Tiger Prints

April 2025

The Official Newspaper of Pierre Van Cortlandt Middle School

Vol. 3

Happy April!

by: Layla

From PB&J day, to World Rat Day, the days of April get weirder and weirder. Let's check out some notable examples!



April Fool's Day

The first day of the month, April 1st, is April Fool's Day! On this day, have fun and prank your friends and family. People from all over the world come up with brilliant pranks and ideas for what to do, and I'm sure you will too!

Are you an animal lover? Then these few days might be for you.

National Pet Day

National Pet Day is a day to celebrate our favorite furry friends. National Pet day is on April 11th.

World Rat Day!

World rat day is celebrated on April 5th. It is celebrated to promote adoption for the animals and to show our love for the rodents.

Now for some fun food days!
PB&J Day! *April 2nd*
National Carrot Day! *April 4th*
National Caramel Popcorn day! *April 6th*
National Coffee Cake Day! *April 7th*
Enjoy some of your favorite snacks!

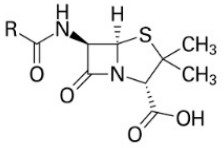
Ready to have a sleepover? Maybe plan one on these days!
National Pillow Fight Day! *April 5th*: Play this fun game with your friends!
National Pajama Day! *April 16*: Wear Your cozy clothes on this holiday!

Things Invented by Mistake

by: Lily

Did you know that the average human being makes about 50 mistakes every day? You've probably heard it many times before, but it's true that while mistakes can make us feel bad, insecure, and incompetent, they also provide a learning opportunity for next time, and in some cases… a whole new invention never before seen by the likes of the human race! Keep reading to find out about some of the world's most groundbreaking and influential inventions and discoveries, which all happened by accident.

From Mold to Medicine: Penicillin



Almost 100 years ago, on September 3rd, 1928, famous Scottish bacteriologist Dr. Alexander Fleming returned from vacation to his lab to find something remarkable. He had forgotten to dispose of petri dishes containing cultures of a bacteria called Staphylococcus aureus, and in his absence, a rare strain of mold known as Penicillium notatum had sprouted, which had released a substance that killed the bacteria it came in contact with.

At the time, even small paper cuts could prove deadly if they became infected, and thousands of people died from infections while doctors couldn't do much to help them. After further investigation, Fleming found that this "mold juice," which he later named penicillin, could destroy all kinds of dangerous bacteria. In 1929, he published his findings in a paper, but he wasn't totally convinced if the penicillin actually had a feasible use, since it was challenging to purify. Ten years later, chemists at Oxford University studied his paper with the goal of turning it into a practical medicine, which was successfully achieved. Penicillin revolutionized the field of healthcare and medicine, making infections that used to be life threatening now easily treatable.

The mold juice was first tried on a patient in 1940, and later used throughout World War II to treat injuries and minimize sickness and casualties due to infections.

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by: Lily

By 1945, it had become a vital part of hospitals around the world. Alexander Fleming's discovery was life changing—by leaving petri dishes of bacteria in his lab over vacation, he had stumbled upon the world's first effective antibiotic. Even today, penicillin is still used to treat everything from strep throat, pneumonia, ear infections, and meningitis, while having saved the lives of over 500 million people.

Popsicles!



Frank Epperson was an 11-year-old kid in 1905 playing in his San Francisco neighborhood when he accidentally left a cup of water and powdered soda mix with a stirring stick in the middle on the porch. Overnight, the cold winter temperatures caused the soda to freeze, so that when Frank discovered the glass the next morning, the mixture was completely frozen. He ran the glass under hot water and took the ice pop out by the stick, and thus the very first popsicle was made.

Frank went on to make the treats for his neighborhood friends, where they were a huge success, and eventually for his children. In 1923, he requested a patent for his invention, which he had called "Eppsicles" after his last name. However, his children convinced him into naming the frozen desserts "Pop's 'sicles," and the name stayed as the popsicle became an instant hit across the country. The first of these ice pops came in seven different flavors and cost only five cents! Fast forward to today, almost 120 years since the creation of the first popsicle, where approximately two billion of these treats are sold annually.

