original documents and archives from the Hemingway family. Pictures, a pair of shoes, scandalous letters, and pieces of art were on display for the class to take a deeper dive into the lives of the family. The most popular archive among the seniors was the breakup letter sent to 19-year-old Ernest from his nurse, Agnes von Kurowsky, during World War I.

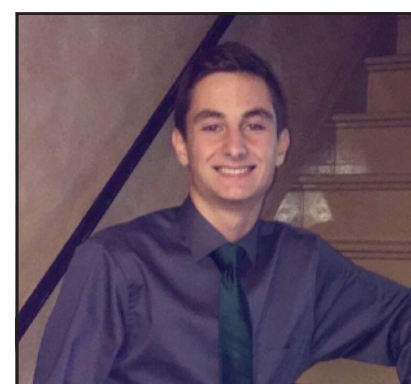
Natiello elaborates on the letter stating, "I think we can all say the best archive was the breakup letter. It was so interesting to see how her language to end the relationship could similarly compare to what someone would say nowadays."

Senior Jacob Zielinski comments on the entirety trip, learning much more than he anticipated about the famous author when commenting, "I really enjoyed my time at the Hemingway house because it was a great experience being able to connect what we do in class to real life."

Senior Edition: What will you miss most about Fenton?



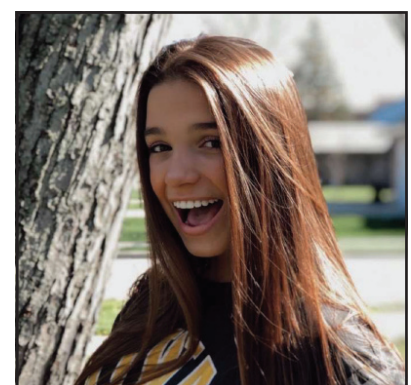
"I will miss calculus because it was fun to overcome struggles with such intelligent amazing people." (Karen Villegas)



"I'll miss the atmosphere when walking into a classroom at Fenton." (Maciej Sporna)



"I'll miss the band room, the weight room, the ARC. Places where I had the most fun." (Julian Klimczyk)



"I'll miss the most amazing teachers and friends, the school spirit, and the family feeling Fenton gave me." (Abby Subach)

Remote Learning Gives Students Chance to Improve Grade, No Repercussions

By Lissette Hernandez

Whether you admit it or not, chances are you've probably missed being at school at least once throughout these past few weeks. Students and staff are all missing each other, our extra-curricular activities, and so forth, and we can all most definitely agree that a Zoom meeting isn't the best way of learning. Still, during this time, we shouldn't let these less than ideal circumstances jeopardize our education.

This is a time where we should work towards self-improvement from maintaining our health to developing a new skill, all while continuing our school work. We have all the time in the world at the moment, so we must continue on our learning, or else we'll be losing brain cells, forget all the skills we learned during the school year, and most importantly, we won't be ready for next year.

There are mixed opinions about remote learning across all aspects. Still, some of the advantages of doing remote learning are that it teaches us responsibility as it does personal growth, it allows us to appreciate in-school learning, and it gives students a chance to impact their grades positively.

Remote learning teaches us personal growth and responsibility because we have the choice as to when, where, how we want to study, and if we want to continue learning. With our inability to be at school for over a month, it makes students and staff value in-school learning and realize that we work better together when we are in the same environment. And according to the remote learning plan, no student will receive a failing grade, which means our grades can only go up from where they are.

The situations we are in are not ideal, but if we maintain an optimistic mindset, we can work towards self-improvement. Whether we want to continue learning is up to us, but remote learning seems to have positive aspects.

The staff of the *Signal* wishes
Congratulations to the

CLASS OF
2020

Mixed Reviews Over College Board At-Home AP

By Malien Tingpalpong

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about unforeseen changes to many areas of normal life. For high school students, classes have transitioned online by utilizing platforms like Zoom, Google Classroom, and many different forms of technology. Yet, there are many problems that have arisen through this change. Some teachers and professors have found ways to safeguard plagiarism or cheating through some Google applications, cheating apps, or attending an online call while testing. In terms of grades, some schools, like Fenton have opted to keep students' grades stagnant, with the opportunity to only improve your scores. Some students find learning the material at home difficult due to at-home distractions, technological issues, or simply not learning the concepts appropriately.

But what about standardized testing? Millions of high school students across the country have committed and paid money in order to take multiple forms of standardized testing for many reasons: To earn credit and opt out of college courses, to impress college admissions, to apply for college, or to prove they have mastered the course material. Students have

ordered testing booklets for multiple courses, spent hours with a tutor, and viewed hours upon hours of SAT prep videos. From books to tutoring, these items to succeed in the testing can add up. What's troubling is how these expenses stem from the same source. The not-for-profit controlling all aspects of students' learning is the College Board. The College Board administers forms of standardized testing from AP tests to SAT tests and subject tests, supposedly supporting and "expanding access to higher education" for all students. This not-for-profit has a revenue of 1.07 billion USD.

The College Board has taken steps to continue on with Advanced Placement (AP) testing during the pandemic because, as stated on the College Board website, "We surveyed 18,000 AP students to see if they still wanted the opportunity to test this year. Their answer: a resounding yes."

The newly-adapted AP Exams will be taken at home and feature a condensed version of the year's material, allow open book notes, and span 45 minutes long with only free response questions. If there are students who choose not to take the exams, the College Board has given students the opportunity for a refund.

For teachers, there have been some challenges connecting with students through remote, virtual learning. Often, the time spent in class is crucial to prepping for the exam. And for these abbreviated tests, some students are asked to complete the most difficult parts of the normal exam.

AP French teacher Mrs. Kyra Behnke explains, "Students usually spend at least 30 minutes a day speaking French to classmates, and even with Zoom, that face-to-face interpersonal speaking has been cut drastically."

When asked about the preparation of students in the material for the exams, Behnke continues, "These tasks will be just like we have practiced all year, so despite the fact that these are typically the tasks that students find the most challenging, they should still feel prepared for the exam."

Senior Adam Kashif has positive thoughts about online exams for the AP tests and is glad the College Board is still offering testing.

He states, "I think it's really cool that they're doing the online exams for people, setting aside their company as a whole, it's cool to see how the opportunity is still there."

Kashif continues to discuss the open-book nature of the AP exams saying, "I think open book exams are pretty nice, in this world you can really google anything and it isn't as important to have things memorized, it's understanding and applying the concepts that matters, which is solely evaluated with open book."

Some people believe the College Board is taking the wrong approach with education in general, regardless of their decision to continue offering online, open-book exams.

Senior Jimmy Palumbo mentions, "Unprecedented times call for unprecedented solutions. Unfortunately, I think the College Board is taking the wrong approach."

Palumbo continues to explain how the College Board's purpose does not genuinely reflect what education should focus on: learning.

He states, "Modern academia has been tainted by an obsession with grades, scores, and certification. AP classes should be about enriched learning. They're not. They're about passing a test. I feel like I spend more time in AP classes learning how to take tests than learning material. In that sense, the College Board's decision isn't surprising but a sad reflection of what formal education has become."

Cartoon by Jesus Amador