

# THE JAMS JOURNAL

JOHN ADAMS MIDDLE SCHOOL  
NOVEMBER 2025

VOLUME 8 : ISSUE 1



## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Pg. 6: Teaching at JAMS for three decades

Pg. 8: Yondr Pouches are coming for your phone

Pg. 11: Names you won't find on souvenirs

Pg. 15: Unlocking the locker mystery on campus

Pg. 16: Manga, why it's still a favorite among students



Photo: Myles Shaw

## HAUNTED HALLS OF JAMS

What fear does to us and why we enjoy it every Halloween (pg. 12)



## THE SHED TAKES SHAPE

New STEM building under construction (pg. 2)



## HONORING MS. SCHWARTZ

Remembering a beloved teacher (pg. 3)



## SEEING DOUBLE (AND TRIPLE!)

JAMS life through twin and triplet eyes (pg. 18)

# SHED Construction Shakes Up JAMS Campus

By MARY PHAM & ALEX BENDER

As summer break ended, students and teachers at JAMS returned to a campus that looked completely different. Familiar hallways and shortcuts were suddenly blocked off by fences and construction signs. Many were surprised to learn that the old science building had been torn down to make way for a brand-new one.

The new STEM building is being built to create a better learning environment with more hands-on space. It will feature laboratory classrooms, an engineering lab and makerspace, interactive common areas, and even outdoor learning spaces. Each part of the building is designed to help students learn and grow, while also giving teachers more resources for their lessons.

Until construction is complete, JAMS students and staff are facing some big challenges. Getting to class takes longer, and loud drilling and rumbling can interrupt lessons. Floors shake, and teachers often have to raise their voices to be heard. Despite all that, Senior Project Manager Kim said, "Our construction should be done by June of 2027. After that, the district will take a few months to move and buy furniture so that the building is finished and ready for students."

Teachers across campus have definitely noticed the impact. Mr. Sato said, "I felt

vibrations from the work outside, and I've also heard many of the construction noises. I shut the door all the time, but the hallway echoes a lot of those sounds." Similarly, Ms. Guirguis shared, "I'm shutting the door all the time, the room shakes, and

we also get rumbling. I often have to ask students to repeat what they're saying and to raise their voices."

Students are feeling it too. Seventh grader Rex Oh said, "I find it hard to pay attention in class as the construction

noises and shakes interrupt the teaching." With noise, vibrations, and blocked areas all around, everyone on campus has had to adjust their routines.

Even though the construction brings challenges, most people agree it will be worth it in the end. Once finished, the new STEM building will provide more space for creativity, collaboration, and innovation. Future JAMS students will have the chance to explore science and engineering in ways that the JAMS alumni never could.

For now, the JAMS community continues to push through the noise and dust, keeping their eyes on the exciting changes ahead. The new building represents not just progress, but a promise of more opportunities for learning at JAMS.



A peek at the bright, spacious interior of the new STEM building set to open in June 2027.

An overhead rendering shows what the completed JAMS SHED will look like.



## Principal's Message



DR. CHACON  
JAMS Principal

This year, my goal is for JAMS to strive both academically and as a community. For students that means building a stronger sense of belonging while also challenging them to grow as thinkers, problem-solvers, and well-rounded citizens who are prepared to make informed decisions in the world around them.

For staff, my focus is on equipping teachers with the tools and support they need to provide excellent instruction while also caring for themselves and each other. By combining academic rigor with social-emotional learning, we create a school where students and staff can truly flourish.

At JAMS, we are also a STEM-focused school, and I want every student to see the possibilities that science and technology can open up. For some, this may lead to careers in science, while for others, building a strong STEM identity means thinking critically, understanding the world around them, while making informed decisions. I want STEM careers to be a real option for all students, not something reserved for only a few. As the construction is finished, the new science building will also provide spaces designed for collaboration, because science is a team effort. Students learn best when they can share ideas, solve problems together, and see that discovery is a collective process.

My hope is that this building gives our students opportunities and experiences they might not find anywhere else, inspiring curiosity, confidence, and a sense that science belongs to them.

# Remembering Ms. Schwartz

“

Stef tried and succeeded at being a great teacher. She had the knowledge, wisdom, and patience to teach all children. She loved science. She cared for kids and respected her coworker teachers.

**Mike Schwartz**  
Ms. Schwartz's Husband



“

I'll always remember her bright, science-themed shirts and infectious positive energy. She delighted in life science, sparked animated discussions about science fiction, and shared her passion for dragons.

**Dr. Chacon**  
JAMS Principal

By **ELIZABETH MELBOURNE**  
& **FINN CALLEN**

**S**tefanie Schwartz, better known as Ms. Schwartz was a well-loved science teacher. She passed away in her home on July 13th, 2025 after a seven month battle with cancer. Ms. Schwartz was known for her positive energy, her willingness to help others, and her love for both science fiction and dragons. Along with this, she loved to teach. In a statement, her son Alex recounts how 6th to 8th grade were her favorite grades to teach, “She used to say that middle schoolers get a bad rap, but she would always tell me how much she genuinely loved you, and that teaching anyone else would be too boring for her. So if you ever gave her a challenge - know she truly loved you for it. And of course, after all the years she spent adoring and collecting them, you know she was thrilled to be a Dragon! I like to think she still is, wherever she's flying off to now,” Alex said.

Ms. Schwartz was a teacher in the SMMUSD district for over 30 years. She taught humanities at Lincoln Middle School when she was hired in September of 1991. Later she worked as a vice principal at LMS for three years. Ms. Schwartz won multiple awards throughout her career, including several teacher of the year awards, a National Board Certificate in science, and a Parent Teacher Association Honorary Service Award. After her passing, the Science Magnet renamed its SAMO scholarship to the Stefanie Schwartz Memorial Scholarship in her honor.

Ms. Schwartz taught many students throughout her years and had a lasting impact on them. Eighth grader Jenna Hald

talked about the memories and experiences she had in her 6th grade science class. She recalled the feeling she got when entering the class. Jenna said, “The best part of Ms. Schwartz's class was that her room was so warm and inviting. Even though I didn't know everyone there I felt like I was able to connect with people and I felt very safe in that environment,” Ms. Alexis, a school counselor at JAMS, had Ms. Schwartz in

7th grade and said, “If I could see her again, I would say thank you for being so patient with me, and I wish I could tell her how funny she was. Although the class was hard, she would always make it light and humorous which was always fun.” Ms. Schwartz was a teacher for 34 years; she taught many different people in many different places, but wherever she was, she made an impact on these students.

Ms. Schwartz had many hobbies and ways to spend her time. She would bake, hike, travel, and read sci-fi novels. In addition, she loved to collect all things dragon. Her students often can recount the hoard of multi-colored dragon figures on her desk. Friends and coworkers talk about how she always knew how to help someone, when to give advice and when to comfort them. Ms. Rattan, a JAMS science teacher, said, “Ms. Schwartz was the kind of person that you could talk to about anything and never feel judged or criticized. She instinctively knew what you needed in order to feel better, whether it was listening, offering ideas for solutions to a problem, or bringing you a sweet treat that she had baked. I miss her every day.”

There is no way to properly explain the kind of person Ms. Schwartz was. She was a friend, a mother, a colleague, a traveler, and a teacher. She was known for many things and by many people. She was not only an important part of the JAMS community, but also a cherished friend. Her lessons, laughter, and kindness will continue to live on in the memories of her students and colleagues. Though she may no longer walk the halls of JAMS, the influence she left behind will remain.



**A young Ms. Schwartz traveling the world, something she loved to do.**

Photo: Ms. Schwartz's Family



**Students gather to sign a memorial banner honoring Ms. Schwartz.** Photo: Ms. Beeman

# Welcoming Our New Student Leaders

New officers share big plans to boost school spirit and create more student-led events.

By ELDEN FUR & EVIE GIORDANO

As students clicked “submit” on the Google Form sent out on September 10, votes began piling in for the new JAMS ASB officers for the 2025–2026 school year. The excitement on voting day is unmatched, as everyone wants to support the candidates they believe will make JAMS a better place.

ASB organizes school-wide activities and helps keep our campus fun and welcoming. This year’s election featured races for president, vice president, treasurer, historian, and secretary, each one filled with students eager to make a difference.

Led by Ms. Beeman, who has advised ASB for eight years, the group serves as JAMS’ student-run governing system. “I plan to work with the class to get their ideas about what kinds of activities they’d like to implement,” she said. “It’s really up to them. We’ll see how much money we raise in our annual fundraiser, and the students will decide how to use it.”

Throughout the year, ASB will organize smaller events like cookie walks, sports competitions, and heritage-themed days, along with larger celebrations such as Lunar New Year, Halloween, and Black History Month. Eighth grader Logan F. said, “Having an ASB program at school is great for students. It shows that JAMS tries to make school engaging and fun. It also gives students a chance to relax and take a break.”

This year’s ASB team hopes to

make JAMS the best it can be by connecting more with students and encouraging everyone to get involved. Co-presidents Noah Kirschenstein and Lorelai Jones have big plans for the year, centered on JAMS’ core values of kindness, connection, and compassion. “Students can help by having an open mind and a positive attitude,”

Lorelai said. “If students do this, our school will become a much better place.”

