

WINTER 2024



KINGSLEY VOICE

MENTAL HEALTH

let's talk about it

the dreaded
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OP-ED

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King's Clinic period is here to stay



Nikita Hardial

Students use Clinic to focus on schoolwork and extracurricular activities, which helps to promote productivity and a balanced schedule.

By Iffat Nafisa

The students at R.H. King Academy have long grown used to the school's unique Clinic period, a 50-minute section of time dedicated to independent study that follows the first class of the day. Many students though are worried that this extra allotted time is to be removed, especially after the (now paused) removal of November break. "I have heard rumours about it," says Shreyashi Dahal, a Grade 10 student at King. "A lot of people are talking about the removal of Clinic."

With rumours of Clinic disappearing, King students find themselves appreciating Clinic period more than ever before. Subigyta Chapagain, a Grade 11, is worried about its rumoured removal. "This is stressing me out because Clinic gives me time to study for

tests and catch up on work," Chapagain says. "If Clinic is removed, I'm cooked."

Clinic increases the productivity of many students and helps them manage their time so they can complete schoolwork. The period also provides the opportunity to work on extracurricular commitments.

These rumours stem from a common criticism of Clinic—that students aren't using the time effectively enough. A Grade 11 student, Najiha Rahman can somewhat agree with this. "I feel like Grade 9s and 10s don't have enough work to use it efficiently. Now that I'm older, though, I don't know what I'd do without it."

Shreya Roza, a junior student who is in Grade 10, also understands some of the concerns about the misuse of Clinic time. "I understand some may be frustrated due to

some students wasting the period by not accomplishing anything school-related, however, if it were to be removed, it would be unfair to the majority of students who are actually putting in effort to use Clinic effectively."

It is important to note, though, that the removal of Clinic, so far, is just a rumour. So, the *Kingsley Voice* decided to find out if there is any truth to this. When interviewed this December, Principal Catherine Chang acknowledged concerns about the productivity during Clinic. "Clinic could be used more effectively by some students, so we want to make sure that the intended purpose of it is clear for students in Grade 9 and 10."

Despite this, Chang reassured the *Voice* that Clinic is in no way being removed. "Clinic is certainly a unique feature that is benefiting the

students at R.H. King. Right now, the leadership team is looking currently at what the bell schedule will be like next year." Currently, the only edits will likely be minor timetable adjustments with the existence of Clinic continued for the foreseeable future.

Overall, this unique feature of King boosts student productivity, facilitates concentration and enables the creation of personal study time, helping students perform well on assessments.

All things considered, the importance of having the Clinic period really cannot be denied as it has consistently provided the opportunity for King students to succeed in their various academic pursuits. It is safe to say that most staff and students will be pleased with the confirmed continuation of King's Clinic period.

A letter from your Editors-in-Chief

**By Nikita Hardial &
Nabiha Tahseen**

Thank you so much for making it to the first page of the winter edition of the 2024/25 print paper without throwing it away! Those who take the time to read our print paper really do hold a special place in our hearts. This edition's writing, layout, and editing process was a rollercoaster, but despite the struggles, stress, and tears, we hope to have produced an edition that will speak to many of you. We put an embarrassing amount of effort into this—yes, even the headlines that we know the rest of our executive team secretly hates—instead of doing our school work, and we're glad that so many students were able to contribute in some way! This winter issue is just a starting point for our team and we hope to produce a print paper that impresses our readers even more this coming spring!

We picked mental health as our main focus because nobody is happy during the winter and if you are, you're not;

stop lying. Jokes aside, we wanted to include articles that would connect with our readers on a deeper, more personal level. Many students suffer from mental health problems—often in silence—and never receive adequate support or recognition. We're sure that most are aware about King's rigorous academic environment where achieving high grades potentially ends up resulting in the decline of students' mental health (see Luckshika Ravinthiran's article on page 6). Recognizing and publicizing these forgotten, albeit prominent, problems in our community is the beginning of change. If we never take the time to reflect, we'll always be stuck in a cycle where our community's systems, perspectives and experiences aren't improved.

We're also very thankful for the grade twelves who have stuck with the newspaper since the beginning, the grade nines who just joined but display immense amounts of enthusiasm, as well as everyone else in between. To our photographers, writers, editors

and artists, we thank you for spending numerous hours helping us turn the topic of mental health into this physical manifestation of everyone's hard work!

Last but not least, we'd like to thank the King staff who helped with the production of this issue, especially Mr. Wilkinson, the Publisher of the *Kingsley Voice*. We have learned so much from being under his wing in the past few years; his expertise as a former journalist has shaped us into

not only better journalists, but better people as well. The opportunities we've gotten from being a part of this council have been invaluable and we have Mr. Wilkinson to thank for his unwavering support and guidance.

Make sure to check out the impressive work from the students at R.H. King Academy showcased in this issue of the *Kingsley Voice*!



Riya Mahendrarajah

Nikita and Nabiha are excited to deliver the newspaper to King!

Study tips from university students



Nikita Hardial

High school is an experimental period to understand, try, and develop good study habits and various learning styles for individuals.

By Claire Taylor

High school is the time to experiment and understand how students learn and taking the time to do so will help them immensely in the long run, specifically when it comes to university.

Here are study tips from first year university students and what habits they have had to create and break when it comes to studying. Please note that study methods that work for one person may not work for another and it is important to try out different approaches and understand what works best for you.

Isabella Perriera, a student at the University of Toronto studying Latin American studies, started off her year unsure of how to study and prepare for her classes. After a few months in university she has begun to understand how she can most effectively study and set herself up for success. She recommends reviewing and attempting to understand the content prior to class in sub-

jects that are discussion-based. When it comes to studying for a midterm, she recommends explaining different topics to friends or even stuffed animals as it solidifies one's understanding of the concepts. Essentially, it helps identify gaps in knowledge and simplifies complex ideas to promote deeper understanding, which is useful for exams.

Katelyn Bond, a Kinesiology major at Dalhousie University uses to-do lists as it allows for her to comprehend all that she needs to get done while also feeling accomplished crossing off items on the list. Bond also recommends gathering snacks and drinks prior to beginning studying so that it is not a distraction in the middle of a study session.

For subjects focusing on math and science, more traditional study methods are used. Hirushi Madanayake, a University of Toronto student studying Life Sciences, has her own habits. "For biology,

it's always rewriting and constant repetitiveness until you do retrieval methods such as flash cards and mock quizzes to see what you retained. And then you repeat that over and over again to see what you didn't remember and review that!"

In terms of other subjects that don't require as much memorization, such as math and chemistry, she recommends doing as many practice questions as possible in order to build an understanding of how to solve each type of question.

Many students have also

started to lean into utilizing AI to help them study and provide them with the necessary tools. Websites such as Quizlet are able to scan notes and documents and create flash cards based on that information. Chat GPT can also easily create a mock test or quiz based on given prompts. Felipe Romero, a University of Toronto student in the sciences, explains that he has recently started using AI to create verbal podcasts of his notes, so that he is able to study while performing other activities such as washing the dishes which allow him to multitask. He explains how it has benefited him in class as well. "[AI] has ultimately provided me more opportunity to actually understand what is being taught." Using AI to summarize notes allows one to focus on what the teacher is saying instead of rushing to get notes from a PowerPoint down.

Remember that what works for one person may not work as well for another as everyone has different learning styles.

"Once I started reviewing the content before class and giving myself practice questions to prepare, I felt more confident going to class."
- Isabella Perriera

'Fun' things to do over winter break

By Lucie Le Blanc

1. Crying over university applications

Seniors, this is for you! Why choose to think of the future as something to look forward to when you could view it as the sole thing that will dictate the rest of your life? Spending your senior year of holiday break doing fun things with friends that you might never see again after high school is overrated anyway!



Nikita Hardial

2. Visiting relatives who ask what you want to do with your life

Sad that the holidays are taking you away from the constant stress of school and thoughts of the impending future? Well, not to worry! When choosing to spend the break visiting relatives, all these wonderful things are transported with you, but are now featured with looks of judgement and underlying tones of disappointment. Why beat yourself up about your plans for the future when your close friends and family can do it for you!