How the Post-it Came to Be

In 1968, an employee researcher at 3M named Spencer Silver attempted to make a stronger adhesive for the aerospace industry. Instead, what he got was a weak fixative that could be easily removed and replaced without leaving behind any residue. Silver's project was reported as unsuccessful, and it would be another six years until someone realized the true ingenuity and potential of the soon-to-be Post-its.

In 1974, Art Fry, a colleague of 3M scientist, Spencer Silvers, was struggling to find a solution for bookmarking pages in his hymnal book at church. He decided to try his coworker's creation, which worked to great success. Fry's forerunners to today's beloved sticky notes were made with yellow, the only scrap paper he had at the time, which to this day remains the product's special symbol.

After 12 long years since Silver's original invention of the Post-it, and a few years of bouncing around the market, Post-its finally found success in 1979 and today are one of the most iconic office and writing supplies worldwide. 3M sells more than 50 billion notes per year, and as of 2024, in 28 different colors!

These are just a few of some of the most well-known inventions created by mistake, which have each changed life as we know it today. You can find amazing things from accidents everywhere around you—for example, did you know that chocolate chip cookies, the Slinky, potato chips, and the microwave were also created by errors? So next time you forget to take those cookies out of the oven or mix the wrong ingredients together for your science test, know that you too have the power to invent something new and change the world.

Whispers of Spring

by: Emma

The breeze hums low, a melody—
Of petals drifting through the sky,
The trees blush green,
Like whispered thoughts just floating by.



The rays of the sun spill golden,
Spreading through the dewy grass.
And time slips by unspoken,
Soft as silks the moments pass.

Flowers lean toward dusk's warm hue,
As golden whispers kiss the land.
And in the hush, the world feels new,
Cradled in time's unfolding hand.

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AI Usage—Is It Beneficial?

by: Clara

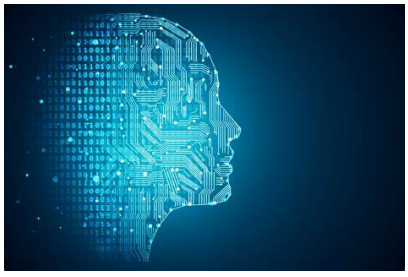
Every week, day, and hour, millions of people are using artificial intelligence, or AI as many people refer to it as. This incredible tool has been allowing people to work faster, be more productive, and get more done! But is it all good? In a school environment many people argue it is bad or unhealthy for kids to be using AI to do their schoolwork, and much evidence points that way. Here I will be going in depth on how AI works, what you can do with it, and how to use it (even in school) in a healthy way!

Starting off with, how does AI really work? With more than 86% of students using AI, it is important to know how it actually works before you start using it. Say you go into ChatGPT and enter "Distribute the negative: −(0.1k+2)." The AI starts by taking a previously uploaded huge set of data. Then it analyzes the data with a specifically made algorithm that is used only for AI. It runs millions of programs to figure out how to do the math and proceeds to do it, in whatever way the internet says.

Now that you have a brief understanding of how AI works, what are students actually using it for? There are so many uses of AI that it seems crucial to know what students are doing with it. AI can do more than solve math problems and write essays! In a survey of what teens want adults to know about AI, many said that AI offers "a way to show my creative style". In another survey, 31% of students who used AI said they used it almost solely to make pictures or videos, 16% used it for music or sound creation, and 15% used AI to write code! According to that survey, 62% of students used AI for creative purposes, not for their schoolwork.



Furthermore, we look at the pros and cons of using AI. Starting with pros, as previously mentioned, AI is frequently used for creative purposes, but there are many more positive uses than that! AI is able to give students immediate feedback that even the best teachers couldn't give to all students at once. It can give information on things the student did well or not, it can even tailor lessons customized to the students work, in a way the teacher just can't give to all their students! AI can use powerful tools to be more inclusive to students with special needs, such as text to speech, visual recognition, or speech recognition. These are all amazing tools that allow for a better learning environment but, there are also many cons. The chief concern raised among educators with AI is cheating and plagiarism, using AI to complete exams or papers, which is unfair to the students who don't cheat, and undermines a good education. There is also a concern about privacy, people are wary about the data collected when any person uses an AI system. In addition, there is plenty more evidence supporting children using AI. To name a few, papers written by non-English speakers are almost 50% more likely to be misclassified as AI when graded by AI. AI reduces human interaction by almost completely destroying the relationship between the teacher and student. Finally, AI often draws information from unreliable sources, causing misinformation and work to be flat out wrong.