Their main goals include creating more fun events and spirit days that bring the school together. “We want to have more assemblies, mental health days, and moments where students can just enjoy being part of the Dragon community,” said Noah. “Less hate, all love.

Hating is not cool and it goes against our school values.”

Each officer plays an important role in keeping things running smoothly. Noah and Lorelai lead ASB and serve as the link between students and staff. Austin B., the vice president, supports them in decision-making. Otis K., the treasurer, manages the budget. Finley B., the historian, works with Yearbook and Journalism to capture photos, while Sammy S., the secretary, keeps notes and organizes documents.

Thanks to ASB’s teamwork and creativity,

JAMS students can look forward to more fun events, new traditions, and plenty of Dragon spirit all year long.

*I plan to work with the class to get their ideas about what kinds of activities they would like to implement for the student body.*

**Ms. Beeman**  
ASB Advisor



**ASB Officers Steven H. and Sammy S. hand out prizes for the school wide Adventure Zone Fundraiser.**

Photo: Elden Fur

## New ASB Officers

Lorelai Jones



Noah Kirschenstein



**CO-PRESIDENTS**

Austin Buzzell



**VICE PRESIDENT**

Otis Kaiser



**TREASURER**

Finley Beardsley



**HISTORIAN**

Sammy Seyum



**SECRETARY**

# Fresh Faculty Faces

By ANDREW LEE

Welcome to the new school year at JAMS. We had two new math teachers, two new SAI teachers, and a new nurse starting this year.

**Ms. Hallman** joins JAMS as our new Math Core 8 and Geometry teacher. Before coming here, she taught at John Burroughs Middle School. She

has a strong background in the performing arts; having grown up involved in choir, dance, and theater and even helped produce a performance at the Sydney Opera House this past summer.

Now in her second year of teaching, Ms. Hallman is passionate about making math a positive and engaging experience for all students. She believes there's beauty in using math to understand the world through patterns and is excited to be part of such a close-knit community of staff and students.



Ms. Hallman

**Ms. Nguyen** is the new Math Core 6 and 7 teacher. She loves helping students learn and feel confident about math. Before coming here, she taught 5th graders at Harbour View Elementary and learned a lot about what makes learning fun and challenging. When she's not teaching,

Ms. Nguyen likes to read and bake. In high school, she ran hurdles on the track and field team and somehow injured the same ankle three years in a row! She also has a big family with 25 cousins. Ms. Nguyen believes that "everyone's journey is different; as long as you're growing and learning, your journey can be a little slower or faster than others." She's excited to get to know her students and be part of the JAMS community.



Ms. Nguyen

**Mr. Dobbins** is our new math core 6 and 7 SAI and

collab teacher. He has been teaching for three years and worked at JAMS as a Behavior Tech and long-term substitute for two years before becoming a full-time teacher." Mr Dobbins's teaching philosophy is to promote critical thinking that teaches you to experiment, take risks and be comfortable with making mistakes. He's excited to teach incoming 6th graders.



Mr. Dobbins

**Ms. Garipay** is a Reading Improvement, SAI Science, and Curriculum Skills teacher. Before becoming a teacher, she worked in fashion after earning her degree from LIM College in New York City and even opened a boutique in Santa Monica with her sisters. After having children, she decided to change careers and has now spent twelve years in education - first as a paraeducator, then a substitute, and now a full-time teacher with credentials in English and Special Education. She loves helping students build confidence and reminds them that "mistakes are part of the process and every challenge is an opportunity to grow."



Ms. Garipay

**Mr. Gorton** is our new nurse. He has been a school RN for four years and previously spent ten years working in dialysis and hospital ER/med-surg. Before becoming an RN, he was self-employed for twenty years as a youth sports educator and personal trainer. A Dodger and Rams fan, Mr. Gorton is also a classic car enthusiast and mechanic who enjoys boating and skiing.



Mr. Gorton

His teaching philosophy is to keep things simple, realistic, and tailored to his audience. He's excited to work with Leslie, our awesome HOS, to serve older students after spending his first three years in elementary school, and to have the best health office in the district.

We're so excited to welcome our new teachers and staff to the JAMS family!

## JAMS Named California Honor Roll School



**HONOR ROLL**

JAMS has something big to celebrate! It was named a 2025 California Honor Roll Star School, an award that recognizes schools for high academic achievement and student success. The award comes from the Educational Results Partnership (ERP), which looks at schools all over California to see which ones are helping students grow and close achievement gaps.

JAMS wasn't the only school in our district to shine. Six SMMUSD schools made the list this year. Along with JAMS, the Honor Roll includes Edison Language Academy, Franklin, Grant, and McKinley Elementary Schools, plus Santa Monica High School.

Star Schools, like JAMS, are recognized for having 33% or more of their students from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds while still showing strong success and improvement. That makes this award extra special. It shows that JAMS students and teachers are proving that hard work and teamwork can lead to amazing results, no matter what challenges they face.

JAMS Principal Dr. Chacon shared what the award means for our school. "This isn't just a recognition, it's a celebration of us. It reflects our collective commitment to continuous improvement, collaboration, and student success," Dr. Chacon said.

She added that this recognition belongs to everyone at JAMS - teachers, counselors, instructional aides, office staff, custodians, and campus supervisors, whose teamwork and dedication make our school a place where students feel safe, connected, and want to learn.

So next time you walk through the halls of JAMS, know that you're part of a community that's officially "Honor Roll" worthy. **Go Dragons!**

## The Teachers Who Grew Up at JAMS Celebrate 30+ Years of Helping Shape the School Every Step of the Way

By ALEX BENDER

# From Chalkboards to Chromebooks



Ms. Goldberg continues to bring creativity and kindness to JAMS, just as she did in her early teaching years. Photo: Mary Pham



Ms. Woo directs the next generation of musicians with the same passion she's had since her early teaching days. Photo: Elden Fur



Still inspiring smiles, Ms. Hale helps students find joy in learning, just like she did back in the '90s. Photo: Alex Bender



Ms. Levin works one-on-one with students, bringing the same dedication she's shown since her first days at JAMS. Photo: Francesca Nitti

Thirty years is a long time in any career, but for some teachers at JAMS, it's proof of a deeper passion. These dedicated teachers have spent decades shaping classrooms and contributing to the school's culture. These teachers have talked about their favorite memories, gave advice to students, and shared why they are still here.

Their stories show how much the school has changed, and how much it

still feels like home.

**Ms. Goldberg**, who has taught history, PE, ASB, and yearbook over the past 33 years, estimated that she has taught more than 5,000 students. "Many of these students hold a special part in my heart," she said. "It's really cool when my former students become colleagues here or when I get to teach the children of former students." She explained that the biggest change she's noticed is JAMS' reputation. "When I first came here, JAMS was not considered the best school in SMMUSD. Over the years, it's improved to the point that we are a California Distinguished School." She added that the one thing that has never changed is JAMS' focus on putting students first.

Instrumental music director **Ms. Woo** said her reason for staying is to give back to the community that shaped her. "During my first years, there was a core group of veteran teachers who were my idols," she said. "They were funny but firm, challenging yet compassionate." She added that the biggest change has been in technology. "We first used chalkboards and overhead projectors... the internet was clunky and slow. Now, everything is wireless!" Still, she noted, "The vibrant energy of middle schoolers has never changed." She said her favorite part of teaching is watching students grow as musicians and people, even long after they've left JAMS.

For **Ms. Hale**, JAMS has been a lifelong home. "I went to school here when it was John Adams Junior High," she said. "All of the highlights of my life were celebrated here." Ms. Hale described how JAMS supported her through both joyful and difficult times, and how many of her closest friendships began on campus. She continued, "My husband went to John Adams and so did my son. Having those collective memories as a family is beyond special." She said she still keeps in touch with many former students and has made lifelong friends among the staff, people she now considers part of her extended family.

Science teacher **Ms. Levin**, who has spent all 30 of her teaching years at JAMS, said the school has become like family. "Watching my own children go through JAMS really changed my perspective on what students experience," she explained. She's seen seven principals, years of construction, and major shifts in technology (from chalkboards to AI) but said, "The only thing that has stayed the same are some of my colleagues: Ms. Hale, Ms. Goldberg, Ms. Scotland (who retired last year), and Ms. Woo."

Even after 30 years, these teachers still love what they do and the JAMS community they've built. Their stories remind us that what makes JAMS special isn't the classrooms or the Chromebooks - it's the people. Their hard work inspires students and teachers to keep learning and caring. The memories they've made will always be a big part of what makes JAMS feel like home.

andia.bacaj



841 likes  
andia.bacaj Is WW III about to start? #makena.fitez #avery.watt #hasbro #battleship  
hasbro Glad to see world peace is still being negotiated  
battleship I'm adding "peace keeper" to my resume

ms.murphy



685 likes  
ms.murphy When you go to Vons for snacks and come back with a \$5,000 donation #cheetos #avid #vons  
chester.cheetah There was Cheeto dust on that check  
vons @cheetos Chester brought out the crunch!

ms.beeman



167 likes  
ms.beeman Painted in full color to celebrate the World Series Champs @dodgers #elias.oberman #LAdodgers  
dodgers He's ready for the victory party.  
shoheiehtani @dodgers The face of a true fan!

teddy.pesapane



492 likes  
teddy.pesapane Follow the leader #ms.fernandez #mason.altshule #thegreatshakeout

myles.shaw



713 likes  
myles.shaw Defying gravity #oliver.mota #nfl  
JalenHurts bro really should be in the NFL  
obj @myles.shaw chill, I taught him that move

elizabeth.melbourne



224 likes  
elizabeth.melbourne From hats to ovens, tinfoil can really do it all! #gabriel.bornello #mr.sato #solarovens  
ovens Imma steal that design  
marshmallowman @ovens I'm cooked

mr.miranda



940 likes  
mr.miranda That moment your pawn becomes a queen #raylan.radford #philemon.ayele #chessclub  
anyataylorjoy Where is this club and when can I join?  
dr.chacon @anyataylorjoy no, u don't even attend JAMS

# Instajams

Instajams captures JAMS life the way you've never seen it: snapshots straight from campus, not the Internet.