3. Getting sad over Christmas nostalgia

Why relish the present when you can cling to the past? Spend your time enjoying the holiday season sulking over how Christmas doesn't feel the same anymore. Having to spend your own money on Christmas gifts and receiving socks instead of Barbies and toy cars just isn't the same...



Najiba Rahman

4. Procrastinate on all your culminating assignments

Enjoy your winter break while never-ending feelings of guilt eat away at your soul as you avoid doing work.

Sustainable ways of gift giving



Nikita Hardial

Not only are homemade crafts low-cost and eco-friendly gifts, but they can also work to provide a relaxing activity for the giver as well.

By Bavina Sivapathan

Whether it be Christmas, a birthday, or any special occasion, gifts are a great way of showing appreciation to another person. In contrast to the joy gifts typically bring, they can also be a burden financially and in terms of sustainability.

The good news is that giving doesn't have to cost anything more than a bit of effort and time.

According to the National Retail Federation, the average Canadian spends \$650 a year on gifts for family and friends. Finding ways to save money and be ecofriendly at the same

time can be difficult, but in the end, the effort is worth it.

A sustainable way of gift-giving is to make a do-it-yourself (DIY) gift. By following a simple YouTube tutorial on making paper roses cards (instead of buying one), one can express true thoughtfulness for someone given how much time must be spent on these crafts, showing people how much they are appreciated. Crafts can also double as a therapeutic activity as they are creative and allow for relaxation.

According to a study conducted by One Poll, of 2000 Americans, 62% prefer gifts that feel more genuine and personal. "Some days I want to look at something and think about the person that gave it to me and how much they care about me," says Grade 12 student, Adsaya Sathiyarajah, showing her gratitude for a more personal kind of a gift.

Aside from DIY presents, a genuine and personal gift can also be simple acts of service.

If a friend loves riding their bike, offer to wash it for them and present it in the form of a coupon, redeemable whenever they need. It shows the will to go out of one's way to make a loved one's life a little easier, which makes for something a little more valuable and personal.

Sustainable gifting habits also include being eco-friendly. Re-gifting unopened items, making crafts, purchasing biodegradable items (ex. reusable tote bags, metal/silicone straws, beeswax wraps, etc.) are all steps one can take to limit waste when gifting. Additionally, gifting items from the thrift store or repurposing/upcycling them makes for a unique gesture.

Sustainability should also be thought about when wrapping. This can be done by storing gift bags, and using them when needed. These bags are meant to be reused and doing so mitigates the unnecessary expense of wrapping paper. Give it a try!

FEATURES

Obstacles to getting mental health support



Nikita Hardial

Lack of support can make at-risk people hesitant to reach out and get the mental health support they need. Guidance counsellors at King are great at helping students with some issues as well as directing them towards other resources that they may need.

By Nikita Hardial

According to the *World Health Organization*, one in seven of all adolescents suffer from a mental health disorder. It is no surprise that mental health support is a growing need, but many avoid seeking it out until it becomes an absolute necessity.

“[My condition] was affecting my daily life and getting unbearable, so treatment was the only option left for me,” shares an anonymous respondent of a survey put out by the

Kingsley Voice.

It is essential for mental health support to be obtained before things worsen, but there is no question that the mental health support system has a long way to go to find a way to best meet the needs of those looking for help. In some cases, there are disadvantages for those wanting to reach out. There are individuals who have started medications that aren’t working or who have perhaps gone to therapy and had a bad experience. These kinds of situations may result

in dissuading students from going back for more. “I don’t go [to therapy] because I hate talking to people about personal things and I feel like it’s easier to not go,” shares a responder.

While this is an unfortunate truth and experience for many, others report good experiences with mental health services. “I don’t regret speaking out about how I feel—I can see the effects of my treatment and I can see myself happier, more mindful, and productive,” says another responder. “The hard-

est part for me was speaking up and getting used to the routine of treatment.”

Many treatments fall under the umbrella of mental health support. These include counselling (which is more short-term), therapy (a broader, long-term form) and medications prescribed by psychiatrists which can include antidepressants, anti-anxiety, etc. Treatment can greatly improve one’s condition, but for various reasons, these things can also be intimidating to individuals, causing them to postpone reaching out.

At R.H. King there are many ways to access treatments. The guidance counsellors can help talk to you about your feelings and provide you with resources. A Grade 11 student, Najiha Rahman, who has struggled with her own mental health in the past, wanted to come forward about her journey to help destigmatize the topic.

“R.H. King’s guidance team offers a lot of support and showed me resources I didn’t know were available to treat my low mood. I think we need to cultivate the environment where students don’t feel scared to ask,” Rahman says.

Some resources for students that are recommended include YouthLink and What’s Up Walk-in, who offer counseling services that serve whoever comes in first. For students who are anxious about doing counseling in person, there are also online support resources, like those provided by Kids’ Help Phone (1-800-668-6868).

While there are many services available, there can be numerous cases in which the surrounding environment is what deters people from seeking support. In many immigrant families, for example,

mental health is constantly put on the back burner and deemed unimportant.

“I feel like mental health is seen as taboo and something that almost doesn’t even exist sometimes,” shares another anonymous responder who struggles with opening up to their parents. Having one’s own family not acknowledge mental health as a concern causes even more problems to build within. With constant discouragement from family members, it is hard to share one’s inner struggles. “They pass [this mentality] down to us and when [mental health] is mentioned, they see it as no big deal since they had to suppress any thoughts when they were young.”

Although much has improved from years prior, those who have spoken out about their struggles still receive judgement. It is not easy to come out and be vulnerable in an environment where judgement is around every corner, like in a high school environment, where many teens feel hesitant to open up.

This self-doubt is a pertinent obstacle, making individuals feel that they are unworthy of receiving help. “I feel hesitant because I do not want to be told that what I am feeling is fake, or that I am exaggerating.”

Starting therapy, counselling and/or medications can be difficult for many. It is hard not to feel ostracized, especially when living within the scary reality of high school. Despite that, finding support is a necessary step to help those with mental illness function with less difficulty and at the same level as their peers. If one is suffering, it is crucial to reach out for support through friends or some of the resources mentioned.

The changing demographics of drivers



Nikita Hardial

Teenagers are leaving parking lots empty as they are driving less than ever before... but what could be the cause?

By Claire Taylor

Recently there’s been quite the change in the driving habits of young drivers. More teens than ever are waiting to write their G1 test and complete their G2 driving test. However, many feel that it is

unnecessary considering the rise of on-demand services, faster public transit, and the sheer expense of owning a car (the price of gas alone can be a deterrent to many).

Getting one’s drivers license on their 16th birthday used to be a rite of passage.

Now it is becoming less and less common. According to a report by *Next Gen Personal Finance*, only 25.3% of 16-year-olds had their license in 2021 versus 46% in 1983. With the quality of the TTC, and increasing popularization of Uber services, there can be no doubt that the ease at which teens have access to transportation has made it less necessary for them to get their license.

Talking to King students, there is a wide variety of stages in driving within the school. Jaylyn Morgan, a Grade 11 student at King, says that she will be going to get her G1 the day of her birthday in December. “I’m really excited to drive,” she says. “I’ve always wanted to try ever since I played one of those driving games on Roblox and I think it’ll be a new and exciting experience.”

For Grade 12 student Aneeka Mukunthan, her reason for getting her drivers license is to help her parents

with driving her siblings around and running errands.

“My sister will definitely not want to get her license now that she has me to drive her around,” Mukunthan says.

On getting his drivers license, Areeb Munir, King’s KSC president, says he’s just too busy. “I’m turning 17 next week and I still won’t have my G1 because I was really busy,” he says. “Now, I will hopefully get it during the winter break,” Munir says. Being busy isn’t the only reason teens aren’t getting their license.

Many students, like Jumaana Ahmed, don’t find it economically possible to get a car right now (both in terms of the car itself and the price of gas). “My parents use our car for work, to get a new one would be expensive, and I don’t think I would use it enough to justify the purchase.”

