

# The Signal



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## Palumbo, Elizondo Compete at IHSA Cross Country State

By Malien Tingpalpong

On Saturday, November 9th, the boys cross country team competed in the IHSA Class 2A Cross Country Championships. Unfortunately, the team fell short of qualifying as a whole for the state meet. Luckily, seniors Jimmy Palumbo placed 30th at the Sectional meet, finishing with his personal best, while Sam Elizondo placed 7th place, both earning the opportunity to compete at state. Palumbo commented on his first cross country state experience stating, "The cross country state experience was one of the best experiences of my high school career from the trip to staying with my teammates to the actual competition itself, it was just phenomenal."

Coach Patrick Fritsch commented on the entire season saying, "My overall thoughts on

the season were positive. We saw improvement in our Top 7 compared to last year." Fritsch is optimistic for the years to come as well seeing as there are strong underclassmen that will join their top spots. This year, especially, was a challenge due to the sheer amount of strong upperclassmen that graduated. In any case, the two seniors pulled through by performing competitively at the tournaments, and eventually by the end of their season qualified for a competitive state tournament.

Senior Sam Elizondo, who also competed at state his junior year, elaborates on the hard work necessary to qualify saying, "I knew I had a lot of catching up to do because our team lost top seniors, so I really had to push myself to be as fast as they were."

This year was not only challenging for Fenton competitors,

but also for Chicago Public Schools students who were not able to compete because of IHSA rules. This complicated the placements at the regional, sectional, and even state meet. Palumbo says, "CPS kids could not compete for regionals, but the night before sectionals a lot of different schools were allowed to compete. This completely changed the competition because schools that did not qualify went on to the state competition."

The day of the meet, the course was very "muddy" so all the runners had to "mentally prepare themselves for the conditions that were likely to present themselves during the race" as stated by Coach Fritsch. At the state meet in Peoria, Palumbo placed 131st and Elizondo placed 76th. Elizondo discusses his thoughts on his cross country career



Photo courtesy of Patrick Fritsch

stating, "Being my last year, I think I learned that if you really put your mind to it and you really dedicate yourself to it, you'll do well."

## The Pros and Cons of Evidence Based Grading

By Morelia Aburto

Every new experience comes with its negatives and positives. It's hard to believe that a grading system such as evidence-based grading (EBG) has positives after all the negatives students focus on. Although many students didn't like this new change to a traditional grading system, many found it better. With EBG, students better their learning. Students tend to focus more on their grades than learning the subject. That often leads to having bad grades. If a student focuses on actually understanding the material, their academic ability will be at its fullest. Michelle Papanicolaou, Fenton's director of curriculum, explains EBG "defines what students are working towards in understanding in their classes, leads to much clearer feedback to students on how they can get better."

In a traditional grading system doesn't really reflect a student's actual learning. An average in the class, which is what the traditional grading system represents, doesn't help a student understand the places where work can be done. EBG breaks up the curriculum into sections. Grading each section as growth is shown.

Another advantage is students found it easier to bump up their grades. While knowing what they needed to work on, and studying that section, a student can easily show growth. EBG reflects the growth of a student in areas of the curriculum. Sophomore Riya Patel found that "if you start poorly and show you are getting better, and the teachers know you have been showing growth, you can bump up your grade." If you know you have been getting better in a certain area, and you show that growth to your teacher, your grades will increase. Students can easily advocate for their learning, showing teachers evidence of how they mastered an area. In a traditional grading system, some teachers don't allow retakes so if you show you haven't really understood a subject by getting an F on a test, that F will stick.

We as humans tend to want to stick to tradition. But if there's one thing that we as humans have learned is that traditional beliefs are meant to be broken. EBG has flaws, but so does a traditional grading system. We don't have to abruptly change to a completely new system. In looking for a specific and better grading environment, an EBG system is definitely the one to look to.

By Jady Golz

It is implemented at Blackhawk and Wood Dale. It's been placed in many schools throughout the country. It's known as evidence-based grading (EBG). In brief, it allows the student and teacher to see the student's skill set in a broken-down format. Its intentions are in the right place, but there are many downfalls. EBG should not be implemented in Fenton High School because it is irrelevant, ill-defined, and too harsh. To begin, most colleges don't use EBG. This can be troublesome because colleges will have to convert grades between the systems. Of course, there are computer systems out there to help out, but there's still room for error.