All the comments and likes are just for laughs. (No WiFi required)

amelia.troutman



539 likes  
amelia.troutman Just found out how Rome fell #devistated #summer:roberts #desiree.w

# Dragons Go Phone-Free

## Students React to Yondr Pouches Coming to JAMS

By KAHLAN ROBERTS & ANDIA BACAJ

According to OverYondr.com, over 40 states in the U.S. have begun using Yondr pouches in schools. These small pouches lock a person's phone inside and can only be opened with a special magnet. At an assembly earlier this year, JAMS students were shocked to learn that the school would spend over \$20,000 to bring Yondr pouches to campus. The goal, according to administration, is to reinforce the phone policy and make sure no one uses their device during school hours.



Many students left the assembly confused and disappointed, wondering why this new system was necessary. Yondr pouches were first created in 2014 by Graham Dugoni, who wanted to design "phone-free spaces" for public settings. Now, JAMS plans to follow that same idea. But not everyone is convinced it will work. According to a recent student survey, 76% of students said Yondr pouches won't solve the phone problem, and 82% think students will find loopholes to get around them.

While many students are skeptical, teachers see the situation differently. Some teachers feel relieved that phones will finally be completely out of sight during class. Others, especially elective teachers, are concerned about how it will affect their lessons. Classes like journalism, yearbook, and ASB often rely on student smartphones or digital cameras to take pictures and videos for the newspaper, yearbook, and school website.

Assistant Principal

Dr. Eure addressed this concern, saying, "Principal Chacon will be purchasing cameras. Students can use the cameras that the school will provide to take photos for these certain electives."

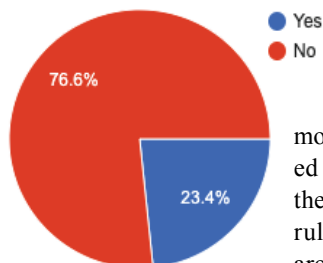
Even with that reassurance, students still have mixed feelings. Many say the issue isn't the phones themselves but how they're used. "I don't think Yondr pouches will solve any problems," said 8th grader Samuel Hohmeigher. "Kids will find other things to distract themselves with, and if there's an emergency, they won't be able to use their phones."

Others believe locking phones away might make things worse. "I think students will feel worse knowing that their phone is locked away," said 7th grader Angelique Alarconramirez. "Knowing there's another layer of security on their phone would make them want to use it even more."

Although 80% of students agree that JAMS doesn't need Yondr pouches, the administration believes this is the best solution to ongoing phone violations. Teachers and staff hope it will help students stay more focused and engaged during the school day.

Whether students like it or not, Yondr pouches are coming to JAMS by the second semester. They're expected to make a big impact on student life. Only time will tell if these gray magnetic pouches will truly help create a more focused and connected school community or if they'll just become another rule students learn to work around.

### Do You Think Yondr Pouches Will Solve JAMS's Phone Problem?



*I think that Yondr Pouches aren't really needed because there are so much bigger things to worry about in school than a student having their phone in their bag.*

**Redeat Gebeyehu**  
8th Grade

# REAL TALK

Dr. Eure, Assistant Principal



**Q: Do you think Yondr Pouches will benefit JAMS?**

**A:** Yes, 100%. I think it's going to allow students to remain focused on their academics which is what parents send their students to school for.

**Q: How will Yondr Pouches effect students during school time?**

**A:** I think it's going to allow students to focus during school time. I think the Yondr pouches will allow less fights, and a more peaceful environment.

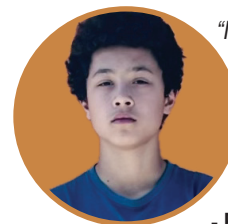
**Q: During emergency situations where students might need their phones, what will happen?**

**A:** During no emergency, should a student be on their phone with anybody. If there were to be an emergency, there would be no reason to call a parent, because the school has already contacted them.

### Do you think Yondr Pouches are a good idea?

*"I don't think they're a good idea because they would make students more upset about the situation, and students would spend time trying to open the pouch."*

**- Simona Cipresso**  
7th grade



*"I think that the idea is good in theory, but students would eventually figure out how to get their phones out."*

**- Felix Carpenter**  
8th grade



# DRAGON DAYS

To kick off the school year, JAMS showed off its school spirit with themed T-shirts, fun activities, and a thrilling Student vs. Staff volleyball game. The pep rally in the PAC had everyone cheering loud enough to wake a dragon! Students rocked their matching JAMS shirts to feel connected and part of the same team. It's the third year of this awesome tradition, and it was the perfect way to ease into the school year - no stress, just smiles. Sixth graders got their first taste of Dragon pride, seventh graders knew what to expect and loved it all over again, and eighth graders soaked it in for their final Dragon Day. Photos: Dr. Chacon and Mr. Miranda



# CAUGHT ON & OFF CAMPUS

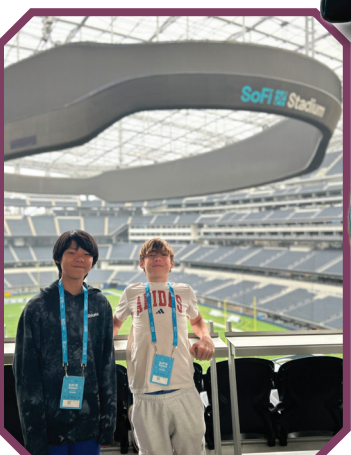


# SCIENCE AT SOFI

Eighth graders took a field trip to SoFi Stadium to learn how science, technology, engineering, art, and math (STEAM) all come together in one amazing place. Students got a private tour where they learned about the history and architecture of the stadium, its Southern California design, and how it was built to handle earthquakes. They also saw the YouTube Theatre, where concerts and events happen, and learned about how the stadium stays eco-friendly and sustainable.

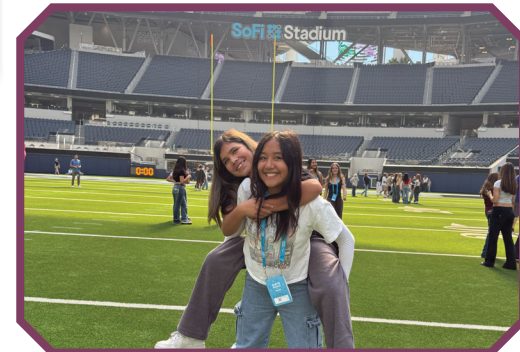
The best part was exploring the locker rooms and walking out onto the field, where students got to see an NFL Combine setup. The trip helped them understand how creativity, teamwork, and technology can make something as huge and exciting as SoFi Stadium possible.

Photos: Elden Fur and Ms. Aguilar



# ASIAN STUDENT UNION

Unlike some of the bigger clubs that meet every Thursday during advisory, the Asian Student Union is a smaller group that meet once a month. During those meetings, students of all races, including Asians, eat lunch together in Mr. Sato's room while discussing upcoming field trips. Trips to places like Little Tokyo, Koreatown, and the Chinatown parade were just a few of the destinations with Asian-inspired backgrounds. The most recent field trip the club discussed was a visit to Koreatown, where students got to shop at Koreatown Plaza and enjoy a variety of Korean foods. Photos: Mary Pham



## Should Picture Day be held at the very beginning of the school year, or would it be better to wait until later?

Having it early means students get their ID cards and yearbook photos done quickly, but it can also feel rushed before everyone settles in and feels ready to take pictures.



Photo: Elden Fur

Logan F. smiles confidently, capturing his final JAMS Picture Day moment.

### PICTURE DAY PERSPECTIVES

Students from all grades had a lot to say about when Picture Day should happen.

**6th graders** mostly talked about feeling nervous and wanting more time to get used to middle school before taking their photo.

**7th graders** mentioned style, confidence, and how they want to look in their pictures; some liked doing it early, while others wanted it later to show how much they've changed.

**8th graders** gave more thoughtful answers about tradition, maturity, and what makes the most sense.

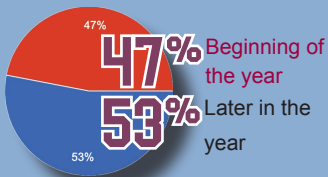


Photo: Andrew Lee

Soleil M.M. stays steady before the flash while Charley M., Eliotte D., Dakota G. wait in line.



