



SENIOR SPOTLIGHT INTERVIEW

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What courses are you taking in the IB Diploma, and how did you choose them?

I'm taking **History, English, and Dance** at a higher level, and **ESS, Greek, and Math** at standard level. I chose History because I was really good at it in 10th grade, and I wanted to challenge myself. English, because I enjoy writing—it's actually my favorite type of homework or exam. And Dance has always been part of who I am; I've been dancing since I was three. I even combined two of my favorite subjects—History and Dance—for my **Extended Essay**, where I explored **how ballet was used as a form of propaganda during the Cold War**. I loved my topic—it made the 4,000 words feel easy.

Where are you headed next?

This fall, I'll be moving to the Netherlands to study **Liberal Arts and Sciences at Leiden University**. Even though the university is in Leiden, I'll be living in The Hague because my program is based there. I chose this degree because it offers **flexibility**—you can select your major in your second year—and I'm not 100% sure yet what I want to focus on. It just felt like the right fit. It's also a prestigious program, and I honestly didn't think I'd get in. But I did, and **I'm grateful and excited**.

What are you most looking forward to in this next chapter?

Living on my own. I've never lived abroad before, and it's something I'm really curious about—learning to be independent, managing things like cooking and sharing space, and just navigating life on my own terms. I'm also **excited to meet new people and discover new passions**. I want to start dancing again, maybe even join one of the university's dance or theater committees.

Let's talk about dance—it clearly means a lot to you.

I started ballet when I was three, and from there **it became a major part of my life**. I later added contemporary and jazz, but contemporary is where I feel most at home. For a long time, I danced intensely—8 to 10 hours a week. There was even a moment I thought I might go professional. But this year, I had to stop because of my workload and some negative experiences at my dance school. It was tough. I realized that even something you love can become unhealthy in the wrong environment. That said, **dance is still part of who I am**. I hope to return to it in a way that's joyful and healing.



What has dance taught you?

Discipline, patience, and humility. Especially with ballet—you need to work hard and be okay with constant correction. But it also taught me how to express myself and feel free. When I’m on stage, I don’t feel nervous. It’s like I’m completely in the moment, and even though people are watching, I don’t see them—I **just feel present and connected to myself**. That kind of confidence has carried over to other parts of my life too.

How has Pinewood shaped you? What lessons are you taking with you?

Pinewood changed everything for me. I moved here in 8th grade not speaking English fluently, and I was definitely the “new kid.” But slowly, I started gaining confidence—in my language skills, in my academics, and in myself. **I also loved being in an environment full of different nationalities and perspectives.** That’s not something you find in every school. I was always a hard worker, but **Pinewood taught me to be more confident in my work.** I learned that even if others don’t always recognize your efforts, they’re still valid. **Your growth belongs to you, and recognition isn’t everything.** I realized that what matters most is how you see yourself. That’s something I’ve taken to heart.

How did you manage to balance academics and your passion for dance?

I’m not going to lie—it was very difficult. **I had to make sacrifices,** like giving up free time or going out with friends. Sometimes I’d stay up late to finish work and then wake up to do it all over again. **But I’m proud of myself.** I worked really hard, and if I could go back, I wouldn’t change it. There’s something empowering about knowing that at one point in your life, you were doing really well and pushing yourself in different areas.

What do you love most about being a Pinewood student?

The international environment. Being surrounded by people from different backgrounds made me more open-minded and gave me a broader perspective. You don’t always get that, especially in Greece. And **the relationships—with teachers and friends—have really shaped me.** I’ll miss those the most. I also love how **Pinewood has so much greenery**—it feels like a little village. Being around trees and nature calms me. It balances the academic stress.



Do you have a favorite Pinewood memory?

Definitely the school trips—Xanthi and Athens were both so much fun. Traveling with classmates, sharing rooms, laughing on the bus—it creates memories that stay with you. You get to connect with people you might not talk to every day.

If Pinewood were a person, or a friend, how would you describe them?

They'd be like **an old, wise advisor—serious, but warm and caring**. Someone who wants to guide you, not just academically but personally. **Someone who gives you space to grow**.

What advice would you give to students just starting high school?

Don't let your failures discourage you. You're not supposed to have everything figured out from the beginning. **You're growing, and growth takes time**. Also, don't wait for others to recognize your effort in order to feel good about yourself. **You know what you're putting in, and that's what counts**.

Is there something about you that people might not know?

Because I was dancing so intensely for so long, I didn't have time to explore other hobbies. Now that I'm moving into a new chapter, **I want to discover new passions**. **I've always wanted to learn how to draw**—even though I don't think I'm very good! **But you don't have to be perfect to start something**.

Final thoughts?

Pinewood gave me more than just academics. It taught me resilience, self-respect, and how to find my voice.