

Oakdale Middle School

GAZETTE

Cultural Comebacks

Have you ever felt left out or had difficulty expressing yourself or your culture? That happens a lot and it does not feel great. Expressing your cultural identity is important, putting down roots and spreading them around the world helps us come closer together! In this article, I will be talking about how students at our school allow themselves to express cultural celebrations or customs that they felt have come back into the spotlight recently.

Karen Sanchez, an 8th grade student from El Salvador, was asked, "What is something that is part of your culture in El Salvador that has been recognized here in America?" Karen says, "The food, pupusas, and many other things. But, pupusas are more of the culture in my country that has been recognized here." Another student, Rahaf Aljomaa, was asked, "What are things you would like people to know about you or your culture that are really important to you?" Rahaf responded by saying, "Where I'm from (Syria) and what language I speak (Arabic)." The last person that I interviewed was Mr. Lopez, and I asked him, "Why do you think expressing your culture is good? He said, "I think expressing your culture is good because it helps other people that don't share your culture learn a new culture which helps them understand who you are better."

Our culture is a great thing to share with others and as Mr. Lopez said, "Diversity helps us see the potential in who we can become in the future." We can see from this that the more diversity we have and share with others, the more we can open up our cultures to more people so they are exposed to the special things our cultures have to offer. As a 2nd Generation Mexican-American, I definitely see how our culture has been expressed and appreciated recently here in America. I think everyone should be exposed to it, and I would like to shed some light on other cultures we have at Oakdale. ~ Yamilet Vazquez



8th Grade Appreciation

As we all know, school years end and everyone goes to a new grade, and over time a new school. Our eighth graders sometimes do not know how appreciated they are here at Oakdale, so this article is dedicated to them. Before they leave, we should get to know some of our eighth graders and learn what they appreciate and will miss about Oakdale. Aylin Carino, Vanessa Maldonado, and Julian Perez shared their favorite moments and more about this school year. Everyone's favorite memory is considered their best for different reasons. It can be meaningful, or it can also just be because they had a lot of fun in that moment.

Aylin's top memories were making vlogs with friends and having lunch with all of them, which she will miss next year. She said, "I appreciate the lunch ladies for making the spicy chicken sandwiches with the crispy french fries." Vanessa said that her favorite memory from this school year was the eighth grade Camp War Eagle field trip! Like Aylin, she also has appreciation for one of our own staff members here at Oakdale, which is Mrs. Annen. She said, "I appreciate Mrs. Annen because she is a nice, funny teacher that gives teenager vibes." The last person I interviewed was Julian, who said his favorite memory from this year was the Silver Dollar City trip and, like Aylin, he will also miss his friends when he goes off to high school. "I appreciate Coach Frese because he made football season memorable," he expressed.

Oakdale certainly makes sure to show our eighth graders that they are appreciated, like taking them on field trips to Camp War Eagle, the band, choir, and orchestra field trip to Silver Dollar city, exploring Heritage, exploring colleges, etc... Our eighth graders from this year will certainly be missed when they go on to highschool. They do much more for Oakdale than most people expect, like making the yearbook, introducing new or incoming students to the school, tutoring kids, and more! So let's celebrate our eighth graders for their accomplishments this school year, and wish them a good year in their new school. ~ Cythlali Garcia



Who do you look up to?

Some people look up to multiple people or celebrities, but some of them look up to one person in particular. I interviewed Senorita Rodarte, Mr Amargos' intern, and she said, "A teacher I looked up to was Mrs. Kristen Novotny, a Spanish teacher at Springdale High School. When I came in the 2nd semester of my junior year, I was going through a hard time and she noticed my change in demeanor, so she gave me space to talk and shared her experiences. She had made it her mission to help me, and she was an incredible teacher that gave us opportunities to get involved in the community. Because of her, I'm also going to be a Spanish teacher in the hopes of doing the same for my students."

A good motivational person inspires people with enthusiasm and passion. They make us feel valued by investing time and learning about our priorities, strengths, and needs. These people do good things and encourage others to do the same. That is why people look up to them. I interviewed Christian Mora, and he said, "I look up to my brother named Jesus Mora, because he's always been there for me when I needed him."

