

With college essays around the corner, how can A.I. help you find your voice?

Pg. 10

YOUR IDEAL CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

What does science tell us about the best place to learn?

Pg. 8

With COVID coming back, a look at how far we've come, and what's next.

Pg. 16

BEAR WITNESS



CHROMEBOOKS VS. PERSONAL LAPTOPS

The digital divide

The district's one-to-one Chromebook availability was introduced during the pandemic, but students who could afford it bring their laptops to get around restrictions to websites and limitations in running more powerful software.

Easier access

"With a personal computer, I just have easier access to documents and all my college apps," senior Kaelyn Kubota

GoGuardian

The monitoring software is popular among teachers, but it is not able to detect students who bring non-school laptops, even when they are signed with district email.

LEFT TO THEIR OWN DEVICES

Though Chromebooks are only allowed on campus, inconsistent teacher enforcement creates a digital divide

JIVYON CHOI Editor-in-Chief

Web browser games, Netflix, college apps, photos, texting, Adobe software, ChatGPT — you can access these and more at school on laptops that students bring from home.

Though school-issued Chromebooks support basic functions such as the Google Docs and approved Chrome extensions, essential websites are blocked and face increased scrutiny from the district and teachers who use the GoGuardian monitoring software.

Because of the one-to-one Chromebook to student ratio, Branham policy states that "no personal computers or tablets are allowed" in classrooms. However, it also leaves enforcement of that to teachers, who can also allow students to bring more powerful and often more expensive laptops, which cost far more than the \$300 Chromebooks.

Kira Durant, the district's Coordinator of Instructional Technology believes that allowing students to use their own devices creates a big discrepancy in learning.

"It poses an equity issue and perpetuates the existing digital divide," she wrote to in an email to the Bear Witness, adding that "personal devices are at risk of being damaged, stolen, or lost when brought to and from school."

But for students, there are other reasons why they choose to bring their own devices.

Senior Kaelyn Kubota brings her personal computer to school, and understands that though Chromebooks can be required for online tests, a Chromebook-only rule is too restrictive given that GoGuardian only blocks websites on personal computers if logged in

SEE CHROMEBOOK • PAGE 2

GoGuardian teacher

When students access their Chromebooks at school, teachers can use GoGuardian to monitor student work. This includes locking and closing student screens and allowing them to chat with students.

Student expectations

The district says it does not monitor whether students are logging on with their Chromebooks or with their laptops. "Students are expected to bring their district-issued Chromebooks to school and use them for school work," says Kira Durant, the district's Coordinator of Instructional Technology.

Popularity of Google's Snake game

There are hundreds of versions of the Snake game, which first surged in popularity as a built-in game for Nokia's mobile phones. its popularity surged again when Google introduced its version as a Google Doode in 2013. Since then students have played the game in-between assignments, since it is not blocked by the

85%

of schools and school districts in the United States have a Chromebook program

48.1 million

Chromebooks are used by K-12 students.

LUNCH WASTE

300

Pieces of fruit that Branham chef manager Collette Lewis estimates is discarded each day at school.



Food rules can't cut fruit waste

ELLIOTT YAU Staff Writer

Sophomore Jaxsen Tafaoimalo walks out of The Kitchen at brunch, holding his scrambled eggs, biscuit and apple while others around him drop their fruits straight onto one of the condiment carts.

On average, about 575 students pass through The Kitchen during brunch, and about 920 during lunch, according to kitchen lead Oscar Celaya.

All of those students are required by law to take a fruit—but not to eat it.

To be in compliance with the National School Lunch program, which reimburses schools for their meals, schools must ensure that every student who takes a meal is provided a quarter cup of fruit or vegetables.

But this policy isn't having its desired effect: Students take fruit but then immediately discard it. During a lunch period this month, 187 fruits were left on the condiment cart at lunch, meaning that at least 19.77% of students who got lunch that Wednesday did not eat their fruit.

SEE FOOD • PAGE 2

Editorial

You can't change the law, but more solutions needed to cut food waste.

Page 7

ACTIVITIES DIRECTOR

Leaders seek stability in new role

MILA WINDELL Photo Editor

After having four activities directors in the past two years, Branham ASB hopes that its two new directors will stay a while: chemistry teacher Victoria Raineri and assistant principal Scott Savory.

The changes began two years ago when activities director Christina Hillman resigned before the 2022-2023 school year to take on a new position in the Central Valley. Hillman held the position for four years.

A new activities director, Christina Carrera, took the position at the start of the last school year but abruptly resigned in October. English teacher Kerry Murphy and volleyball coach Heather Cooper were named interim directors until the end of the first semester, and Cooper continued the role until the end of the year.

The role requires that faculty must have or be working toward an administrator credential, which Cooper did not have yet.

SEE ASB • PAGE 3

Bear Witness staff graphic