On the note of conversion, EBG conversion to traditional grading isn't clearly defined throughout the school. Freshman Kelly G. states, "I think [EBG]'s trash because I like to know what my grades are. Like, A-B-C-D-E-F-and not 1-2-3-4 'cause what kinda... what is that? I also want to know my percentages. In English I don't know what that is." Kelly, along with others, wish that they could know what their grade is exactly.

EBG is too harsh on the students. In an interview with Michelle Papanicolaou, Fenton's director of curriculum, she explains the grading system to me with a hypothetical scenario. In relation to a hypothetical student in English, she states, "Maybe this student does really well in reading, and maybe they're awesome with collaboration, and they are great with presentation too. But their writing, they're not showing any evidence. With a traditional system this would average out. And this student would get themselves maybe a B or a C, right? And the type of system we're looking at this same student, it wouldn't average out. They would either...this one would be a D because of the logic system."

With EBG the student would be standing with an overall grade of D in English because they couldn't master one subject. This is unfair to many students because that student may be being pushed too hard. A student can't be proficient at something that they're incapable of doing at a particular time. They may be able to squeeze by but that doesn't mean they're learning anything. If we want our students to have a happy and stable learning environment, we need to stick with traditional grades.



# "Summer Matters" Program Aids Difficult Transition

By Jenny Aguilar

It's no surprise Fenton is a cultural mosaic, with students coming from a variety of countries, like Mexico and Poland. To accommodate for these cultural diversities, Fenton's ESL team has developed ways to help these new students adapt to going to an American high school. Summer Matters aims to make these students feel more comfortable about attending school in the fall. Fenton's ESL team has been invited to present their program at the 43rd Annual Statewide Conference for Teachers Serving Linguistically and Culturally Diverse Students, known as Multilingual Illinois, presented by the Illinois Association for Multilingual Multicultural Education, or IAMME. Fenton has welcomed students from all over the world such as Mexico, Poland, Russia, Romania, Ukraine, Ghana, and the Philippines. Over the last four years, however, there has been an immense increase of Guatemalan immigrants immigrating to the Bensenville area, specifically coming from the area of Huehuetenango.

ESL coordinator Michelle Rodriguez explains how over the past couple of years Fenton has been adapting to the influx in Guatemalan students: "Fenton is trying to expand its classes and accommodate [for the students]." The ESL program has expanded from about 15 students in past years to 40 students enrolled in the 2019-2020 school year. What makes these students stand out is their background. Many of the Guatemalan students grew up in Huehuetenango, Guatemala, an



Photo courtesy of Kate Ward

impoverished, rural area of the country. Because of this, many of them stop going to school around the fifth or sixth grade, some stopping even earlier, having only around a first or second grade education to help support their families.

Rodriguez says, "These students are different from our traditional newcomers. [They] are coming in with big gaps in education." She explains the difficulty in finding education material that is both suitable for their knowledge and age. And on top of all that, many of the students arrive only speaking their native Mayan dialect. This makes communication between the ESL teachers and students more difficult since there isn't a common language they both can speak. All of these factors make enrolling into an American high school a daunting task. "We take things for granted," Ms. Rodriguez says about our view on attending a school in the U.S. "Our newcomers don't have a lot of the

essentials."

That's where the idea for Summer Matters came in. During the one-week summer program, Guatemalan students learned about the basics of high school, such as their lockers, how to read a schedules, and using a Chromebook. Students are given the opportunity to walk around the school and develop a connection with the staff before classes begin in the fall. Along with a sneak peek at high school, the students were also taken on a tour of Bensenville to show them a variety of the community areas they have access to, like the bank, library, and Metra station.

This innovative program has gotten the attention of many people, NPR even writing its own article about the program. Fenton ESL teachers Ms. Pamela Panagakos, Mr. Alexis Herrera, Ms. Cindy Galecki and Ms. Rodriguez will be presenting their Summer Matters program at IAMME conference, Multilingual Illinois. Ms. Kate Ward, a prominent contributor

to the Summer Matters and ESL programs describes the event as an "annual regional conference for teachers of multilingual students. Teachers enter to show what they are doing."