Photo: Julia Cadena



*"It can show students how they looked at the start of the year, which might be nice, since they get their yearbook at the end of the year."*

**Samuel Chapman**  
8th grade

*"At the beginning of the year, it's basically you the year before. People change styles or their appearance by the end and would prefer to look like that in their picture."*

**Alice Roberts**  
6th grade



*"The main use for picture day photos is the IDs. We should get a new ID at the start of each year, using new picture day photos. Simple logic."*

**Maxwell Fields**  
7th grade

*"Taking your picture later in the year can better show your style and personality in the grade you are in rather than in the start of the year when you still might have the style and personality from last year."*

**Valerie Vazquez**  
7th grade



*"I feel like it's better to take it at the beginning of the year so we can just get it over with."*

**Naomi Perez**  
7th grade

*"Later in the year because it's like a new you."*

**Haley Navarro Cruz**  
7th grade



*"We should always take pictures at the beginning of the year because there's no point in getting our IDs later in the year if we are going to need them for school."*

**Santiago Lechuga**  
7th grade

*"I'd prefer it being later in the year because then we are all mature looking and we won't have to hear things about our looks from the beginning of the year."*

**Audrey Rodriguez**  
8th grade



*"I think it should be in the beginning of the year because it may take a long time to take the photos."*

**Daniela Lopez**  
6th grade

*"It should be later in the year because when you see the yearbook picture, it makes you feel good because it's how you look in the moment, whereas you might have looked very chopped at the beginning in relation to the end."*

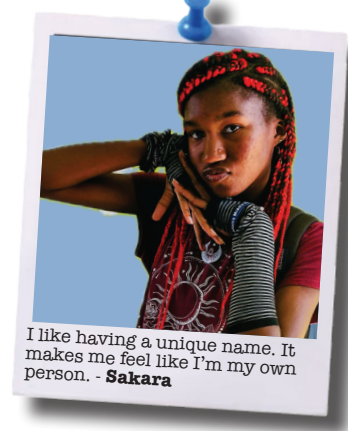
**Oliver Frost Lorenzo**  
8th grade



A look into unique names at JAMS

WHATS IN A NAME?

By DELFINA CORDERO & JOSIE MANKIEWICZ

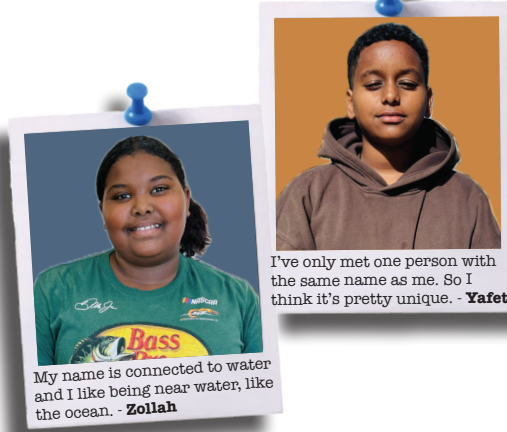


“Is Your Name Your Destiny?” asked a New York Times headline from 2024. A name can be more than just something teachers call out during roll. Some names are common and familiar, while others stand out as rare and unique. “My biological mom gave me my name and my adoptive parents decided to keep it. It means sacred grass and is a medicine,” said 6th grader Durva C.

America is a large melting pot consisting of many different cultures. Within this blend of backgrounds and traditions, some families choose names that link them to their roots, building a sense of belonging within this big country. For example, 8th grader Kira K. stated that her name is common in countries like Ukraine, which is where she is from. Names are a big way people share their culture and ultimately, their story. As English teacher Mr. Miranda shared, “It shows individuality and creativity.”

Sentimental value can be one of the most common reasons to pick a name for a child. “My mom used to watch this show with the actor Angelique Boyer. She loved the character and named me after her,” said 7th-grader, Angelique A. When someone names their child after a character or a person who they love, it shows just how much the sentimental value of something can affect someone’s decisions like naming a baby. As Ms. Alexopoulos explained, “Every name holds meaning for the person, but be careful, it may not always be positive.”

Familial names are a big part of the world today. Seventh grader Isabella



“My biological mom gave me my name and my adoptive parents decided to keep it.” - Durva 6th grade



Kristina L. says, “My name is a combination of my auntie’s name and a girlier version of my uncle’s name.” Being named after a family member who is very important can be an honor, or maybe a burden. Having been named after someone who meant a lot to family or parents can be stressful for some, and make one feel like they have to live up to the person. However, having the same name as someone who meant a lot to one’s parents can be incredibly special. Ms. Cowgill shared that one of her students, Trebor, was named after his father Robert but spelled backwards! “The story was fascinating,” she said.

JAMS students shared their thoughts and stories about their unique names, revealing the meanings, memories,

and experiences behind them. Eighth grader Maelle D. talked about how people sometimes mispronounce her name, explaining, “It depends! With substitutes not so much because they tend to mispronounce my name a lot. You’d be surprised what Mr. Minz has called me before.” 8th grader Mesha R. was asked what she thinks her name would be if it wasn’t what it is now. She continued, “I think if my name wasn’t Mesha then it would be Emily.” When 8th grader Sakara D-T. was asked whether she likes that her name is unique, she responded, “I like having a unique name. It makes me feel like I am my own person.” Lastly, when asked what the story behind her name was, Ellowyn S. shared, “I think my name was originally going to be Ruby, but one night when my mom was pregnant with me, she said I came to her in a dream and told her I wanted my name to be Ellowyn. She then woke my dad up and told him that that name was going to be mine.” Ms. Alexopoulos agreed, saying, “Ellowyn is awesome! I’ve never heard that name before.”

Some names have culturally significant meanings, emotionally significant meanings, some have sentimental value, or maybe one’s parents thought it would suit them. Whatever the name is, no matter the meaning, it’s still special. Dale Carnegie once said that “A name is the sweetest and most important sound in any language.” This idea connects to how names can come from just about anything, but no matter where a name originates, it’s still a big part of someone’s identity, and that’s the meaning that matters most.

FUN FACTS

Sources: Social Security Administration, Glamour Magazine, Medium.com

**Girls** are more often given unique names than boys.

**Economy** has an effect on names. During tough economic times, parents are more likely to choose less common names.

**Spelling** variations make names more unique while keeping familiar sounds, like “Nyah”, “Kayleigh”, “Aidyn”, “Madisyn”, “Jaxon”, “Brion”

# The Science Behind The Scares

Exploring How Fear Fuels Energy, Courage, and Connection

By IRIS GRUNCA & KALIANNE LAMBERT

Photo: Kalianne Lambert



Imagine this. You walk into a haunted house with your heart pounding and your hands shaking. A rusty sign reads “Whispering Pines Asylum.” Cobwebs cover the walls, and a flickering lantern barely lights the hallway. Suddenly, a skeleton with glowing red eyes jumps out and screams. You freeze. Your heart jumps like a rabbit trying to escape. Believe it or not, that burst of fear is actually good for you.

That adrenaline rushing through your body has benefits. It gives you energy, makes you more alert, boosts your immune system, and even helps you bond with people around you. Let’s explore why getting scared on Halloween might be healthier than you think.

If someone told you that being scared is good for you, you probably would not believe it. But without fear, life would feel pretty boring. According to CBS News, “When you are scared for

a short period of time, your body releases endorphins. Your body releases dopamine. Your heart rate speeds up. Oxygen and blood flow to your muscles and you get pumped up and you actually feel energized.” Basically, your brain sends signals to your adrenal glands. Those glands release adrenaline into your blood, which helps your body react fast to danger.

Fear starts in a small part of the brain called the amygdala. It controls the “fight or flight” response. Medical Mythbuster explains, “The changes in your body are designed to give a greater sense of alertness and a burst of energy just when you need it most.” Your heart beats faster and your breathing speeds up to protect you. Blood flows quicker, giving your body oxygen and helping your tissues heal.

Mrs. Levin, a 6th grade science teacher at JAMS, says, “When you’re scared, your body goes into the fight or

flight mode and your adrenal glands send adrenaline to your blood. This speeds up your heart causing more blood to pump to your cells which deliver glucose and oxygen to your muscles to provide more energy.” Fear makes people feel more alive and keeps life exciting. Without it, things would feel dull and ordinary.

Fear also teaches courage. It helps you build confidence and train your brain to handle stress. At first, fear can make you scream or want to run, but after you realize Halloween is safe and meant for fun, your brain starts to see it differently. This helps you become more resilient and better at handling real problems.

Being scared with friends or family on Halloween also brings people closer. When you scream together and then laugh about it, it makes you feel connected. Seeing others scared too makes you feel normal and less embarrassed. Sharing those moments creates memories and stronger friendships.

So next time your heart races in a haunted house, remember this: fear is not just about being scared. It is your body helping you feel alive.

*When you’re scared, your body goes into “fight or flight” mode and your adrenal glands send adrenaline to your blood. This speeds up your heart causing more blood to pump to your cells which deliver glucose and oxygen to your muscles to provide more energy.*

**Ms. Levin**  
Science teacher





# Halloween Costume Contest Winners

**BEST HAND-MADE**  
Noah Stella (Spring Bonnie)

**STAFF HAND-MADE**  
The Hippies

**FUNNIEST**  
Chandler Schwartz + Summer Robertson + Sylvie Levitt  
(Rock, paper, scissors)

**FUNNIEST STAFF**  
Ms. Beekman and Ms. Davis  
(Teen boys)

**REALISTIC**  
Maxwell Fields  
(Union soldier)

**REALISTIC STAFF**  
Ms. Beeman  
(Cruella de Vil)

**CUTEST**  
Cami Serna, Josephine Browning, Olive Allen, Elena Wheeler  
(Goldilocks & the Three Bears)

**SCARIEST STAFF**  
Ms. Peterson  
(Clown)



Noah S. took home the medal for both best hand made and scariest costume as Spring Bonnie!  
Photo: Mr. Miranda

## Spook, Sweets, & Style

By KALIANNE LAMBERT

There were duos and trios, all trying their best to take home the medal for the annual JAMS Halloween Costume Contest. Many tried, but only a few succeeded. These JAMS Dragons went all out this year with their creative costumes!