Brandon Cruz said, "I look up to my brother because he's the one who has been there for me and the one who supports me in every moment. I also look up to Cristiano Ronaldo because I've watched him since I was little, so he is my idol too. I like the fact that he never gives up, the way he plays, and the fact that he shows you how to be better." Everyone has someone they look up to, whether it is a teacher or a family member. These heroes are who shape us to be the people we are today. Senorita Rodarte, Christian, and Brandon shared who they look up to, but who inspires you?
~ Keyla De Leon



TEACHER COLLEGES

Is college just more hours of school, or is it an opportunity to start your future career? I asked Mr. Ruetten, "At UOM, what did you major in and were you in any programs?" He responded with, "I went to the University of Memphis. I was in the Teacher Preparation Program, and I majored in awesome." Most colleges or high schools have classes you can take to become whatever you want to be.

It is very exciting to learn about what fun classes you can take when you are a middle school student thinking about college, so I asked Mrs. Shumate, "What college or colleges did you go to and what classes did you take to become a teacher?" She responded with, "I went to Henderson State University, a teacher school, and got a bachelor's degree. My major was middle level education." To become a teacher you have to earn a bachelor's degree and have an approved teacher certification.

High schools and colleges also have clubs and programs that you can join for teaching practice. I asked Mr. Eckert, "Were you in any programs or clubs for teaching?" He responded with, "I went to Pima Community College and the University of Arizona. I also went to graduate school to be a teacher. I was in a program for childhood development, formative and summative assessments, and classroom management skills." Overall, college is a really good way to go if you want your dream job. ~ Katlyn Cox

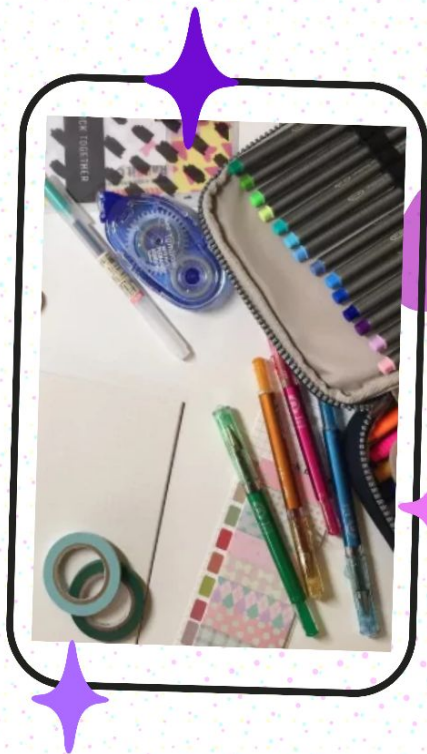


Middle School Must-Haves

It is always great to have a stack of pencils on you, but there are some inventions that can help middle schoolers even more. One is definitely pocket binder separations. They help with keeping binders clean, they divide the papers you can easily snap in, and they help with the ones without holes. Another great tool is the "Paper Mate ClearPoint 3pk" pencils. They hold a lot of lead and they have a very long eraser. When you need more eraser, you just twist. I got Mikel Stephens' opinion on this and he said, "I find that my favorite middle school item is white erasers. Even though most pencils have them, it's nice to have an eraser and not have to change my pencil everytime I use all of its eraser."

Although it is nice to know what is good for all grades, it is even better to be prepared for 6th grade specifically. Even though most of the teachers will say bringing dry erase markers are not necessary, it is a huge help to have a pack. I guarantee you will need to use one at least five times in the school year to write on table white boards when the teachers' markers are dried up. I talked to Ellie Stewart and she said, "I have carried around a binder since 6th grade. The binder is so helpful because it has so many pockets and it keeps my papers in order. It also helps to carry it around instead of leaving it in my backpack."