Fenton's ESL and bilingual teachers have been attending the conference for years but this is the first time someone from Fenton is presenting. Being given this opportunity shows just how outstanding Fenton's ESL team is and how great the ESL program is.

The ESL team isn't stopping here, though: "We're hoping to expand the program from one week to two," says Ms. Rodriguez. Both Ms. Rodriguez and Ms. Ward want to find ways to incorporate the ESL students with the rest of the student body. Many teachers and students are unaware about the achievements the ESL team has accomplished; many only knowing about the programs existence.

Senior Becky Millard is one of the many students who is open to getting to know and being more involed with the ESL students: "I know that we have them, but they are kind of in the dark. A lot of people don't know about them." She explains a time where a next-door Bison Time teacher came in and asked if any of the students would be interested in just playing some board games with the ESL students.

As Ms. Ward says "Students are recognized for the culture they walk in with. They bring their own identity. Luck to have the opportunity in whatever way we can support them."

## Podcasts Showcase Unique Voices

By Lissette Hernandez

For the second year in a row, Mrs. Sara Pahl's and Ms. Abra Millman's Accelerated English 2 classes got the opportunity to create their own podcasts where they chose a topic to write about that was important to their life. Students got the opportunity to express themselves by using Audacity to help them achieve that, not only did they get to this but in order to celebrate their accomplishments they got their very own pizza party where they got to invite one other student to listen to their podcast.

Sophomore Alexa Toledo says, "Overall I really enjoyed the podcast party. It was a really fun experience to have, just having that time to relax and listen to all sorts of podcast. Everyone was really chill and the teachers really seemed to enjoy our podcasts." Millman also added, "The students spent a long time working on their productions each story was so unique so we wanted a celebration to advertise and share the stories that they recorded. For example, we had students talk about Mr. Rogers, veterans, and immigration." All in all, the sophomores put a lot of hard work into their podcasts and got the opportunity to be recognized by their peers, while enjoying some fresh pizza and getting the chance to be part of a raffle throughout all of the lunch periods.



Photo courtesy of Sara Pahl

## Students on Stage: Written, Directed, Created by Students

By Michelle Agyemang

Students on Stage is ready to perform! SOS, or Students on Stage, is a place where students can express themselves by creating their own shows. All their productions are "written, acted, and created by students" says director and sponsor, Dr. Mike Mitchell. SOS typically puts out all types of productions such as poems, short stories, monologues, and plays all written by students from Fenton.

This year the majority of the show is one-act plays that explore various topics. The entire anthology of performances are fully produced by students.

Students on Stage is the place to be when Fenton students have an interest in creating their own shows. In all other Fenton state productions, directors and teachers put together the production. With Students on Stage, students are able to have all the say in the productions. All the choices in acting or directing are made by the students.

Senior Megan Jobe says "I decided to join SOS because I love being on stage and this is another opportunity to improve my skills & perform."

Even if you don't have any interest in acting, there are open opportunities to be a director, writer, or crew member. Many students served in every role for this show.

Along being a creative outlet, SOS allows students to work together and grow bonds. By writing shows together, acting together, and creating sets together SOS lets students create strong connections with one another. By the end of the show, the entire cast is more like a family.

Sophomore Erica Ayala says, "I love working alongside my peers and getting to know everyone better." Students on Stage's performance of their hard work was on December 6th at 7:00 pm and was completely free of charge. They would love for you to be there!



# Riot Fest 2019 Recap: “It Changed My Musical Perspective”

By: Delilah Johnson

Riot Fest 2019 was possibly one of the biggest culture shocks I’ve had in awhile. There were so many different types of people coming from almost everywhere. People dressed head to toe in jean material, covered in pins and patches. Gay people, straight people, trans people, old people, young people, people somewhere in between. Everyone was here for the same reason, *the music*.

Riot fest is arguably Chicago’s most popular punk-rock festival. It started out as a purley-punk festival, but as its popularity grew, it became more widespread. From Ska-punk, pop-punk, to classic rock, screamo, and alternative. 2019 Riot Fest was from September 13-15.