Whether you were trick-or-treating alone or with friends, Halloween night was full of fun, fright, and sugar rushes! The most liked candy at JAMS? Sour Patch Kids, a perfect mix of sweet and sour that tops the list of favorites every spooky season. So... are you ready to scream and plan your costume for next year's contest?



8th graders show off their style as the Frat Boys for Halloween. Photo: Francesca Nitti

## Two Holidays, One Spirit

By KALIANNE LAMBERT

There's Halloween, and then there's Día de los Muertos and they're not the same. While Halloween focuses on fear, candy, and scaring away bad spirits, Día de los Muertos is all about remembering and celebrating loved ones who have passed away.

Families light candles to help spirits find their way home, offer water and pan de cada día (a traditional bread) to satisfy their long journey, and decorate colorful altars to welcome them back. Halloween comes from Celtic traditions, while Día de los Muertos has roots in Aztec culture. The biggest difference? Halloween celebrates the spooky and unknown, Día de los Muertos celebrates love, memory, and life beyond death.



Throughout the week, ASB hosted Día de los Muertos activities like loteria and flower making. Photos: Ms. Beeman and Mr. Miranda



Students craft colorful paper flowers during ASB's Día de los Muertos celebration.

Photo: Mr. Miranda

## The Transition from Elementary School to Middle School, and How it Effects Students.

By JULIA CADENA & MYLES SHAW

**O**n August 21, hundreds of students streamed through the front gates of JAMS. Among them, about 300 sixth graders set foot on campus as middle schoolers for the first time. They had gone from being the oldest kids in school to the youngest. Middle school is different in so many ways from elementary school.

The campus is larger, the classes move faster, and there are more students. As they made their way to first period, the same thought was running through every sixth grader's head: Am I ready?

Throughout their lives, kids encounter dozens of movies, books, and news articles, such as "The Clique" and "Best Friends" that tell them about the transition to middle school. From "Diary of a Wimpy Kid" to news accounts about bullying in schools, the transition to middle school is often portrayed as a huge challenge. But is the shift to middle school

*"I think the transition to middle school can impact a child in various ways. It's one of the very first big transitions they have had in quite some time."*

**Ms. Zargar**  
6th Grade Counselor

# SIXTH GRADE PERSPECTIVE

really as difficult as it's made out to be?

The transition to middle school can be hard to adjust to at first. The students' small, familiar campus has been replaced with a huge, confusing maze of classrooms. Some students adapt to these changes quickly, learning their way around campus in only a few days. Others find it hard to adjust to the new environment. More challenging classes and a larger campus can be overwhelming. For most students however, the transition is somewhere in between.

"If I could give one piece of advice to an incoming 6th grader, I would say try not to think about it too much and have fun," said Bella Vasquezjaurez, a 7th grade student. When asked which factors were difficult for them to adjust to, 48% of students said that they struggled with finding classes, 38% said they struggled with more challenging classes, and 36% said that they had difficulty adjusting to a larger campus.

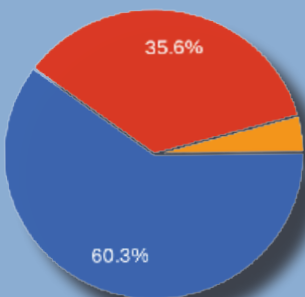


6th Graders Niam P. and Thomas H. show off their school spirit with JAMS T-shirts!  
Photo: Mr. Miranda

Any new experience can be intimidating, but especially a new school. Fifty-seven percent of students surveyed said they felt nervous before the first day of school. "Looking back, the transition to middle school does not feel like such a big deal anymore," said 8th grade student Hailey Noshko. "The initial fear and stress faded. It became the new normal after a few months." Despite how different middle school is from elementary school, it doesn't take long for every sixth grade student to find their place at JAMS.

### How Long Did It Take You To Adjust To Middle School?

- A few days
- A few weeks
- A few months



## Expectation VS. Reality



**MARCUS MCDONALD**  
6th Grade

### EXPECTATION:

I expected a lot of homework and classwork.

### REALITY:

There's a lot of homework but also some fun activities.



**TRENT BUHAJ**  
6th Grade

### EXPECTATION:

I expected the first day to go smoothly.

### REALITY:

It went okay, I felt scattered, but people helped me.

What would middle school be like if one of its daily inconveniences suddenly disappeared? Lockers might have pros and cons, but they could also make life at JAMS a little easier. No one wants to walk around with multiple notebooks, binders, PE clothes, lunch, and a Chromebook that feels like it weighs more than they do. With lockers, students could leave materials at school instead of lugging everything home. And this is only the beginning. The story of lockers and the curiosity around them is just getting started.

If JAMS students had lockers, what would they put inside? As long as it fits, it could go in a locker. After thinking about it, most students said they would want school supplies, personal items, or things to stay organized. Eighth grader Audrey C. said, "I would want a little whiteboard with a marker so I could write reminders, like assignment deadlines." Sixth grader Harrison M. had a completely different take. He said, "I would include a snake figurine like my pet snake, a bunch of books I like to read, and a fish figurine too." Whether it is useful supplies or fun little trinkets, every locker needs a personal touch.

And of course, lockers should look good on the inside too. Nobody wants to open a locker that looks plain and sad. But how much effort would students actually put into decorating one? Seventh grader Bethel B. said, "I would put stickers, words of affirmation, and photos of my friends. All of these things could be cute designs and could help me throughout my day." With so many personalities at JAMS, lockers would probably look totally different from one another. Some might be covered with photos of pets or celebrities. Others might have mirrors, mini magnets, or tiny shelves. According to The New York Times article "Locker Decorations Growing in Popularity at Middle Schools," some lockers even have furry carpets and motion sensor lights. The owner of a children's boutique said locker chandeliers became so popular that people were "snatching and

# Unlocking the Locker Question

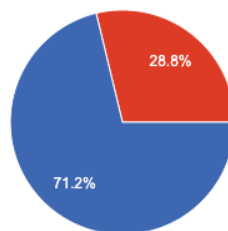
Exploring how lockers could change student life, for better or worse.

By TEDDY PESAPANE  
& OLIVIA PRATHER



Would you want a locker at JAMS?

■ Yes  
■ No



grabbing." But even with the fun decorations, the pros and cons of lockers cannot go unnoticed.

Lockers could definitely be helpful, but would the problems be worth it? Most students said the biggest issues would be forgetting their combination or having their locker jam. Eighth grader Nicholas P. saw it another way. He said, "It seems like a waste of school funds." Still, many students complained about how heavy their backpacks are every day. The National Institutes of Health said, "The need for children to carry a full day's class schedule of schoolbooks, in addition to other items and supplies, throughout the day is a growing concern." They also mentioned the rising number of students with back and shoulder pain. Lockers could help with that. Sixth grader Ayla S. said, "I have to carry all my volleyball clothes and stuff around all day just for my volleyball practice after school, which makes my backpack extra heavy." For students in sports, music, or after school clubs, lockers could make things a little easier.

So what happened to lockers at JAMS in the first place? Many years ago, the school got rid of them because students were not using them responsibly. But if lockers ever came back, would this generation treat them differently? Would lockers become a fun utility again, with colorful decorations and personal touches? Or would they become a hassle all over again?

Lockers might seem like a small detail, but small things can change how a school feels. They could help students stay organized, feel less stressed, and show their creativity. They could also be a place to leave notes for friends or hang up artwork and photos. Even though some people think lockers are unnecessary, others believe they could bring more personality to JAMS.

Whether students see lockers as an inconvenience or an opportunity to make school life brighter, one thing is clear. Lockers are more than just metal boxes. They are a way to express who you are, stay organized, and maybe make middle school a little easier to carry.



*"We had to bring textbooks to class daily. Some students were not being respectful of their lockers, so they were taken away. There is no need for lockers today because students don't have anything to put in them."*

- Ms. Hale, social studies teacher



*"I know one of the reasons we decided to get rid of lockers was because students were hiding contraband in them and it was causing problems."*

- Ms. Goldberg, social studies teacher & yearbook advisor

# Manga Mania

The JAMS Library's Diamond in the Rough

By AMELIA TROUTMAN & MAKENA HORWITZ

**M**anga, the Japanese comic, has grown a lot larger over the years at JAMS. It has been around in the JAMS library for some time and many JAMS students seem as interested in this type of comic as students in previous years. As manga continues to grow worldwide, it has become a major favorite among most readers here.