With clothes, movies, food, and even friends all being a click away, most teenagers

don’t rely on travelling to far places to connect socially or to entertain themselves. According to a survey done by *Monitoring the Future*, the amount of high school seniors who gathered with friends in person “almost every day” dropped from 44 percent in 2010 to 32 percent in 2022. Now, more than ever, it is simply more convenient to stay indoors.

There are trends that reflect this move away from driving as well. The term “Passenger Princess” has become popularized over recent years and jokingly refers to the friend who is always driven around by others as they themselves do not know how to drive.

For many teens today, driving and owning a car is not very important to them. It no longer offers a status boost as it did many years ago, and along with the accessibility of public transport and entertainment, the need for teens to get their license has greatly reduced.



The science behind how Flu shots work

Explained by a biology teacher at King!



Nikita Hardial

Flu shots help protect you against Influenza so effectively that getting your shot makes the pain worth it.

By Sophia Zhao

Scientists are uncertain how humans first caught the flu, but they believe it started with the domestication of animals such as birds and pigs. The first major flu pandemic happened from 1918 to 1920: The Spanish Flu. There was no vaccine at the time, which resulted in more than 500 million cases and an estimated 50 million

deaths. More than a century later, the flu vaccine is distributed worldwide and saves countless lives. But how can such a small and quick shot do so much?

First, one needs to understand how the flu enters our body. When the body comes into contact with the virus, a part of its DNA attaches to the DNA of the body's cells in the nucleus (the 'brain' of the

cell). This triggers the immune system which fights off the infection. The body's immune response causes symptoms such as fever, body aches, or a sore throat.

Everyone can agree that getting the flu sucks. While laying in bed from all the symptoms, however, the body is busy creating antibodies. One can think of antibodies as security guards. This means

the next time they come into contact with the same virus, the antibodies are familiar with them and the resulting symptoms are not as bad. While the body can essentially create its own vaccine with antibodies, it could be dangerous because of how hard it is to predict the body's reaction. In some cases, a vaccine can be very effective. Monica Rana, a biology teacher at King, says a vaccine is the reason why most people only get chickenpox once.

For the flu, inside the shot is the virus itself... but relax—this one is unable to actually hurt anybody. A flu shot contains multiple different kinds of Influenza to ensure the body can create antibodies for each type. Vaccines are also updated annually since viruses change rapidly.

"The virus is present in the vaccine, but everything inside it is gone, so all that's left is the shell, also known as capsid," Rana explains. "It's why some have mild flu symptoms after getting a vaccine, although they're completely harmless. People who claim they got ill from the vaccine caught the virus before their shot."

As soon as the vaccine comes in contact with a person's cells, the antibodies present in their body spring into action and attack the capsid.

Since the virus is already inactive, the antibodies can safely fight it off.

Breast milk contains antibodies too. "When mothers feed with breast milk, they're giving their antibodies to their baby," Rana says. These antibodies help babies develop a strong immune system and protect them from illnesses. Immediate vaccination is unnecessary for breastfed newborns because they gain these antibodies from their mothers milk.

People can also have an antibody deficiency, meaning they have an increased chance of getting infections and other illnesses. Vaccines play a big part in their lives. "Sometimes, antibodies can be transferred from one person to another by a blood transfusion," Rana says.

Not only does getting vaccinated protect individuals, it also creates a safer environment for those around them. It is especially important to get vaccinated in order to protect immunocompromised individuals who, though they are able to get the shot, are still at an increased risk of getting ill. The flu shot is incapable of making anyone immune to the flu, but it does give people a head start if they catch it. Go face that fear of needles and get your shot!

Brainrot has taken over the internet



Julia Nichol

Popular brainrot terms, such as "Skibidi Toilet," have taken the internet by storm, completely transforming the vocabulary of youth.

By Joanna Joseph

'Brainrot' is a term used to depict online content of low quality that is senseless and confusing. The term gained enormous popularity in 2023, thanks in part to a YouTube series called *Skibidi Toilet*, centered around toilets with animated heads trying to take over the world. The questionable series is particularly popular with younger children. What does it mean? Well, nothing. Literally nothing.

Since then, popular terms relating to the broader term 'brainrot' have been heavily associated with Generation

Alpha; born between the early 2010s to the mid-2020s. A chain reaction from the popularization of these terms has caused some real negative impacts that have helped shaped the new generation's worldview and behaviour.

A notable change has been the desensitization to absurdity due to extensive exposure to content with little meaningful or positive influence. Slowly, young children are becoming constantly surrounded by content that does not require brain power, which runs the risk of turning them into mindless zombies known as "iPad kids." iPads have become a con-

venient tool for parents to soothe their cranky children. However, this can result in a counterproductive shift in the child's behaviour. In an interview with *Vice*, child psychologist Ryan Lowe shares that through using devices as a coping mechanism, "the children will have no strategies and no experience of managing their feelings or dealing with frustration."

Grade 11 student Rumaisa Hasan is an avid user of Instagram Reels, a breeding ground for brainrot material. "After spending some time on the platform, I've noticed that my day-to-day vocabulary consists

of a lot of nonsensical words and phrases. I also catch myself laughing at the weirdest things."

The enormous amount of absurd content has resulted in intense overstimulation. The majority of these videos are bizarre, strange, and unpredictable — like two AI-generated eggplants dancing to the words "sigma sigma boy." The human brain reacts to the absurdity and creates a loop causing the viewer to find it entertaining and addictive. Engaging with unpredictable content triggers the brain to release dopamine, a hormone that contributes to feelings of

pleasure. This encourages repeated engagement with similar content.

This can then cause people to have less desire for activities that are purposeful and slow-paced. People are becoming addicted to the unpredictable and fast nature of brainrot. According to a study by Communications Psychology, the constant stimulation from digital media makes less-stimulating activities such as reading unappealing.

Brainrot has normalized apathy regarding real-world issues. People, especially children and teens, are slowly conditioned to become detached from the world and find serious topics humorous. Most recently, the internet has been swarming with jokes about the suspect in the UnitedHealthcare CEO's murder, Luigi Mangione.

Everything seems to now be viewed as a potential joke and even major corporations are in on it. NATO recently posted an image of "peace" on a green background, inspired by the hit album *brat* by Charli XCX. The issue with this is that a multinational military alliance of 32 countries is reducing the concept of peace to a pop culture reference.

Brainrot marks the beginning of a new internet era, and only time will tell how it will shift social media and interpersonal relationships.

Finding better support for those with ADHD



Kaycee Wigmore

Students with ADHD often use a variety of strategies including fidget toys to control impulses while concentrating on the school work at task.

By Swadana Devadas

ADHD is a neurodevelopmental disorder that impacts a person's ability to focus, control impulses, and regulate emotions, all of which are crucial for academic success. For children with ADHD, this disorder makes tasks like reading, problem-solving, staying organized and managing time incredibly challenging. Unfortunately, the typical classroom environment in many schools is not designed to accommodate these needs and this lack of support can hinder both their academic and social development.

Teachers and special education resources play a critical

role in providing the support needed for students with ADHD to succeed. However, despite their best efforts, the existing classroom structures are often not in a position to adequately provide the necessary accommodations.

The Assistant Curriculum Leader (ACL) of Special Education at King, Beth Mackenzie, shared that in addition to academic difficulties, children with ADHD often face social challenges as well. Since they may struggle with impulse control or interpreting social cues, building positive relationships with peers can be difficult. Without proper support, these students can feel isolated or misunderstood by

their classmates, further impacting their emotional well-being.

One way to improve support for ADHD students can be through individualized education plans (IEPs), which outline specific accommodations and teaching strategies for each child.

"Having an IEP can be extremely effective. For some students, it can be game changing, especially if it's ADHD plus additional learning differences," Mackenzie says. "However, a student with an ADHD diagnosis does not necessarily require an IEP. There are accommodations that can help any student feel and be more successful,

and these can be crucial for students who are neurodiverse. For example, organization coaching, building time management skills, opportunities for movement breaks, and prompts to return students' attention to task."