“I don’t know who this band is,” a woman murmured from behind me, “but I guess it’ll be a surprise. I mean, these people seem to be excited about them”

I was standing in the middle of the crowd, waiting for Frank Iero and The Future Violents to play. When the couple behind me started talking, it almost gave me some sort of hope. People were discovering new music that they would enjoy. Frank Iero was the guitarist from MCR before they broke up, and that’s what I thought everyone knew him as, until I found out that some people were just here for discovery, and I loved that.

We watched this band called Skating Polly. The band was formed by a guitarist, a drummer, and a bassist. The lead singer, who also played bass, was a polar opposite from the guitarist. The bassist would jump and dance and scream as she played; She was the music. The guitarist, on the other hand, was into the music, but in a different way. The bassist was living the music, while the guitarist was feeling it. Even though the amount of band members was quite slim, their sound seemed to fill up the whole field. Their noise was loud, and the vocals were louder.

Frank Iero was the third band I saw that day. I was actually really proud of myself, because I think I got my Dad to enjoy his music. It usually tends to be the other way around. Frank Iero and The Future Violence is a mix between punk and alternative. One of my favorite members of the band, Kayleigh Goldsworthy, actually played violin for a few songs. It was something that I had never seen or heard before, but it mixed so well with the songs.

After our pork burrito meal, my dad and I were lucky enough to stumble upon a band called ‘Streetlight Manifesto’, the type of band that just sounds so good and so cool that they draw you in and you could listen to them for hours. Streetlight Manifesto is a ska punk band with a sickening horn section. The low notes of the bari sax and the high solos of the trumpet, mixed with the tenor and alto saxes, and the smooth trombone. It was so good and so engaging. The live performance was so captivating and it matched the energetic sound perfectly

The last band that I saw that day was Bikini Kill. One of my all-time favorite bands was reuniting at Riot Fest, and I was shaking in my boots (Timbs, to be exact). This was the experience of a lifetime. I got to see Kathleen Hanna jump and dance and scream in all her different voices. She was my *idol*. She didn’t care what anybody thought. She was there to send a message to her

listeners, and to have a good time. Bikini kill is a Riot Grrrl, or feminist punk, band. Bikini Kill are not only musicians, but have once been artists, and poets, opening feminist art shops and performing spoken word, doing anything to get their message across. This band is one of the most inspiring bands to me, and to not only see them play live, but to also be at their reunion show was one of the greatest experiences of my life

I was only at Riot Fest for one day, but I do have friends that went to the fest on the other dates. Adam Millard, a sophomore, said “It was my first time ever being at an actual concert, and it was cool that I got to see more than one band. I got to see a lot of bands that I liked, and it inspired me a lot. I can’t wait to go back next year!” Damian Quijas, a junior who was at the festival for all three days says “Riot Fest was amazing. Endless bands/artists with endless amounts of different people. Every day was something new. On the first day it’s nothing but pure excitement that makes you go crazy, especially since Blink182 was headlining that night. Saturday was especially memorable because a bunch of people, including myself, moshed over fire during ‘Andrew W.K.’’s set which was insane. Sunday was purely for just enjoying the music. Riot Fest may not be for everyone, but if it is for you.... you’ll love it!”

Riot Fest 2019 groundbreaking for me. It introduced me to a whole new world of people and music. It changed my musical perspective. Everything was original and different. There weren’t two bands that sounded the same. Without Riot Fest, I don’t think I would be interested in Ska, or Grunge Punk, or even Bikini Kill as much as I was before the Fest. September 15th, 2019, will be engraved as a memory in my mind forever, and hopefully one day, i’ll be up on one of those stages. But, at least for now, I know my plans for next September.



Photo By Damian Quijas

## System Adds Diversity, Equity to AP Program

By Michelle Agyemang

Fenton High School has been on a journey to develop and better their equity when it comes to AP classes. Advanced placement classes provide academic rigor, a better work ethic, and give a GPA boost to students. Since 2015, Fenton has been taking the initiative partnering with EOS or Equal Opportunity Schools.

EOS states that its mission is to “ensure that students of color and low-income students have equitable access to America’s most academically intense high school programs and succeed at the highest levels.”

Fenton has been a leader in the fight for equity winning 2019 National AP School of the year. Last month Fenton hosted an Equity Lab which is where schools that are excelling in showing equity, present what they have been doing to reap those results. EOS was created by a High School Teacher Reid Saaris. He noticed that when he was in his AP classes all the students looked the same, were from the same background, and all had the same level of privilege. He wanted to find a way to get minorities and low-income students to participate in these classes, similar to what Fenton is doing.