In our library, the manga section has stayed mostly the same over the years, though some series like *One Piece*, *Naruto*, and *Demon Slayer* remain available, not many people know what manga is exactly. To explain, our school librarian, Ms. McLaughlin said, "Manga is traditionally a Japanese cartoon-styled story that readers understand through the illustrations and words in which they read from back to front and right to left. Sometimes the series is adapted from the anime show, other times the manga is turned into anime for viewing. It's a great thing when kids choose to read rather than stream on a screen; we spend too much time staring at screens, in my opinion." When asked about recommendations, Ms. McLaughlin said, "We've been able to purchase new manga for our new library space and new JAMS students. So, I'd recommend *Hunter x Hunter* to readers who like adventure and want to explore the idea of justice. Other 'gateway into the manga genre' and newer collections include:

*Cat+Gamer*, *In the Name of the Mermaid Princess*, and *Cells at Work*. However, if someone wants classic manga, then come pick up *My Hero Academia* or *One Piece*."

Lots of people think that graphic novels and manga aren't helpful for school, but that's actually not the case. Natrona County Library says, "Manga engages your brain in ways regular books don't... Furthermore, learning to read pictures, words and sound effects (onomatopoeia) together helps you more accurately process the story and images through multimodal learning." The website also states that manga benefits those with Autism Spectrum Disorder, as manga contains visual language and repetitive patterns.

Although Ms. McLaughlin and some students enjoy manga, most students still prefer traditional books.

While manga has loyal fans, books like *The Inheritance Games*, *The Summer I Turned Pretty*, and *The Hunger Games* are checked out more often. Some students find manga confusing because of its back-to-front format or unique art style.

Still, for those who do enjoy it, there's a lot to discover. *Naruto* by Masashi Kishimoto follows a troublemaking boy trying to graduate from Ninja Academy and become the leader of his clan after



Anya and Bond from *Spy X Family*



Luffy from *One-Piece*

he is ignored and made fun of by his whole village. *Spy X Family* by Tatsuya Endo tells the story of a spy trying to break into a private school, but he needs a wife and a child to do so. What he doesn't know is

that his wife is an assassin and his adopted child is a telepath. Another series named *Komi Can't Communicate* by Tomohito Oda, is a heartwarming story about a shy girl named Komi with social anxiety. When she finally makes a friend, Tadano, he makes a deal with her to get her 100 friends by the end of the school year.

As manga continues to grow in popularity, it offers a unique way of storytelling that connects readers across the globe. As more students start to read manga, more series will be added to libraries across schools for more students to discover these fun and artistic stories.

## What do you like most about reading manga compared to regular books?



"It shows me that there are different types of books. Some books that don't involve pictures can be boring, and I like the speech bubbles. It makes it more interesting to read with the pictures."  
-Delilah A., 6th grade

"The art is really good and the setting and plot has a creative and original feel to it. The story develops along with the characters at a fairly stable pace, and the characters' personalities stay consistent throughout the books."



-Eloise A., 7th grade

### The manga section in the JAMS Library



## Double Win

Aurora Gonzalez, 8th-grade



Aurora's winning artwork, featured as the cover of this year's yearbook.



Aurora Gonzalez, an 8th grader at JAMS, has won the yearbook cover contest for the second year in a row. "I feel honored," she said. "I didn't think I'd be in this position when I first started drawing last year."

Last year's design was completely her own idea, but this year the yearbook staff gave artists a theme focused on beach and fun. Instead of making it harder, Aurora said the guidelines inspired her artwork. Her original plan was to draw

more water, surfers, and people playing on the sand. But she decided to focus on the Santa Monica Pier because she felt it is an iconic place that brings people together. She even included the pier sign on the back cover, along with small details that connect both JAMS and Santa Monica.

Aurora hopes the cover makes students feel connected to their own lives. "It should reflect their fun experiences and moments with friends and family," she said.

# The Secret Skills of AVID Students

Behind the binders and planners, AVID students are mastering the real skills that build confidence, leadership, and lifelong success.

By KAHLAN ROBERTS

AVID is often misunderstood by many students, and is perceived as a class that only talks about homework. Though many students believe this, AVID students can assure that this is not the case. In AVID, students are constantly learning key topics like teamwork, communication, responsibility, and organization. Though these topics help students during school, AVID also teaches these topics to be brought to outside of school and into the future. In a survey regarding the program, 1 in 5 AVID students claimed that the class made them more confident and persistent in their abilities.

AVID students in 7th and 8th grade learn what skills they find most valuable. Their answers in a recent survey show that AVID is about much more than academic support. It is about preparation, growth, and teamwork that shape how stu-

“*AVID isn't just study time, it's about learning life skills.*”

Isaac M.  
7th grade

dents learn and lead.

One of the most common skills students mentioned was staying organized. Seventh grader Nick G. said that keeping his binder and planner in order helps him stay on track in all his classes. Many agreed that this structure makes school less stressful. "I plan ahead instead of waiting until the last minute," eighth grader Emma S. explained.

Several students pointed out that AVID teaches important life lessons. "AVID isn't just study time, it's about learning life skills," seventh grader Isaac M. said. Students also shared that tutorials and binder checks take real effort and responsibility. Eighth grader

Marisol B. added that these routines "push each other to do better every day."

Both grade levels showed pride in how AVID shapes leadership and teamwork at JAMS. "We lead by example in the classroom," eighth grader Ricardo G. said. Whether it is through tutorials, organization, or reflection, AVID students are learning to support one another while preparing for high school and beyond.

The AVID mindset - focused, organized, and motivated - reflects the school's own values. This shows when we see AVID students representing themselves both in and out of the classroom. AVID teacher, Ms. Murphy said, "It is not just a class - it is a program of hard work, leadership, and success."

AVID isn't just a program, it is an experience that will last a lifetime.

**42%** of AVID students said staying organized and managing time are the top skills that help them in other classes.



With nametags out and pencils ready, AVID students focus in as the guest speaker prepares to begin. Photo: Ms. Murphy



Eighth graders John M., Stella W., Julia C., and Sakara D. strike a smile for an AVID-worthy photo moment. Photo: Ms. Murphy



It's "Fun Friday" in AVID, and students bring their competitive spirit to an intense round of UNO. Photo: Ms. Murphy

# DOUBLE VISION

A Look Into Twins, Triplets, and Siblings That Attend School Together

By NOVA MORGAN



**TOP ROW (L to R):** Bernardo + Jose Corona. Diana, Angel, + Daisy Salazar, Sylvie + Walker Levitt, Nadim + Nadir Nasr, Nicholas + Stella Garcia

**SECOND ROW:** Jordan + Jackson Chavez, Luca + Rocco Novellino, Edward + David Jones, Andia + Brikena Bacaj

**THIRD ROW:** Ililta, Imnet, + Tselot Tesfaye, Olivia + Madison Piippo. Ricardo + Leondro Gonzalez

**BOTTOM ROW:** Ayla + Skye Strand, Leonardo + Lukas Bellanger, Yafet + Yanet Yonas, Ellie + Emmet Shapiro, Rebe + Thomas Hall

Approximately 80% of Americans have one or more siblings, while only three percent of Americans have a twin or triplet. At JAMS, approximately 20% of students have a sibling that attends alongside them; there are a staggering amount of twins and triplets. There are 14 sets of twins and two sets of triplets across all grade levels. So, how do the presence of twins or triplets, or, more commonly, the presence of a younger or older sibling, affect school experience and culture?

A sibling on campus can certainly make or break a school experience, as relationships can differ between campus and home. Eighth grader Maëlle Daniels said, "It's pretty different. We don't really talk to each other at school; it's usually just exchanging a 'what's up', or a glance across the quad. While at home, we enjoy comparing experiences with teachers we both had/have." When asked if teachers compare Maëlle with her brother, she said, "I don't

think comparisons are made that often because people see us as two different people with two very different personalities."

There are several major ways sibling relationships can affect school culture and experience, both positive and negative. One positive example is a built-in support system. Siblings can understand each other's learning challenges and celebrate each other's achievements. Though, a negative example would include comparison. According to a survey 64% of JAMS students have been compared to their siblings in the past, so this isn't a rare phenomenon.

Comparisons are an even bigger issue among twins and triplets. Comparison, among any sibling relationships, often results in feelings of inadequacy and insecurity. Author Barbra Klein, Ph.D, Ed.D, who specializes in twin relationships, had this to say with her own experience as a twin. "I know that I have taken outsiders' and close others' comments about my twin

identity as very hurtful to my positive sense of self. For example, I was 30 years old when friends still asked with great enthusiasm, 'How is Marjorie?' I wanted to say, 'What about me?'" Another common occurrence with twins is being mixed up. When asked if his teachers ever mixed him up with his sibling, 6th grader Rocco Novellino said, "I mean, sometimes. We're not identical, but they still sometimes mix us up."

Having a sibling on campus comes with both challenges and advantages. Siblings might be compared to each other or even get mistaken for one another, especially if they're twins or triplets. At the same time, they share experiences, memories, and support that make school life a little less overwhelming. In the end, siblings are more than just classmates. They are built-in teammates, and, like 7th grader Sylvie Levitt says, "Someone always has my back."

At JAMS, choir unites students through song, confidence, and a shared love of music.

By TEDDY PESAPANE

When the JAMS Performing Arts Center isn't filled with costumes and props, it's filled with the voices of choir students practicing their catchy vowel warmups. Many people don't realize there's more to choir than just singing. At JAMS, choir isn't just an elective, it's a community built on friendship, confidence, and a shared love for music. Students from all three grades say that singing together helps them feel connected and proud. The feeling of everyone's voices coming together into one sound is what keeps them coming back year after year.