It is also important to provide teachers with the opportunity to be trained to support students they may have with ADHD. According to The Centre for ADHD Awareness Canada, 45% of parents feel that teachers do not have the specialized training to understand how ADHD affects learning. This lack of understanding can unintentionally create an environment where students feel unsupported or

even stigmatized. More professional development for teachers could help create a more inclusive classroom that recognizes the specific needs of students with ADHD, allowing for more effective and individualized support. Teachers themselves would also benefit as this could help improve teaching practices and foster better relationships with students in need.

Incorporating flexible teaching methods and using technology are potential solutions to better support children with ADHD. By creating classrooms that are more adaptable, teachers could allow for movement, offer quiet spaces for concentration, and include hands-on activities that engage ADHD students more effectively. Technology, such as organizational apps, can also help them keep track of assignments and deadlines. Furthermore, fostering a collaborative classroom environment where ADHD students can work closely with their peers would not only help with their academic success, but also improve their social interactions.

The need for a better classroom structure for ADHD students goes beyond just academic success—it is about creating an inclusive, supportive environment that helps students thrive emotionally and socially as well. When schools implement these changes, children with ADHD are more likely to succeed and feel empowered.

By investing in better support systems, Ontario can create better environments.

TDSB is understaffed and overstressed

Staffing shortage creating a potential crisis in TDSB classrooms

By Naiyarah Amarasinghe-Domingue

For the past five years, the TDSB has been understaffed and underfunded according to Ryan Bird, a TDSB spokesperson, but students are feeling the effects of this now more than ever.

Though these understaffing issues span across all aspects of education, from administrators to caretakers, the board has been experiencing a vast shortage in available substitutes and EAs (Educational Assistants) as mentioned in an article by the CBC.

EAs, though not as widely discussed, are vital to the classroom environment as they most often deal with students more at risk of being behind on work and helping those who need additional support. Substitutes, on the other hand, allow teachers to take necessary time off without worrying about leaving students unattended, as substitutes can provide students with structure and consistency in unexpected circumstances. Shortages in make it harder for students and

staff alike to succeed.

This problem is in contrast to a decade ago when Ontario had a large teacher surplus. In 2015, approximately 4800 qualified teachers were not working in the province, according to the Ontario College of Teachers. This year, the annual number of new teachers from Ontario's faculties of education are around half the number who entered the profession in the late 2000s and early 2010s.

There are many theories surrounding the root cause of the issue. Some blame it on the changes made to teachers college in 2015 (the degree became a two-year program to reduce the likelihood of enrollment). Another theory is the unprecedented amount of teachers retiring during the pandemic. Many older teachers decided to go into early retirement when facing the stress and health risks associated with teaching during the pandemic. Also, many of them were potentially not equipped to handle the sudden reliance on technology during quarantine as schools shifted to social

distancing, asynchronous learning, and more attempts to salvage the education experience.

Additionally, some say that the problem comes from the nature of modern teaching itself. In recent years, education as a career path has become increasingly thankless in Toronto. A report by the Auditor General of Ontario found that an increase in budget cuts, violence in classrooms, and lack of in-school support... all of which are reasons why young professionals may not want to teach anymore.

Despite the government's boasts of more money being spent on education when one takes inflation into account there really have only been continued slashes to the provincial education budget. This may be why young teachers are fleeing the profession at record numbers within the first five years of entering it, according to Nathalie Reid, an education researcher at the University of Regina.

The truth is, this crisis is a combination of these things and more. The question re-

mains - what to do about it? There have been calls to reconsider the two-year teachers college program, or expand concurrent education programs, which combine undergraduate programs and teaching certifications over 5 years. Many working teachers think the answer lies in simply making education and teaching desirable pathways for young people. This would mean instilling long-term programs encouraging burgeoning professionals to get teaching certi-

fications and making changes to the current system which seems to devalue educators and support workers.

In any case, the solution requires a review of public education. Understaffing in the TDSB is projected to only get worse by 2027. Considering this complex issue has been weighing on the minds and hearts of students, teachers, and administrators for five years already, one can only hope that it is at the top of the school board's agenda.



Scar Stamp-Blackbeard

The lack of teachers can change what is 'class' time to 'free' time.



Why you should consider taking Dual Credit



Dual Credit opportunities allow students to take courses at colleges where they can gain unique skills.

By Kaycee Wigmore

Ever wanted to take a specific course that King does not offer? Looking to go into college with an advantage over other students? Want to take some post-secondary courses to put on university or college applications? If you said 'yes' to any of the above, the Dual Credit program may be for you!

Dual Credit is a program at many high schools across the GTA that offers a high school credit and a college credit at

no cost to grade 11s and 12s. There are many courses to choose from that range from subjects like cooking to forensic psychology.

The courses take place at a real, functioning college campus in classes with other high school Dual Credit students. Students receive free materials (uniform, tools, etc.), textbooks, and a college student ID. Using that ID you can access resources that the college offers to students. For example, at George Brown College, students can use the

gym, library, and even check out computers and iPads to take notes and do work on. Students will also receive free TTC bus tickets to commute from school to their chosen college and back. If a student takes a Dual Credit course each semester in both grades 11 and 12 that is a whole semester of college credits they earned for free.

The next window to apply for Dual Credit classes is semester two, but Dual Credit classes are run in both semester one, two, and during the

summer. When applications open, students can pick up a Dual Credit form from the Business Office (A12) and select their top three classes from the master list posted on your grades Google classroom.

Students can pick what college they wish to attend as well. Dual Credit classes take place one day per week and are about three hours, but it may vary depending on the class. Three hours may sound long but the professors understand that most students can not sit still and take in information for that long so there are breaks throughout many of the lecture-based classes.

Siena Ciancusi, a grade 12 student at R.H. King, will be finishing her third Dual Credit this winter. "Dual Credit is a great experience, even for those who don't intend on going to college," Ciancusi says. "It's free lectures, knowledge and equipment as well as access to libraries and gyms and you get the opportunity to meet new people." Dual Credit provides students with the opportunity to explore a variety of fields that allow them to gain hands-on experience in different areas of study. "[Dual Credit] has helped me decide what path to pursue after high school by introducing me to new opportunities. I was even able to

obtain a job applying what I learned in my welding class," Ciancusi adds.

Post secondary education also tends to have fewer assignments and tests. Instead of having an assignment every class and hours of homework every night, there are usually three to five assignments and two to four tests and sometimes a final exam over the course of a whole semester. This allows students to focus on mastering the material in greater detail while offering a more thorough exploration of the subject compared to high school courses.

Students who are interested in Dual Credit classes must also keep in mind that they may miss some of their high school courses to take a Dual Credit and they are responsible for keeping up with missed work in those classes.

Dual Credit classes also take attendance and it is mandatory. If a student is absent for a class, the Dual Credit teacher will email the teacher in charge of Dual Credits who will then reach out to the student to inquire about the absence.

For more information on Dual Credit programs, including those mentioned here, please visit <https://www.ontario.ca/page/dual-credit-programs>.

The "suck it up" mindset in academic settings

By Luckshika Ravinthiran

The term "suck it up" is used to express putting up with something, such as pain without complaining. The term "thug it out" is used to express pushing past an obstacle, and harden oneself when experiencing challenges. In academic settings, students tend to perceive their self-worth based upon the grades and awards they receive and if they don't do one of the above they fear they'll miss out or be left behind.

According to *Brainz Magazine*, students develop attitudes to "suck it up" and "thug it out" while facing academic challenges both subconsciously and consciously. These approaches are meant to symbolize being resilient but can pressure students instead and give them increased stress and anxiety. This can lead to students starting to feel uncomfortable in many situations including going to a trusted adult such as a guidance counselor or a teacher for help. Students may fear that seeking support from people is a symbol of weakness or feel that something is wrong with them.