The EOS system has promoted many changes in Fenton. Kate Ward said, “The survey that [students] take, is being taken and evaluated to give students chances and recommendations. We have teachers that are an outreach to have a more personalized recommendation for AP classes.”

Fenton has also incorporated AP Bootcamp in the summer to help future AP students become more comfortable. Students have also seen the changes in their AP classes.

Sophomore Jenny Aguliar said, “I believe Fenton does give opportunities to all students for AP classes. If I’m being honest, there are some people that I didn’t expect to be taking an AP class but they are and they are doing pretty good.”

The opportunities that Fenton gives makes sure that all students are able to join and participate in various AP courses but taking an AP class always come with a set of challenges

Junior Jadalyn Souvannasy says that AP classes have given her many positive results, they have taught her to be more responsible, to ask for help, and to manage her time. All students should have the opportunity to build the skills that AP classes provide.

In the future Fenton plans to incorporate students more in the search for equity, opening the board up to students and allowing students to establish their voice on equity in their classes. Having students take on leadership roles and voicing their opinion on certain topics at school, will allow Fenton to become even better at creating a perfect environment for all students thrive academically.



Cartoon by Jesus Amador



# Dance Force Wraps Up Successful Showcase, Preps for Competitions

By Alexandria De Vito

After a few successful competitions and after a successful showcase, which is held every year, in which the girls of Fenton's Dance Team choreograph their own dances to songs of their choice, Coach Chaidez said the showcase really had a great turnout, lots of friends and families, as well as staff members came out to support the girls. The showcase is a really great fundraising opportunity for the dance team and this season went really well in terms of ticket sales, bake sales and shoutout cards that audience members can write for the dancers. Jordan Blanche (Senior) says that she can really see the girls coming into their own with more solo performances amongst them in the showcase. She also says that dance teaches a great team effort and provides an amazing source of group dynamics, for example really taking responsibility for their own parts and avoiding "handing-off" various things in hopes that other girls will do it.

Keeping the girls' spirits up

is always a big focal point for the coaches, if anyone gets frustrated or feels down after a mistake, they try to remind the girls of how far they've come up until now. And how getting frustrated is normal, but they have to keep a positive mindset and they are

always reminded that the dance team is a family and they will always have each other to fall back on. The coaches are really pleased with how positive, hardworking and how helpful they are, especially to each other.

The team is used to very

hard-hitting hip-hop, however this season they're trying out new types of hip-hop with more girly aspects to broaden their horizons of other styles of dance, so for future experiences or careers, they won't be confined to just traditional hip-hop. Everyone is super pumped to get back into regular competitions, which are normally very stressful for both the dancers and the coaches, but one thing the whole team is focusing on is having more fun with all their routines. The whole team is always excited to see their hard work pay off and seeing their growth overall is always a rewarding process. For this competition season, the team actually had professional choreographers come in from New York, one of which is a dance instructor for an all-dance school back in New York. Both the choreographers dance together on a college team and for a professional, soccer team. It's safe to say this group of girls is very committed and work hard both on the dance floor and with each other.



Photo by Alexa Toledo

## Girls' Gymnastics Off to Strong Start

By Olivia Baran

Fenton High School has a gymnastics team! That is a statement that many students at our school have yet to hear and are surprised once they do. That is most definitely a shame because gymnastics requires extreme talent, coordination, and patience, which Fenton's gymnastics team certainly has. Coached by Paula Parat and Victor Ruiz, the team has surely expanded in size as well as improved in talent. The Varsity gymnastics team coach, Victor Ruiz states, "It's exciting to see the development of each athlete." Gymnastics is definitely not an easy sport and it takes a lot of passion and skill, in various forms, to achieve improvement. Luckily, our gymnastics team has it all; from Junior Varsity to Varsity, the talent shown in each individual is incredible. Coach Ruiz also states that, "peer interaction, improvement in individual skill, and being a part of a team but yet still compete individually" is what each athlete will eventually face when joining the team. Varsity athlete, Audrey Benitez expresses that, "[she] joined gymnastics because it's a way to clear [her] mind from all the stress [she] undergoes during school. It allows [her] to push [her] body and mind past its limits." Those are definitely valid reasons as to why Fenton's gymnastics team succeeds; the athletes go above and beyond. Another Varsity athlete, Emily Czyzycki declares that, "after meets, we go and get food so I always think that is a plus." Talk about team bonding! Our gymnastics team may require a lot of willingness, however the gymnasts also attain many exciting events throughout the season. Hopefully, our school becomes more aware of the fact that Fenton has a gymnastics team, because the team works hard daily. Wish our gymnasts good luck on their upcoming meets!