The JAMS Journal asked choir students why they joined and what keeps them singing. Most said they joined because they love performing or wanted to build confidence. Choirs include students from multiple grades, helping them make new friends across the school. Seventh grader Emma L. said she joined "to help me feel more confident about my voice," while sixth grader Rylan D. shared that he joined because he "loves singing and performing."

Choir director Ms. Blanchard explained why the program matters: "For the same reason that we have any academic class, physical education, art classes, or an instrumental music program, to create skilled, kind, connected, and well-rounded learners." She added, "We should all be one family, there shouldn't be any hierarchy."

Across all grades, students agreed that performing and learning harmonies are the best parts of choir. Eighth grader Makenna F. said her favorite part is "the feeling of everyone singing as one voice," and seventh grader Rosie M. added that it feels amazing "when everyone's voices blend." For JAMS



Photo: Ms. Blanchard



“

*No one is perfect, and together, we can all create a beautiful masterpiece.*

**Ms. Blanchard**  
Choir director



**Ms. Blanchard reviews a piece of sheet music with her choir students as they prepare for their upcoming performance.** Photo: Teddy Pesapane

singers, harmony isn't just about hitting the right notes, it's about teamwork and connection. Many said concerts are their favorite part because they show how much everyone has grown since first learning the songs. Ms. Blanchard said, "I'm really excited to make music with my students" every time she steps on stage.

On November 5th, JAMS Choir performed at the District-wide Fall Festival, where the Honor Choir and Treble Chorus II represented the school. Each group performed two songs and received feedback from judges, which can be nerve-wracking. To manage stage fright, students take deep breaths, focus on the music, or look at the director for support. Eighth grader Cece H. said, "I practice more to feel prepared and confident." Ms. Blanchard related to her students, saying, "I used to get stage fright, but since I do it a lot, I don't get as scared now."

When asked how choir makes them feel, most students said happy, confident, and calm. Seventh grader Noah S. summed it up best: "I think about how proud I'll feel after we perform." Whether rehearsing in class or performing on stage, JAMS choir students prove that harmony isn't just about the music, it's about teamwork, friendship, and joy.



**Choir students perform at the District-wide Fall Festival showcasing their talent for the JAMS Community.** Photo: Ms. Blanchard



**Dressed in concert black, choir students gather for a group photo before their performance, ready to showcase their hard work and harmony.** Photo: Ms. Blanchard



Seeing motorcycles go by - when the bikers wave back to me it makes my day. - **Nova**



Simply seeing others smile. It comforts me to know people are happy. - **Yaretzi**



It makes me smile when I see other people do well. - **David**



I'm grateful for the support that I get from my family and friends. - **Elodie**



I'm grateful for the people in my life who remind me that I am loved. - **Ms. Peterson**



I smile when I see my friends. I run to hug them every morning. - **Saskia**

# Attitude of Gratitude

In the spirit of Thanksgiving, we asked our JAMS family what fills their hearts with gratitude, and what never fails to make them smile. Here are some of our favorite answers.



I'm grateful for my family, and that I can do as many things as I can. - **Olivia**



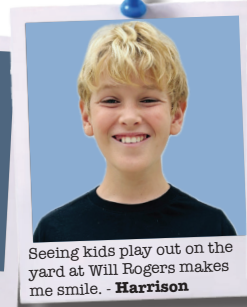
I'm grateful for my mom always caring about me. - **Kimberlee**



I'm grateful for my family, friends, home, school, and many good things. - **Camilla**



Grateful for having great friends and family that support my decisions. - **Kahlan**



Seeing kids play out on the yard at Will Rogers makes me smile. - **Harrison**



Waking up knowing that I don't have to go through anything alone. - **Morgan**

## DRAGON DOODLES

Dragon Doodles showcases the imaginative artwork of JAMS students who bring creativity to life through their unique and expressive designs.

Angelica Huang  
7th Grade



Finley Beardsley  
7th Grade

Eloise Alexopolous  
7th Grade



## THE BOOKMARK

### Keeper of the Lost Cities by Shannon Messenger

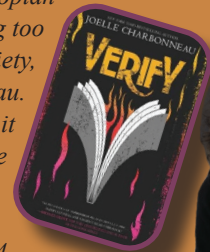
"It is a great story that has twists and amazing characters. Shannon Messenger built a world full of Abilities (NOT magic), Counsliers, and Arson. (but don't let that stop you!) My favorite characters are Biana, Amberly, Vacker, and Tam Dai Song. YES it is beautiful - I cried like, five times (that's how you know it's a good book)."



Lilly Grinage  
6th grade

### Verify by Joelle Charbonneau

If you're interested in a dystopian novel but don't want something too disturbing about the future of society, try *Verify* by Joelle Charbonneau. Set in modern-day Chicago, it follows a community where the past has been erased and people begin questioning government "improvement" projects. If 1984 by George Orwell or Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury felt too advanced or hard to get into, this book is a great alternative. Critics even say *Verify* feels like a modern blend of both classics.



Ms. McLaughlin  
Librarian

# Keys to Your Heart

Tiny accessories that reveal your style and your story.

By DANIELA KADISH & FRANCESCA NITTI

Key-chains are more than just small decorations. They can show someone's personality, style, or even their interests. There are all kinds of key-chains, big or small, cute or simple, and each one can give a first impression about the person who owns it. Personalized key-chains make people feel unique and add a bit of flair to everyday life. With so many colors, shapes, and materials, every key-chain can say something about someone.

Labubus are one of the most popular key-chains right now. They are colorful, soft, and known for their cheerful look. According to a recent school survey, 11.1% of students own a Labubu. Many people think Labubu owners are fun and loyal to their friends. Cartoon key-chains are also loved by students and show off favorite movies, shows, or characters. People who choose these usually have bold outfits and confident personalities.

Letter key-chains are another common choice. They are

simple but stylish and show that someone is proud of who they are. If they were a font, they would be bold because they stand out without being afraid. Homemade or crafted key-chains are extra meaningful because someone actually made them. These key-chains do not show one exact type of personality, but they give a little glimpse into someone's life and memories. People who carry handmade key-chains are often warm and full of energy.

Even though trends like Labubus, Stanleys, or HydroFlasks fade away, their impact sticks around. Has someone ever looked at an old trend and remembered how everyone wanted it? Now Stanleys sit in cupboards and Sonny Angels are lost in drawers.

Things that were trending end up in thrift stores or landfills. On social media, content creators show off their trendy items which makes people want them more.

One student said, "I think



that over consuming is bad for mental health, because if you want to be like everyone else that's not very good." They are saying that buying things just to fit in can make you feel worse about yourself. It can make people believe they are not good enough if they do not own the newest or most expensive things.

Have you ever wanted something only because everyone else had it? It is easy to feel left out if you do not follow the trends. But it is important to ask yourself if you really need it or if you just want it to fit in. That feeling of needing more and more can become dangerous. When trends fade, all those items end up forgotten in bedrooms, closets, or the trash.

Key-chains might be small, but they tell big stories. They show what someone likes, believes in, or feels connected to. Whether it is a trendy Labubu or a handmade gift from a friend, every key-chain says something about the person who carries it.

## Types of Key-Chains on Campus

Labubu  
11.1%



Character/  
cartoon  
20.2%



Plush  
19.2%



70% of JAMS students have some sort of key-chain they bring to school every day.

Do you feel like you sometimes buy or collect more than you actually need, and do you think that kind of overconsumption can harm the world in any way?



"I don't think I over consume as much as other people, I think that I do over consume though."

- Angelica Huang, 7th grade



"I think that over consuming is bad for mental health, because if you want to be like everyone else that's not very good."

- Audrey Malaythong, 8th grade

## JAMS Jamz

The JAMS Jamz playlist is a student-made collection designed to capture the perfect fall and winter vibes.



Rock That Body  
Black Eyed Peas



Sugar On My Tongue  
Tyler, The Creator



The Fate of Ophelia  
Taylor Swift



When Did You Get Hot?  
Sabrina Carpenter



Letter To My 13 Year Old Self  
Laufey

# Reflections Contest "I Belong" Highlights JAMS Talent

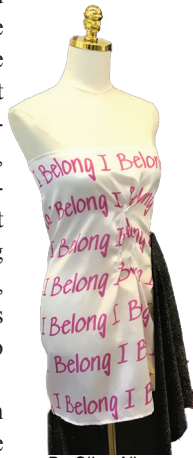
The JAMS and PTSA Reflections Art Contest celebrated creativity and self-expression this year with the theme "I BELONG!" Students were invited to create original work at home in categories like Dance Choreography, Literature, Photography, Film Production, Music Composition, and Visual Arts. The contest wrapped up with a gallery showing of all submissions, a fun celebration, and ribbons awarded to the winners whose art captured what it means to belong.

In **Visual Arts**, Imogen Roth-Greenhut earned 1st place with "Happy Place", followed by

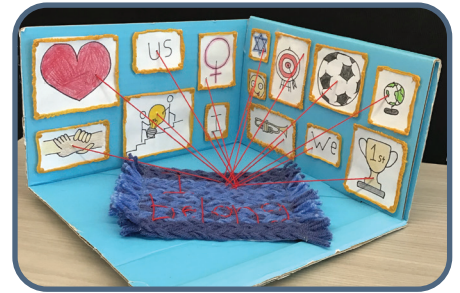
Olive Allen with "I Belong" and Maccabee Kushner with an honorable mention for "Sky of Belonging."