In summary, AI has many pros and cons, it can be used for creative purposes, or it can be used to cheat. It is challenging for a teacher to let students use AI but not allow them to do anything negative with it, causing many teachers to ban it completely. Almost all students have used AI, in a positive or negative way whether or not the teachers like it. However, with AI starting to appear all around us, it is important to know how to use it to benefit us, even for schoolwork. Some positive ways students can use AI (other than the ways listed earlier) include, organizing/taking notes, and summarizing paragraphs or papers. What do you use AI for?

PVC Critic

by: Anonymous



Have you ever had the school lunch? I know I have. We all have opinions but mine is gonna be heard. When you first came from CET, you were so glad that the food didn't taste like cardboard. But does that make it good?

Let's talk to some students and see what they think. Now, before we get started, you should know that everyone I interview is anonymous just like me. This student is going to be known as Cookie.

PVC Critic: Hello, have you ever had the school lunch?
Cookie: Yes, I have. I think it's decent.
PVC Critic: Do you prefer the PVC school lunch or the CET school lunch?
Cookie: PVC's is one step ahead. [But] I think the pizza is plastic-y and the chicken fingers are wet.
PVC Critic: I see; thank you for your time, Cookie. Remember to keep me anonymous.

Let's hear from one more student. This student's nickname is Master. Wow—he must be a Master when it comes to… everything maybe?

PVC Critic: Hello Master, what do you think of the school lunch?
Master: I think it's decent, way better than CET.
PVC Critic: So, Master. We've heard that CET lunch tastes like cardboard. What do you think PVC's lunch tastes like?
Master: Regular food. I love how the pizza has a lot of dough, but I don't like how the cheese sticks to the pizza. It freaks me out.
PVC Critic: Understandable. Well, thanks for your time, Master.
Master: You're welcome. Thanks for having me.

The Story of BOB

by: Audrey & Jacob

Chapter the First: The First and Only Chapter

BOB was in his house when his life changed. A cheese had walked in the door.
"Hello," The Cheese said, "will you eat me?"
BOB gave him the criminal offensive side eye. "Why do you want me to eat you?" he asked, confuzzled. The Cheese responded, "Buddy, you must be deaf. I said, please don't eat me, weirdo."
BOB started crying and saying, "I will crash out now, I will crash out now."
"Sorry, Sorry, Sorry," said the cheese, "I didn't mean it that way."
BOB sniffed. "It's ok."
"OK, great." said The Cheese. "I need your help."

An hour later, BOB had packed all his things. The Cheese had given him a jetpack along with some glowing parmesan cheese.
"Get ready," The Cheese said. "We're going to the Cheese World."
"Couldn't we have driven in your limo?" BOB said. The Cheese replied, "You have to fly to get to the Cheese World. I get to drive. Oh, you will also need this."
The Cheese handed BOB a heavy-duty vest. "What's this for?" BOB asked.
"It's for the people who protect Cheese World," The Cheese said.
"What?!" BOB exclaimed, "What do you mean, protect?!"
"I recruited you to protect the Cheese World." The Cheese said simply. "Here, you also get a blaster and a thermal detonator."
"What do I need that for?" asked BOB.
"In case you come across something that needs to be handled…" The Cheese said.
"Oh god…" said BOB, very concerned. "Wait… you said you wanted me to protect the Cheese World. What did you mean by that?"
"The Cheese World has been taken over by a powerful entity named Feta Cheese."

"The problem is named Feta Cheese?" BOB asked. "Yes." The Cheese said grimly. "He is a horrible kind of cheese that wants to conquer the Cheese World."
"Oh no!" BOB cried, "We have to do something!"
"And we will," The Cheese responded. "We are heading to the Cheese World now."