According to the Center for Deployment Psycholo-

gy, these attitudes also have a large impact on the personal growth of students. Students can lose confidence in their ability to problem solve which can impact their emotional development. Rather than looking at emotions such as sadness and stress as everyday human emotions, students could see them as weaknesses. This can cause emotional repression where students bottle up their emotions. This mentality makes it difficult for students to develop important emotional skills such as communication, empathy, and more. If students avoid seeking help due to stigma, they are unable to learn how to cope with challenges in healthy ways.

Along with the personal and emotional toll, the "suck it up" and "thug it out" attitudes can impact the academic performance of students. The pressure to get a good grade and push through challenges without addressing underlying issues can lead to burnout, a decline in motivation, and decreased focus.

According to National Institutes of Health, overwhelmed students who are unable to communicate with their teachers struggle to complete their assign-

ments. By strengthening the idea that these challenges have to be faced alone, students are unable to achieve their full academic potential and succeed.

Naveena Gnanachandran, a grade 12 student at R.H. King, believes that as difficult as it may be, asking teachers for help can make a large difference in one's performance.

"I feel like a lot of students are too afraid to ask for help and they end up going home without knowing how to complete their assignments," she says. Reflecting on her own experience she says that for some science courses she

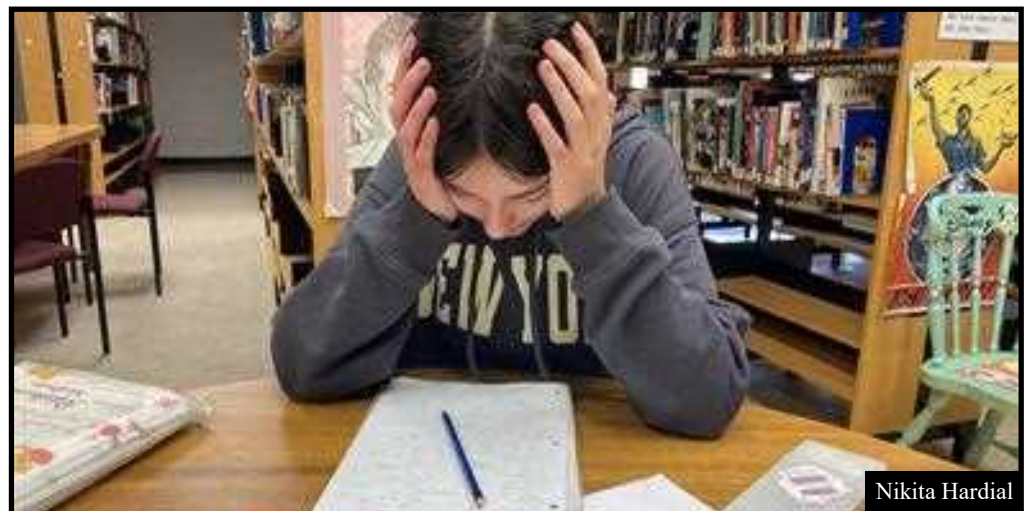
avoids asking the teacher questions in class because of the belief that she will be able to go home and figure it out, essentially 'sucking it up', which ends up harming her overall grade.

In order to achieve a healthier academic environment, it is important to move past the "suck it up" and "thug it out" attitudes. Although resilience is about persevering, it is also about knowing when to seek help to achieve milestones. To help students in this situation, many students encourage teachers to play a larger role. This can mean encouraging teachers to provide additional re-

sources for students to connect with and making consultations with parents.

Lein Elnaw, a grade 12 student at R.H. King suggests teachers continue to check up and touch base with their students to see how they are managing their work, especially those who are struggling.

"Teachers can also dedicate hours outside of class for students who are struggling and feel ashamed to ask for help in front of others. Teachers should also help promote healthy study habits to students such as taking breaks and managing time, to avoid burnout," she says.



The constant pressure to achieve perfection in many high schools can significantly impact students' confidence, mental health and overall well-being.

MENTAL

1st place in KVC's poetry contest: 'Beneath the surface'

By Magilini Hiritharan

There's a world beneath the surface, unseen but always near,
A quiet storm of whispers, a shadow fed by fear.
The face may wear a mask of calm, a steady, practiced gaze,
But underneath, the battle burns, a labyrinth, a maze.

Each thought, a thread unraveling, each breath a fragile plea,
For solace in the chaos, for a moment to feel free.
The weight of words unspoken sits heavy on the chest,
While sleepless nights and restless dreams steal moments meant for rest.

Yet even in this darkness, a flicker fights to stay,
A stubborn spark of courage that refuses to give way.
It whispers, "You are stronger than the doubts that cloud your mind,
The road ahead is winding, but the path you seek, you'll find."

The journey's not a straight one; it twists, it bends, it stalls,
It asks for patience, courage, and to rise from every fall.
It teaches us that healing is a lesson never done,
A patchwork quilt of victories stitched softly, one by one.

There's beauty in the struggle, though it's hard to see it clear,
In tears that cleanse, in hearts that mend, in friends who hold you near.
For every time you stumble, for every time you break,
Is proof of life within you and the strength it takes to wake.

So here's to every fighter whose scars remain unseen,
To every soul who battles in the spaces in between.
You are not the storm that rages; you are not the night,
You are the dawn that follows, a beacon burning bright.



Nikita Hardial

Canada's failing mental health system



Pethmi Jayatunge

Long wait times, in collusion with a fragmented system, are potential obstacles that are preventing young people from getting the mental health care and support that they may need.

By Jumaina Ahmed

In recent years, the Canadian mental health care system has reached a breaking point. Individuals in need of services are often faced with barriers concerning long wait times, inaccessibility, and high costs.

In particular, many Canadian youth have faced challenges with the country's ineffective mental health care. According to the Canadian Paediatric Society, 1.2 million Canadian children and adolescents suffer from a diagnosable mental health condition, yet only 20% receive adequate support. According to BMC Public Health, mental health challenges are a leading cause of school dropout and untreated issues can lead to lifelong struggles with employment, relationships, and even physical health. Those with poor mental health are also at a higher risk of developing a chronic physical condition.

Mental health care systems tailored to youth often fall short. The World Health Or-

ganization (WHO) reported that most countries allocate 1% or less of their health budget towards child and adolescent mental health and that existing mental health services can be inaccessible. Services are usually fragmented in Canada, meaning that there could be a lack of coordination and integration between the multiple providers a young person might be consulting, such as school counsellors and public social services. The WHO also reported that the fragmentation of the mental health system can result in delays and difficulties in finding the right type of care.

The long wait times of the system also make it highly inefficient. Many who seek care from youth services right before they turn 18 could become adults by the time they receive it, as reported by Children's Mental Health Ontario (CMHO). By then, they must switch to adult services which means starting another search for appropriate treatment. Frustratingly, these services

are not catered to youth, so they may not fulfill their needs even after all of that.

Individuals seeking mental health support can wait months, or even years, before receiving it. In 2020, the CMHO found that 28,000 children in Ontario were waiting for mental health or addiction support. Wait times can differ with some youth having access to same-day walk-in support while others wait as long as two and a half years. For someone in crisis, these random periods of waiting can be detrimental. A teen experiencing severe anxiety or a student dealing with depression cannot afford to wait months for help. The lack of timely support can have profound effects on lives because early intervention is key when dealing with mental health as consequences delay of untimely support can be fatal. According to Statistics Canada, suicide is the second leading cause of death in Canadian youth aged 15 - 34.

As public mental health

services fail to keep up with peoples' urgent situations, many turn to private services for help. These services can be quite expensive as each session could cost hundreds of dollars which is unaffordable for many. Those who are unable to afford these costly services could experience worsening symptoms or turn to other outlets such as substance use or self-harm.

Despite the glaring need, Canada's mental health funding is still highly inadequate. In 2022, mental health received only 7% of the total healthcare budget which much below the WHO's recommended 10-15%. In 2021, the Liberals made a campaign promise for \$4.5 billion to provinces and territories over the next five years as a part of the Canada Mental Health Transfer. However, this seems to have been an empty pledge since very little of that promised money has been seen. Canada desperately needs more mental health care workers. In a survey from the Canadian Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health, 83% of respondents said that provinces should hire more mental health care providers. The nation is facing a shortage of psychiatrists and psychologists. At the moment, Ontario has a shortage of 200 psychiatrists. This has resulted in an overwhelmed mental health care system with not enough professionals available to aid individuals in crisis.