School can be very anxiety inducing, mostly because of the amount of work students do, but there are some ways to help with the anxiety. I always find that it helps me best when I am wearing an anxiety ring. An anxiety ring is just like a normal ring, except for the fact that it has a little metal plate in the middle that spins around. Another item that can help is called a chew necklace. It is made of silicone and a string that you put it around your neck like any normal necklace, but then you can chew on it or squish it, like a stress ball. I interviewed Addilyn McNicol on this subject and she said, "I personally like to have stress balls on me at all times. It helps when I get overstimulated or stressed, although you do have to be careful what classes you bring it out in. Some teachers classify them as a toy." ~ Fiona Baker



SCHOOL RIVALRIES

What do you think of school rivalries? When you get into upper level grades, they become more of a presence in your school. That is, if your school has sports, clubs, or other organizations that compete. 8th grader, Amelia Perez was asked, "What do you think of school rivalries?" She said, "When you have school rivalries, it gives you more motivation to do better in the game, and it also brings up the team's spirit."

Having a school rival can play a big part in your school's sports teams. For example, when Oakdale goes against Lingle, it is a big deal because both Oakdale and Lingle will go into Heritage High School. For this reason, a lot more people go to cheer on our team. Mrs. Pittman is a big supporter of our school. She says, "My favorite part of rival games is the spirit or enthusiasm both teams and schools bring to the table. Everyone always wants to win, but when we are playing against a rival, that desire goes up a few degrees!"

Having a rival school is always something some people like. Coach Kihn, the 7th grade basketball Coach says, "I notice how involved the students and staff are at Oakdale. When we run on the court and feel the energy and passion from the student section, our players immediately get a boost!" Overall, when having a school rival, the energy and enthusiasm in a game goes up. The student section becomes way more excited and tuned in. ~ Kennedy Cade

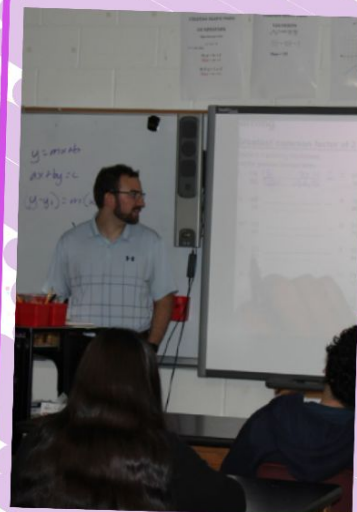


Student Improvement

According to True Statistics, more than 70% of Oakdale Middle School students have improved this year. But what could have helped them accomplish that? I interviewed Mr. Washburn, Mrs. Pittman, and Mr. Rodriguez to ask them about their thoughts on this topic. First, I asked them, "From what you have seen, what has helped students improve the most this year?" Mr. Washburn tells us, "Accountability for students with the celebrations for meeting expectations and the students missing out on those celebrations because of not meeting expectations."

Next, Mrs. Pittman said, "A combination of student and teacher engagement and determination on the part of the students has really helped us this year." Lastly, Mr. Rodriguez replied, "Our focus on creating a positive culture and rewarding students for working hard." Overall, these teachers think that rewarding their students for their hard work is a big factor in their improvement this year. Then I followed up by asking them, "Why do you think some students may have not improved?" Starting off, Mr. Washburn says, "Some students don't have support at home, nor have an understanding of how their decisions today could impact their future negatively."

To add on, Mr. Rodriguez said, "They don't value school or don't see the importance of school and how it helps them in their future." Finally, Mrs. Pittman, also on the same path tells us, "Lack of effort and not taking school seriously." I then asked them a similar question, "What do you think we could do in the future to help these struggling students?" Mrs. Pittman says, "I think pairing them with peer tutors/student mentors, because they will feel more of a connection with a student rather than a teacher." Mr. Rodriguez believes that, "Teaching kids to see the value of the skills learned from school that can be used in the future." will help these students. At last, Mr. Washburn tells us, "Accountability and offering an elective for students to work on missing foundational skills, so they are better prepared to master grade level content." ~ Diana Esqueda



Why is ESOL Important?