The One Day I Wish I Went To School

by: Ally & Alice

It was just a normal day—or at least that's what my friend Emma and I kept telling each other. We weren't mentioning the fact that we were ditching school, nor the fact that our parents were going to kill us when they found out. Why were we skipping school? Well…

Fifteen minutes earlier…

"Sophie!" my best friend Emma called as she sprinted across the schoolyard. She was wearing one of her nicer dresses for the first day of school. Her straight black hair was cut into a bob, framing her olive-toned face. Her dimples were showing, and her brown eyes were sparkling. I think Emma was the only one actually excited for the first day. Her dress was forest green, made of cotton with short sleeves. Meanwhile, I was wearing a red cotton dress with sleeves down to my elbows. It contrasted with my pale skin, brown curly hair, and light brown eyes. We looked like Christmas standing next to each other—though neither of us celebrates the holiday.

We were in the middle of talking when I heard someone behind me. I knew who it was without even looking.
"It's Kevin…" I mumbled to Emma, just loud enough for her to hear. We were passing by the strongest, most intimidating boy in our school—the one who'd been bullying us since second grade.
Emma got the hint and lowered her head, hoping he wouldn't notice us.
"Oh, hello, guys. Let me introduce you to some of my friends," Kevin said. He had spotted us—and suddenly started acting… nice? Emma and I exchanged confused looks. I looked up at him only to see his devilish grin. Nope. This wasn't going to be good.
"Guys, meet Soapy and What's-Her-Name." Laughter erupted from his group of friends. Oh no. Not again.
"Your outfits look… nice?" Kevin said, pausing to look us up and down. "Very Christmas-y. Oh wait, I forgot—you're not normal like the rest of us. You don't even celebrate the holiday."
He broke into a laughing fit—the exact laugh I'd been dreading all summer.
"Anyway, let me introduce you to my friends, like I was saying." Kevin pointed at around thirty kids, rattling off each of their names.
"So," Kevin said, "I finished introducing you to my friends. Can you introduce me to yours?"
We didn't even have time to come up with an answer before he jumped in again.
"Never mind—you don't have any!" The laughter that followed was louder than before. Great.
"At least we have brains," I heard Emma say beside me. The laughter quieted. We never talked back to Kevin.
"What did you say?" Kevin growled.
"I said AT LEAST WE HAVE BRAINS!" Emma repeated, louder this time.
I expected Kevin to start yelling, but instead, he just chuckled.
"I have more of a brain than you," he responded.
"Oh, really?" I replied, surprised by my own boldness. "I mean, we get better grades than you by far. Should we tell your girlfriend about the 25% you got on the math test? You told her you got a 95%."
Kevin's face turned red with shame and anger. His "friends" started laughing. That's when he lunged at us.
I ducked, and he missed his first punch. Then we ran, Kevin close on our heels. We sprinted into the school just as the bell rang, but he was still after us. We darted out the side door. Kevin laughed from inside. That's when I remembered—the school locks its doors. They can only be opened from the inside. And Kevin wasn't going to let us in any time soon. We went around to the front, where they give late passes, but the new Welcome Center operator was asleep at her desk.

So… yeah. That's why Emma and I are walking the crowded streets of NYC on the first day of school. We had a bit of money in our backpacks and decided to go to the Twin Towers to do some shopping. We were praying our parents wouldn't spot us—but bright red and green dresses don't exactly blend in. We were heading to the South Tower; Emma's mom works in the North Tower, so going there would've been asking for trouble.

"So, what will we tell our parents?" Emma asked cautiously, breaking the silence.
"I don't know," I replied sadly.
"They'll be awfully mad that we missed school," Emma noted. "Especially the first day."
I nodded.

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The One Day I Wish I Went To School

by: Ally & Alice

"But we tried our best," she continued. "We knocked on the school door for like ten minutes!"
It was true—we had knocked for ten full minutes, but the Welcome Center operator hadn't even opened her eyes.

"Hey, is that you?" a girl's voice asked behind me. "It's me, Lily. My dad always brings me to his work on the first day of school. It's kind of a tradition."
I pulled out my new flip phone because I heard it beep.
"Oh my gosh! Did you finally get a phone? It's so cute, and I love the color!"
Lily went to our school. She was the popular kid, and her dad was the CEO of some important company or something.
"Hey, can I have your number? Maybe if I have time, we could go shopping in the underground mall," Lily asked.
"Uh, sure," Emma responded.