Although the Canadian system may be experiencing its challenges, this should not be taken as a sign to avoid getting help. King has in-school support available at Student Services, and students can also contact Kids Help Phone at 1-800-668-6868 when in need of immediate assistance. Even with wait times, not accessing services when in need will only result in worsening conditions.

King shares: warm tips for cold days

Anonymous students share their strategies to deal with mental health struggles in the winter.

"Spending time with family and friends cheers me up."

"Watching my comfort shows always helps with my mood."

"I like to draw in my spare time as creating artwork of things I like helps distract me."

"I love to watch into the horror spirit by watching holiday movies and making gingerbread cookies. It's always such a blast as I do this with my family and friends."

"Going to the gym and exercising makes me feel better."

"I like to go outside and enjoy the snow. People think the cold means you stay inside, but there is so much to do. Just look at Lake Louise winter pictures and you will know that you are missing out!"

"Finding something good to laugh at whether that be friends, Instagram, my family — that gets my mind off of things."

"Studying with friends and going to cozy cafes for a change of scenery helps."



How to beat the dreaded winter blues



Nabihah Tahseen

Winter can be tough. The days are much shorter and colder with gloomy days feeling all that more oppressive. You may not want to leave your bed, but there are ways to fight back against the winter blues.

By Nabihah Tahseen

Along with the beautiful snow comes the cold, darkness, and fatigue. In order to wake up feeling rested, many students sleep in when they can, but not too much! After waking up at one in the afternoon, actually getting out of bed and eating breakfast, it is then suddenly pitch black in just a couple of hours.

“It makes me feel very unmotivated and depressed,” says Christina Condilidis, a student at King. “I associate nighttime with sleeping and relaxing before the next school day, so now that it gets dark by the time I get home, I feel like I can’t do anything. I do believe that seeing the light from outside helps me concentrate somehow.”

So what is the solution? There are a few things you can try. Perhaps wake up by elev-

en in the morning (or earlier!) even when the option of sleeping in is present. In terms of feeling a lack of motivation to be productive in the dark, a candle, some adequate lighting, and even a summery playlist can do wonders for getting hyped enough to get things done. Just a few adjustments can make one forget that it’s the gloomy winter-time.

Just being awake may not be enough for some, though. In the midst of all the stress winter brings, there may also be unintended isolation as people stay in where it’s warm and bright. While alone time is definitely important, it would do a lot of good to spend some time with friends, even when it feels like a daunting task.

“I was volunteering for KVAC to paint the musical sets and I was having a really good time! It was the first time in a while I went out with my

friends to do something,” says Riya Patel, a student at King who felt guilty just sitting around. “The whole time I just felt bad because I wasn’t doing homework. I love spending time with friends, but we rarely go out because we are doing work and don’t feel like getting up.”

Even though everything can feel like a massive task when you’re tired, hanging out with friends can be a nice change of scenery and a breath of fresh air.

Working is good, but beating the winter blues can also just involve relaxing, especially over the winter break. If the entire break is spent doing work then the return to school will not feel productive or refreshing.

Varsan Jeyakkumar, a grade 12 student could not agree more. “November break used to be a time where I forgot about school and chilled.

I spent the day on my sofa, my bed, or just outside. It felt like summer break, because there was no assignment due the next day or three quizzes upcoming,” he says. “This reality evaporated when I became a grade 12 student. During my break, I was working on two projects, studying for upcoming tests—a unit test on the Wednesday after—and completing assignments. This motivated me to grind and get things done, but it certainly was not a break.”

While doing work over the break is inevitable for many, balance is key. After an assignment or task gets completed, rot for a couple days! Do nothing but sleep, watch TV, and see loved ones.

For the seniors, winter also means worrying as the first couple rounds of university acceptances get sent out. “I believe getting an offer is something you should be proud of, but it can definitely cause some anxiety when you’re talking about how many offers you have compared to your friend,” says Ayushi Anuprova, a grade 12 student at King.

It is also important to be present during the good moments. During a small or big moment of joy, whether that be an entire fun day, or simply 20 minutes of watching TV, savour these slivers of happiness and peace. Try to focus on that positive feeling and remember it as something to look forward to when things are looking dreary.

2nd place in KVC’s poetry contest: ‘Curtains’

By Echo Moonah

I don’t fear the dark
I’ve grown quite indifferent
When I could never see my
hand in front of my face
That ignorance could have
been called blissful
Or simply called what it was
Which was all I ever knew

But I opened the curtains and
saw everything
My hand held the potential
I believed I hadn’t earned
But I decided what I need,
and I need relief from all this
dark

I know now that I don’t have
to fear the dark to love the
sun
And I will not let anyone tell
me I have to hate what I am
to love what I’ll become



Nabihah Tahseen

3rd place in KVC’s poetry contest: ‘The weight of the chains’

By Hayat Saleh

I wake to chains I cannot see,
I feel the cold, heavy weight
that lies on my wrists
They keep me bound to my
bed
The bed I lie in is no longer a
bed—

My bed became my coffin.
I want to get up.
I want to eat breakfast.
I want to feel the water on my
face as I wash it.
But my body betrays me
The chains grow tighter on
my wrists—
Telling me to “stay”

My clock haunts me as it
ticks,
Each tick is a reminder of
everything I’m not doing.
The clock screams at me
“you’re wasting time,”
I continue to lie, silently,
Wishing I can scream back.

The trap is silent,
But it screams in my ear.
The world continues moving,
While I am left behind,
Stuck in this endless cycle,
Bound to the bed where
I wallow in silence.

The rise of mental illness as a trend



Nikita Hardial

The glamorization of mental illness can result in misdiagnosing.

By Julia Nichol

Young people are increasingly turning to social media platforms like TikTok to share their personal experiences with mental health. Mental health issues are becoming more widely discussed in a way that feels more relatable and less clinical, leading to a level of destigmatization that was never thought possible for a topic that was once considered taboo. This all sounds good, but that doesn’t mean there aren’t pitfalls for those using social

media platforms.

TikTok’s short video format allows users to share their stories in engaging and creative ways that foster a sense of community and support for people who feel isolated in their struggles.

As mental health becomes a more prominent topic on TikTok, it is important to acknowledge both the potential benefits and challenges of this trend. On one hand, TikTok’s accessibility allows people—especially young people—to feel less alone as

they navigate their emotions. Realizing that other people share similar struggles can provide solace. This can be a really good step for many.

Platforms like TikTok can also be very beneficial to those who face barriers to mental health care due to cost, stigma, or other reasons. It provides a space where both influencers and viewers can learn from one another about mental health, coping strategies, and then go on to connect with people who can help or understand what they are going through.

However, the fast-paced nature of the platform can sometimes lead to generalization or oversimplification. While the bite-sized content can make information more digestible, it does not leave much room for nuance which can lead to misunderstandings. For example, a quick list of symptoms for anxiety or ADHD might resonate with many viewers but it doesn’t capture the complexities of these conditions.

Due to this young people may jump to conclusions about their own mental health, potentially misdiagnosing themselves or overlooking the important of professional guidance that can properly give

them the support they need.

Another challenge is the way TikTok’s algorithm pushes content that generates high engagement such as videos that are emotionally charged or exaggerated. This can create a distorted view of mental health where struggles are either glamorized or trivialized. For example, some creators may focus on the more relatable or even humorous aspects of a condition while leaving out the real, less glamorous realities.

Despite this, this positive potential of TikTok should not be overlooked. Many users still create content responsibly, sharing authentic stories that spark important conversations. For young people who may not feel as comfortable sharing their struggles in real life, these creators can offer validation and act as a bridge to taking the first real step to addressing mental health concerns with a trusted individual or professional.