In **Music Composition**, 1st place went to Phoebe Brooks for "The Lonely Flute" and 2nd to Harrison McGee for "The Power of Belonging." For **Literature**, Maelle Daniels won 1st place with "We All Belong," and Asten Oh took 2nd with "My Reflection on 'I Belong.'" Finally, in **Film Production**, Yara Bruno earned 1st place with "sPawn."

Congratulations to all the talented JAMS artists who showed what belonging truly means.



By Olive Allen



Imogen Roth-Greenhut earned 1st Place in Visual Arts for her creative diorama. Students admired all the submissions displayed in the library. Photos: Mr. Miranda



# WHAT'S HOT WHAT'S NOT

Trends change rapidly these days. Something popular this week may be forgotten the next.

By DARIEN MAHIR



**Baggy jeans:** Fashion might be the biggest part of our culture, even more than music or memes. Styles have changed a lot over time, from suits to sweaters. Today, baggy jeans are the top trend. In a school survey, 65% of students said they prefer baggy clothes, mostly for comfort and skate style.

**67 Meme:** Memes, which have been around for decades, are videos, images, or texts that are funny and get spread throughout the Internet. One new big meme is "67". This meme came from a song where the artist sings the number 67. It became popular when a popular high school basketball team started saying the phrase. This then sprouted into many different things and people, and they went as far as even making 67 water.



**Labubus:** Trends come and go, just like memes. Labubu, a new plush toy, has taken over the internet and become popular among younger students. Similar to Jellycats, it's rising fast thanks to social media, celebrity influence like BLACKPINK's Lisa, and strong advertising. About one in four students owns one.

**Nettspend:** Nowadays, musical artists have more platforms than ever to promote their music. They also have social media. One notable example of this is the rapper Nettspend. In 2023, he blew up on Twitter from a snippet of his song. Other big influential rappers in the same genre noticed him and helped him push more music out.

**Skinny jeans:** Skinny jeans aren't very popular with teens anymore. Most say they're tight, uncomfortable, and hard to move in. Instead, teens prefer baggy jeans because they're relaxed, stylish, and easier to wear all day,



**Skibidi Toilet:** Skibidi Toilet was one of the biggest memes of 2023, known for its bizarre animations and catchy music. It spread quickly across TikTok and YouTube, especially among younger viewers. But as the trend died down, people started calling it "corny," and most moved on to newer, funnier memes.

**Pop it toys:** Pop it toys blew up in 2020 for its addictiveness and how satisfying it was to pop it. A lot of cool design's have been made on them but they have sadly fallen off.



**Jazz:** Even though Jazz is somewhat popular among older people the new generation does not like the sound and would rather listen to fast, loud, new music.

# No Hands on Deck

Can Autonomous Vehicles Safely Navigate Our Streets and Our Schools?



**“Do you think that Waymos are safer than regular cars with human drivers?”**



*“Yes, because they stop when they need to, follow the speed limit, and they are more aware than regular people driving cars.”*  
**-Charlotte McCowan**  
 6th grade

*“Heck no! Waymos don’t have the eyes of humans and people know the ways of the road.”*



**-Etta Vallese**  
 7th grade



*“I feel safer in a Waymo because I can’t get kidnapped.”*  
**- Julian Recendez**  
 8th grade

By **CHANDLER SCHWARTZ** & **VINCE YU**

Imagine a white car covered in cameras slowly pulling up to you. You open the door, sit in the soft leather seat, and get ready to say hello to the driver. But there is no one there. The steering wheel starts to turn on its own as the car drives you home safely. When you arrive, a small orange robot rolls up to your door. You type a password, and it opens to reveal hot food that you ordered. These are AI systems like Waymo and Coco robots. They use cameras and advanced technology deliver food and people to their destinations.

Waymo and Coco robots are becoming more popular every day. Many people like how they work on their own, but others are unsure. Seventh grade counselor Ms. Cowgill said, “I certainly think AI can make life easier, but at what cost?” Some believe AI makes life safer and faster, while others worry it takes away jobs. Seventh grade teacher Ms. Hale said, “I don’t use AI for anything so I definitely would not use it to take me anywhere.” But Ms. Alexopoulos said, “I trust Waymo to get me to most places, though I haven’t tried it yet.”

Waymo was created by Tekedra Mawakana and Dmitri Dolgov to reduce car crashes. Over one million people die in car accidents every year. Waymo cars have 29 cameras that give them a full 360 degree view, and their reaction time is faster than any human. They are electric, so they do not release harmful gases into the air. Some crashes have happened, but most were caused by other human drivers. Seventh grader Sylvie Levitt said, “Humans can get very easily distracted, but Waymos have cameras all around them and can’t lose focus because they are machines and don’t have brains.”

Coco robots are another type of AI technology. They deliver food and can keep it warm longer than regular delivery drivers. They can also fit in small spaces. Up to 20 Coco robots can fit in one parking spot, and they can carry up to four grocery bags or six pizzas. They use cameras to see in front, behind, and on both sides. In a recent survey, 50.7% of JAMS students said they trust AI to drive them or deliver food. Seventh grader Kaeden McAlpin said, “I would rather get food from a Coco robot because food delivery people can eat it, and

I just don’t want to talk to people.”

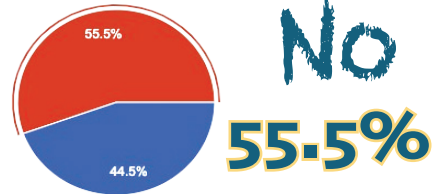
Some students and teachers have imagined robots working at JAMS. A Waymo could take students to school if their parents cannot drive them. A Coco robot could roll across campus delivering lunch to teachers. Robots could even bring pencils and supplies to classrooms. But a survey showed that more than half of JAMS students do not think AI would be helpful at school. Even so, some believe it could make things more organized and help teachers.

All in all, AI is becoming a big part of our world, and many people believe it is for the better. Soon, taxi and delivery companies might all use self driving vehicles. Waymos could become the safest way for students to get to school, and Coco robots could deliver food that stays warm and safe to eat. AI has its pros and cons, but it has the potential to make our world a better place.

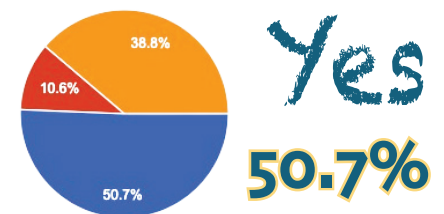


## SURVEY RESULTS

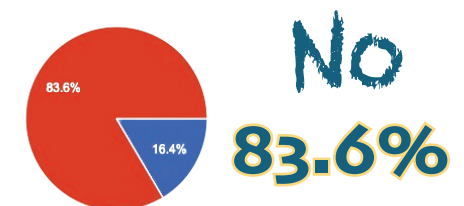
Have you ever been in a Waymo?



Do you trust AI to take you to your destination?



Have you ever received an order from a Coco Robot?



# SPOT THE DIFFERENCE!



Students playing Lotería to celebrate Día de los Muertos, enjoying the tradition while connecting with Mexican culture. Photo: Ms. Beeman

## ANSWER KEY

Look closely and see if you can find all **17 changes** between the two pictures. Can you find them all? Look carefully; some are sneaky!

- 1. Blue door is now red / 2. Logo missing from boy's white jersey / 3. Blonde student's hair color and style changed / 4. Slice of pizza added to table / 5. Building windows removed / 6. Student now has an eye patch / 7. Student's arm is missing / 8. Blue dot added on boy's shirt / 9. Girl in front now has a flower in her hair / 10. Boy is now wearing a white hat / 11. Girl now has a colorful beaded crown / 12. Cups on the table changed colors / 13. Boy's hair changed from black to blonde / 14. Boy's glasses changed to sunglasses / 15. Boy's shirt logo is different / 16. Girl's eyes now looking up instead of down / 17. Girl is now wearing a necklace

## THE JAMS JOURNAL

VOLUME 8 : ISSUE 1

Published by the students of  
John Adams Middle School  
2425 16th Street  
Santa Monica, CA 90405



### THE JAMS JOURNAL TEAM

**Front row:** Daniela Kadish, Evie Giordano, Olivia Prather, Mary Pham, Delfina Cordero / **2nd row:** Vince Yu, Andrew Lee, Teddy Pesapane, Makena Horowitz, Julia Cadena / **3rd row:** Nova Morgan, Alexandre Bender, Andia Bacaj, Amelia Troutman, Elizabeth Melbourne, Kahlán Roberts, Francesca Nitti / **Top row:** Kallianne Lambert, Elden Fur, Myles Shaw, Chandler Schwartz, Darien Mahir, Iris Grunca, Finn Callen

**Not pictured:** Josie Mankiewicz

**ADVISOR:** Mr. Miranda



**KAHLAN ROBERTS**  
Editor-in-Chief



**ELIZABETH MELBOURNE**  
Copy Editor



**MARY PHAM**  
Copy Editor



**NOVA MORGAN**  
Design Editor



**ELDEN FUR**  
Photo Editor