About fifteen minutes after we entered the mall, my phone rang.
"Lily?" Emma asked. I nodded.
"She wants us to meet her on the 55th floor," I said. "She's coming from the 108th floor. We'll meet in the middle, then head to the mall."

Ten minutes later, Emma and I were panting.
"Hi, guys!" Lily greeted us. "My dad gave me some money. Can we go to the mall now?"
We never got the chance to answer. A loud boom sounded, and the whole tower started shaking. The vibration knocked me off my feet. There was screaming all around us.
This was the beginning of the monstrosity in Manhattan.

Editorial



What's more important- that new car, or new friends? You move to a new town, and you have to make choices. Do you go to that barbeque with all the neighborhood friends? Or do you go to a terrible grocery store giveaway in hopes of getting some coupons to start saving up? Then you can get that awesome car sooner, and who wouldn't want the awesome car? You're not going to be making any friends, but hey, you'll have the car, right?

It's a tough question, and your answer revolves around materialism. Materialism is the belief that physical objects and material possessions are more important than spiritual or ethical beliefs, relationships, and other interactions. In an even deeper sense, it's a deep philosophical concept that states all that is in the world and us is material, and nothing is immaterial. Those friendships at the barbeque? They're not material. They're not giving you any direct value. The car though? The car you can drive. The car you can sell. The car you can use. The car shows material value.

Materialism doesn't have to be that strict, though. In other cases, it's simply caring strongly about material possessions. It's someone buying fancy skirts to show they have wealth and can fit in, instead of just being friendly. It's spending too much money on a new computer just to feel like you have the nicest computer. It's focusing on saving up money to buy those new shoes.

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Editorial



The question is: what's the cost at which materialism comes? Let's take the shoe example. You focused so much time on saving up, and now you have the shoes. They look awesome, and you're thrilled as you walk down the street in them. That's when you pass by those two kids in your neighborhood, running down the street and laughing. Their shoes are nowhere near as cool as yours. But they're laughing and playing and couldn't care less about their shoes. You look down and realize you have really cool shoes, but no one to talk to about them or play with or laugh like that.

When people become over focused on materialism, it can be damaging to their personal lives and well being. Nancy Shelek once said, "Advertising at its best is making people feel that without their product, you're a loser… you open up emotional vulnerabilities." But that's not what we should be focused on. We shouldn't feel like a loser based on not having a product. People joke about trendy items and the money and passion being wasted on them, but it becomes a serious issue. According to the National Library of Medicine, non materialism is suggested to improve sufficiency. People who aren't as worried about material wealth tend to be more successful and lead better lives. If you're not worried about buying the coolest shoes, you buy good shoes that don't take as much money and time saving up. Then, you still have quality shoes that will last and fit- and you can make those friends in all that made up time. Tim Kasser, a professor of psychology at Knox College in Galesburg, Illinois, states, "Specifically, materialistic values are associated with living one's life in ways that do a relatively poor job of satisfying psychological needs to feel free, competent and connected to other people." He also explained how materialism tends to lead to less happy lives and poor well being. Materialistic people focus on wealth and material possessions, but end up losing that time spent connecting and creating valuable relationships. Those relationships are what bring us joy. While material items can bring some joy, they'll never last the way relationships and memories do, and that tends to be what damages materialistic people in the long run.

Materialism is different from wanting to buy the occasional splurge purchase or trendy item. It doesn't hurt to buy that cool water bottle or fancy shoe every once in a while. What's important is a balance. Don't become overfocused on those items, and don't buy them all the time. Spend most of your time being happy, creating relationships, and having fun. Make smart purchases that will help you in the long run. Make friends, laugh, go to the barbeque, have fun! And guess what? You can still buy a pretty good car. Sometimes it's hard to let go of the fanciest things and material value. But it's proven you'll be happier. Overtime, you'll see that the time you've gained is even better than having a certain item.

So sure, buy a fancy car every once in a while! But before you dedicate all your time to it, pause and think about what it's costing you. In most cases, it's not worth losing out on time, people, and your happiness.

Editor Avery
All pieces edited by Avery & Emma
Newspaper designed by Emma