To keep mental health discussions constructive, it is important to use the platform thoughtfully. While self-diagnosis through media has risks, it can lead to positive action that greatly improves the quality of life for the people viewing the content.

Wisdom from the corner: With Wilkinson and Michaud

What's your favourite Chappell Roan song?

Wilkinson: I hate church music. Too many organs.
Michaud: That one about how cool it is when middle-aged men keep up with contemporary pop music. 'HOT TO GO!?' Yeah, I think that's the one.

Why don't they want me (romantically)?

Wilkinson: Hmmm... sometimes, it's just best to not find out. Very rarely is the reason helpful.
Michaud: Who cares? Not being interested in dating someone at your age is like not wanting a piece of unripe fruit. Completely understandable.

What should I do if I hate the programs I applied to?

Wilkinson: Learn from your choices. There's nothing wrong with switching things up. As teenagers, you shouldn't feel locked into the rest of your life before you've had a chance to experience all it has to offer.

Fortnite or Roblox?

Wilkinson: Third option: life.
Michaud: No.

How do I "lock in"?

Wilkinson: A padlock. A deadbolt. Chains. Anything like that. It's what you mean, isn't it?
Michaud: Come to the library during D period. It's the most peaceful time of day here, filled entirely with quiet, respectful students who show consideration for their peers trying to be successful in their studies.

What's my purpose in life?

Wilkinson: I'll let you know once I figure out my own.

What Christmas present should I get for my crush?

Wilkinson: Transformers and Lego. I assume you mean me. That's what I want. My rizz is unmatched.
Michaud: Something they would like? Is there nobody left who can navigate basic social norms anymore?



Nikita Hardial

Flawed depictions of neurodivergence



Does representation in media, including Netflix's show *Atypical*, hold value even when it's inaccurate?

By Nabihah Tahseen

While there has been tremendous progress in depicting mental health in the media, much work remains when it comes to representing neurodivergence accurately.

Popular shows like Netflix's *Atypical* and ABC's *The Good Doctor* center on characters with autism, but their portrayals are far from universal. In *The Good Doctor*, Dr. Shaun Murphy's ASD (autism spectrum disorder) is depicted almost like a superpower that allows him to see his patients in a different, more in-depth way than his coworkers. While this is good in the sense that it challenges stereotypes of low intelligence often associated with ASD, it also romanticizes the disorder, leaving many viewers with a similar condition feeling misrepresented.

A study done by the Australian Catholic University shows that 58.4% of autistic respondents say that the por-

trayal of autism in *Atypical*—the story of a high school boy (Keir Gilchrist) with autism who navigates love, relationships, and family—is accurate, which is the majority, but that still leaves more than 40% saying that it is not. Nevertheless, this is still higher than 20% of autistic respondents who say that *The Good Doctor* is accurate.

While Shaun Murphy's hyper-intelligence is a pushback against harmful stereotypes of people with ASD, it can also alienate those whose experiences don't align with this portrayal. *Atypical* has also been criticized for leaning into harmful stereotypes. One Google review of *Atypical* from someone with autism states they feel "they tried to make Sam look dumb to fit the stereotypes that society has put on people on the spectrum."

"Autism differs from person to person, so each experience is unique. The way au-

tism is shown in *The Good Doctor* has not been my experience, but it probably has been another person's experience," says Maple Grysczyk, a student at King who has autism. "It's good to have positive representations of autism in media," Grysczyk continues. "But if I were to make it a tier list, I would prefer it to be positive and accurate, positive and inaccurate, negative and accurate, then negative and inaccurate."

Bronwyn Bolton-Murray, a King student with obsessive-compulsive disorder, disagrees with Grysczyk on whether these shows should get credit for positive but inaccurate depictions of mental health disorders. OCD is usually not represented accurately or seriously in the media, with it either being boiled down to liking things to be organized or being the butt of the joke.

In the TV show, *Monk*, the title character Adrian Monk's (Tony Shalhoub) OCD helps

him solve cases as a detective due to his disorder's observational skills, but his cleanliness compulsions are often seen as a schtick. "Let's be honest, OCD isn't a positive thing. It's okay to portray it as something negative because that's the reality," says Bolton-Murray. "If the media is going to portray it inaccurately, why portray it at all?"

"Having OCD does not mean I need everything to be clean, tidy, organized, and colour-coded. That's not what it is [for me]," continues Bolton-Murray. "It's a compulsive disorder that causes repetitive, intrusive, and often frightening, thoughts, and a need to quash them by performing specific tasks."

On the opposite side of the spectrum, there is still a "crazy" label attached to neurodivergence. The 2024 film *Trap* centers on a serial killer with OCD. In an article by Yusra Shah titled "The worst representations of OCD in TV and movies," it says, "*Trap*'s explanation of the killer's actions is ultimately blamed on his OCD, leading viewers to draw the conclusion that people with OCD are extremely dangerous and violent."

Some of shows have quite high ratings on platforms like Rotten Tomatoes, but their inaccuracies come at a cost. They often prioritize making neurodivergent conditions palatable to neurotypical audiences instead of serving as a meaningful mirror of lived experiences. Everyone deserves to see themselves represented in media accurately so the need for nuanced, authentic portrayals of neurodivergence still remains critical.

Mr. Plankton: Hae-jo's journey

By Ariba Islam

Recently, South Korea has been dominating global trends, from skincare to K-pop, and now, film and television. Korean dramas (K-dramas) are captivating Western audiences with their thrilling action dramas and dreamy rom-coms.

One of Netflix's most recently released K-dramas is *Mr. Plankton*, a story about a man who finds out he has a terminal brain condition and decides to go on a road trip to find his biological father. This drama stands out for its deeply layered characters as they live through one of many unfortunate events that life unfairly handed out. This severely affected the mental health of the characters and their sense of self and worldview.

The protagonist in this K-drama is a man named "Hae-jo" played by Woo Do-hwan. Hae-jo's biggest unfortunate events was developing a terminal brain condition due to genetics, but some may say it is actually how he was abandoned by his parents which left a greater impact.

His story begins with a twist — his loving parents who had first had trouble having a child and considered Hae-jo a miracle, discovered that due to an incorrect IVF treatment, Hae-jo was not their biological son. Amidst other marital issues, they find they are unable to cope with this revelation.

The mother soon passes away, presumably due to suicide, and his father, consumed with resentment, emotionally abandons him soon after when he is only eight years old. Hae-jo lives this way up through high school until the day of his graduation where his father never shows up, so Hae-jo ultimately decides to not go back home. He grew up on his own later with the help of a few people who he met along his journey.

The show masterfully portrays the emotional aftermath of these events and shows the devastating effects of a lack of unconditional parental love, security, and a clear sense of identity. Hae-jo, once a bright and curious child, grows to become an adult who is decep-

tive, impulsive, and dangerously reckless. He also loses the ability to love himself.

This drama offers two powerful lessons through Hae-jo's journey: the importance of unconditional love within families and the value of the people who stick with us

through life's journey. The connections made along the way can matter just as much if not more than the destination. This emotional rollercoaster of a drama captures these truths beautifully, leaving viewers with a sense of both heartache and hope.



Mr. Plankton, a popular K-drama currently available on Netflix, explores a man's journey through love, loss and self-discovery.



Why *La La Land* is a timeless film



Lionsgate
Starring Emma Stone and Ryan Gosling, *La La Land* continues to make waves more than eight years after its initial release.

By Sabiha Sufian

The masterpiece *La La Land*, released in 2016, is a romantic musical starring Emma Stone and Ryan Gosling that took the world by storm and continues to do so a decade later.

The movie focuses on the story of Mia, an aspiring actress, and Sebastian, a hopeful jazz musician and how they develop a romantic relationship and deal with challenges along the way in the glamorous city of Los Angeles.

La La Land won a whopping six Oscars at the 2017 Academy Awards and broke the record for the most Golden Globe awards ever won by a single film. What is it that makes this film so extraordinary and stand out from the rest? And how come everyone is still losing their minds over

it a decade later? *La La Land* incorporates unique uses of music, cinematography, screenwriting, with a blend of film styles and emotions throughout. Here's a deep dive into each element and how each makes it a spectacular film.