## Speech Team Looks Towards Bigger Goals

By Morelia Aburto

With new members, coaches, and experiences, this speech season is definitely one to remember for many old and new speechies. All the members have been putting great effort each Saturday so far for every speech tournament. Everyone wants to do better, and break finals but speech team member, and new speech captain, sophomore Alexis Benitez says "the bigger goal is for everyone to do better than when they started and for the team to come out better speakers than when they came in September." This goal is definitely being met due to the fact that varsity speech member Abigail Niehoff stated that "this year there has been more progress in a shorter amount of time. It's nice to have something in my schedule that is fun." Although the speech season has just begun, we can already tell it's heading in a great direction. If one thing's for sure, it is

that aside from being part of a team, the speech members and coaches are a family. Abigail Niehoff also lets us know that she loves that "everyone is friends. If you have a good team that builds you up and encourages you, you will be successful. This is how the speech team has been the past 2 years." Although some of the members might be competing against each other for an event, it's all friendly competition. The team just supports each other, and others' success makes every member happy.

Fenton has a very competitive speech team. Fellow members in the past years have made it to state and won. But through all the competition, the team makes sure this experience goes down as one of the most enjoyable and memorable for its members. We can't wait to see all the bright things the speech team accomplishes this season, and we can't wait to see how far they go!

## Chess Begins Season, Offers "Self-Disipline in Making Yourself a Better Person"

By Alexandria De Vito

The former state-qualifying chess team has just begun this year's season and it's already looking up for them. Jimmy Palumbo, a top player, says that chess has many similarities to real life and you can even learn valuable lessons from it, such as self-discipline in making yourself a better person in everyday life. He is focusing on being an effective leader to ensure that all players do as well as they possibly can in every match, to ready them for sectionals. Although, a goal for both him and the rest of the team is to make it to state once again. This team is both for students who wish to simply improve their skills and play for fun as well as students who wish to play competitively. The competitive aspect is what drew John

Gadomski to the team, he likes chess for its challenging features. There's nothing like working towards a skill or technique and finally getting it to work, "it is fun seeing if your tactics work out and whether someone finds a cool checkmate," he says.

The coaches, Mrs. Downen and Mrs. Bibel are both pleased with the great turnout of amazing students for this season. There are lots of new freshmen, which is always great, as well as many new upperclassmen who haven't played before. But many of the top players (high boards) are seniors, so the team is losing many students; all are encouraged to join! Part of the reasoning for this is the new preseason the coaches added this year, which caused more time to teach and get to know the players. The team

accepts those of all skill levels, from never having played before to a pro. Anyone can learn the game, quicker than most probably assume. The coaches also applaud their players for being a kind and open group of students who do a lot of teaching amongst themselves. A newcomer, Brenna Ralston, says the team is always ready to help and is never negative, especially if there's a new skill that someone hasn't quite gotten the hang of yet. Mrs. Bibel and Mrs. Downen also have high hopes again for being state-bound this season. It's very exciting because of the new conference, meaning new schools and new challenges for the team.

Roman Gomez, a senior who is also a four year veteran of the chess team joined the team as a freshman

only for extra credit, but soon found his love for the game, he has played in state tournaments, goes against other schools and prides himself in being a high board. Roman as well says the game of chess can teach valuable life lessons, he says chess changed the way he makes decisions, because "now [he] sees outcomes different, and different variations of what [he] can do,". But chess isn't always so serious, he says practice doesn't really feel like practice; it just feels like friends getting together and playing the game. This is a team full of wonderful students who come in every day hoping to do their best, have fun, and prep for any upcoming tournaments, Fenton wishes you another successful season!