Students come from all over the world into the United States. A program was necessary for people in order to get accustomed to the language as well as a new country, so ESOL was created. Although the idea of ESOL has been around for a while, it was not until the 1960s when congress passed the Bilingual Education Act, which acknowledged that a program was needed in order to prevent non-English speakers from remaining in poverty and cultural isolation. All in all, the program was a much needed one, and many people agreed. The following people have been interviewed about their involvement in ESOL.

When Keinny Figueroa was asked what makes ESOL important, she said it is because, "They show us more English and we are getting more prepared to go to normal classes, but overall, I think it is a great program." When Mr. Lopez was asked the same question, he said, "To help students develop their English so they can be successful in all their other classes." He was also asked what he would say to people who think ESOL is not necessary. He stated that, "They have a point. Some people do not need it and some people do need it, and if we think about people who recently arrived from non-English foreign countries, those people would agree with the need for ESOL classes."

When Mr. Resendiz was asked, "What makes ESOL necessary?" He said, "Everyone has a different experience, and as educators, we should be ready to serve all students. At Oakdale, we have a high percentage of English language learners, so it is important to create opportunities so that they thrive in their education." To conclude this article, I will say that ESOL is very much needed. A lot of people may overlook this program, thinking that there is no reason for it, but to come from another country and not know about it can be a scary experience. ESOL can connect students from all over the world, because they share a common experience, the experience of knowing how hard it is to leave everything you know behind. ~ Alexa Gameros



Teacher's Greatest Hits

Have you ever wondered what your teachers have done in their past? Many teachers have interesting backgrounds and stories about their lives, and Mrs. Annen was no exception! I asked Mrs. Annen, "What is your greatest accomplishment?" and she replied, "My greatest accomplishments were my daughter Bailey, and granddaughter Sariana." This shows just how teachers' lives outside of school can be incredibly compelling.

Coach Washburn, an extremely outgoing and energetic person, answered the same question with, "One of my greatest accomplishments would have to be completing two Ironman races when I was 18/19 years old to raise money for a mission trip to Peru. I had trained for 6 months for each of these races to prepare my body for durability as I would be running a race where I would swim 2.4 miles, bike 112 miles, and run 26.2 miles all in one day. My first year I finished the race in 21 hours because of a popped tire and other issues. My second year I trained harder and after doing it once was mentally prepared for the task ahead, so I improved my time of completion to 17 hours."

Ms. Gwatney, a teacher who is very well-loved by her students, responded to the same question with, "One of my greatest accomplishments was becoming a teacher. Being a teacher made me realize how much I love students. These students are the reason why I love teaching. Another accomplishment I have is being a volleyball coach for these middle school girls. I can't say how much I love these students and I'm truly glad that I chose this career path." This shows how much more character and depth teachers have when they share stories and their greatest accomplishments in their lives. ~ Kamila Patena Garcia



STUDENT'S FAVORITE READS



Many students enjoy the books they read at school, and some don't. There are many genres like horror, sci-fi, fiction, comedy, and many more to choose from. Some books that we read at school include Touching Spirit Bear in 6th grade, The Outsiders in 7th grade, and Imprisoned in 8th grade. Although we read books in class, we also read books outside of the classroom. I interviewed three students: Joycelynn Salas, a 7th grader; Jorge Sanchez, a 6th grader; and Gillian Hatty, an 8th grader, to discover their favorite reads.

First, I interviewed Gillian Hatty who said her favorite book is The Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins. When asked why this is her favorite book, she responded, "This is my favorite because it was the first book that got me into reading, and it is a unique story." Similarly, Jorge Sanchez responded with Dog Man by Dav Pilkey. When asked why, he said, "Because of the plot." Finally, the last person that I interviewed was Joycelynn Salas who said her favorite was I Survived the Sinking of the Titanic, 1912 by Georgia Ball. When asked why this is her favorite, she replied, "It taught me more about the Titanic."

Now that you have read about some of these Oakdale students' preferred books, let it inspire you to try out a new genre of books. Some people read books to gain new information or simply just to entertain themselves. And as some say, lifelong learners will always learn more by reading a book. Many stories are expressed through pieces of literature and many people can share a bond with them. What book has made a connection with you? ~ Layla Perez