Blending musical components and movies is not a new concept to the film industry, but one could argue that *La La Land*'s soundtrack is unmatched. The soundtrack includes 15 original songs composed by Justin Hurwitz and sung by the cast. Some of the most famous ones being 'Mia and Sebastian's theme' and 'City of Stars,' both of which include an ethereal feel similar to the many other songs in the soundtrack. The tracks use the same instruments in the songs and often add traces of similar

tunes in each as well as in the background music used to provoke nostalgia and make the audience associate that specific rhythm with the film in a way that adds a sense of familiarity. Each song is carefully crafted and effortlessly blends in with the storyline to match the overall vibe of the film.

It is no secret that *La La Land* has some of the most aesthetically pleasing visuals that the history of cinema has ever witnessed. With the countless breathtaking sights in Los Angeles being included in the film such as Griffith Observatory, Colorado Street Drive, and Mt. Hollywood Drive, it allows for the shots to have a dreamy feel to it. Not only are the filming locations an excellent choice for the visuals, the film also puts a creative twist to many of the scenes which truly captivates the audience and reels them in to want more. For instance, in a scene Mia and Sebastian begin dancing during a date in a planetarium and the scene slowly transitions to them levitating around actual stars leaves viewers in awe. The interesting choice of colours throughout the film enhances the visuals of it and creates a vibrant atmosphere.

A large reason as to why *La La Land* has been able to stay relevant for such a prolonged period of time is because instead of jumping onto the latest trendy styles to use in films in hopes for a larger target audience, the film uses timeless and more modernized film elements which makes it

something truly memorable. The romance in the film is more focused on in-person experiences and memories rather than including scenes focusing on social media or technology in general. Sebastian's character, who is deeply passionate about music, specifically jazz music, brings back the nostalgia of the 90s with those kinds of sounds and notes playing a lot of times throughout the film.

The term *La La Land* is an older name that was used to refer to Los Angeles with a double meaning of being out of touch with reality. This came about from the reputation LA has for attracting individuals with big dreams, especially those who are trying to make it and have a successful career in entertainment. In the film, Mia and Sebastian are also aspiring entertainers who wish to pursue entertainment in one way or another and make a living out of it in the city. But, in addition, we see that throughout the duration of their relationship their moments gradually transition into many dream-like impractical states which showcase their unrealistic and ambitious personalities, implying that they are in "la la land." Despite this, the ending is still realistic which demonstrates the contrast and irony expressed through the title.

La La Land is only beginning its run as an iconic film, and it is sure to make its mark as a timeless classic. You can currently stream the film as part of a Crave/Starz subscription in Canada.

Academic weapons on screen

By Iffat Nafisa

1. Hermione Granger



Warner Bros.

For *Harry Potter* fans, Hermione is a source of inspiration. She consistently demonstrates her knowledge of many subjects, answering questions at the speed of light and fixing any major errors in her friends' homework. She never seems to rest and her thirst for knowledge lets her explore many secrets of the magical world.

2. Rory Gilmore



Warner Bros.

Quick-witted Rory, one-half of the *Gilmore Girls*, spends her leisure time mostly reading. Rory is quick to quote from the many novels she has read and use them to express what she is trying to convey to others. All she seems to care about are her grades, and she frequently does not get enough sleep to ensure she meets her expectations.

3. Elle Woods



MGM Studios

Elle Woods of *Legally Blonde* is intelligent and not afraid to go after her ambitions. When she gets dumped by her boyfriend, who labels her as "not someone serious for his future," she is determined to prove him wrong by attending the same law school as him. Nothing stops her from putting in her best efforts. She eventually finds success in her academic pursuit.

4. Alex Dunphy



ABC

The most clever character on *Modern Family*, Alex never settles for anything less than the best. She spends hours on end studying for her many advanced classes and indulges in several extracurriculars. Her intelligence and sarcasm can sometimes make her appear condescending, but she usually means well.

Lemony Snicket: unreliable narrator



Netflix
Lemony Snicket's fickle narration makes for an abstruse story.

By Aleesha Qureshi

A Series of Unfortunate Events is a peculiar television series on Netflix. It follows the lives of the Baudelaire siblings: Violet, Sunny, and Klaus, (Malina Weissman, Louis Hynes, Presley Smith) who are orphaned after their parents' deaths in a mysterious fire. Throughout the series, they are tormented by the villainous Count Olaf (Neil Patrick Harris) and haunted by their parents' past secrets. The series is told by its so-called author and

narrator, Lemony Snicket (Patrick Warburton), however his storytelling style makes the story extremely puzzling as he is an unreliable narrator, a detail many readers overlook.

Lemony Snicket even warns readers and viewers from the start: "If you are interested in stories with happy endings, you would be better off reading some other book. In this book, not only is there no happy ending, there is no happy beginning and very few happy things in the middle."

He appears reluctant and eager to share these tragedies which brings up the question as to why he would be writing them at all. He continues on in the books to introduce more ideas that call his truth-telling into question.

In a later episode, Snicket brings up the VFD, the Volunteer Fire Department. The Baudelaire children discover their parents were part of this secret organization that was dedicated to putting out figurative and literal fires. Some members sought to uphold the moral values of VFD and others turned to villainy. Throughout the series, VFD is depicted as a web of secrets. Later in the story, it is revealed that Lemony Snicket himself was also a member of the VFD. So, is he villain or hero?

Being a part of VFD is the main factor that makes Lemony Snicket unreliable as a narrator. The organization itself is not inherently bad (or is it?), but it has done harmful things. In the series, VFD exists to prove that there is no true good or bad, which is seen through the events like the Schism and objects like the Sugar Bowl. This idea does

not align with Lemony Snicket's views, as he never said anything negative about the VFD. This clearly shows that it is a big part of him and that he is incredibly biased. He sees every VFD conflict with a positive lens. He also chooses to not reveal information as they are VFD secrets, but does hint at them cryptically.

Snicket has many personal attachments, especially towards Beatrice Baudelaire (the mother of the Baudelaire children) due to his romantic past with her. At the start of every book and episode, he writes a letter expressing his admiration for her. Despite Beatrice being a major factor that started much of this conflict this is not how the story is told. Snicket glosses over any responsibility she may have for how everything turned out. It is evident that his sympathies align with VFD and the Baudelaire children to soften their faults and paint them as victims.

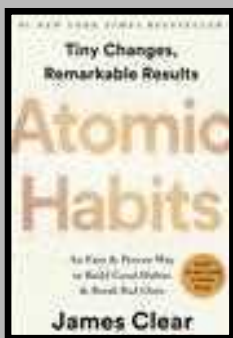
Ultimately, Lemony Snicket's role as an unreliable narrator prompts the viewer to question the story that is being told. The story of the Baudelaire children may have ended on screen, but there are still many mysteries about their narrative.

3 self-help books to read

By Swadana Devadas

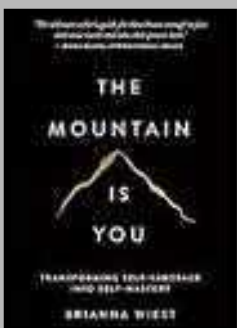
Navigating mental health and self-improvement can be challenging. Here are five standout reads to guide you!

Atomic Habits
by James Clear



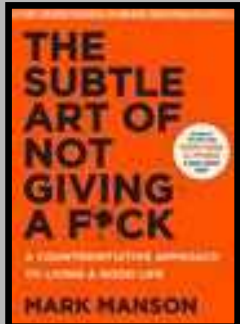
This bestseller breaks down the science of habit formation, showing readers consistent changes lead to remarkable results over time. Clear combines research with relatable anecdotes, teaching you how to apply this in your daily lives. *Atomic Habits* provides a practical roadmap for turning intentions into actions.

The Mountain is You: Transforming Self-Sabotage into Self-Mastery
by Brianna Wiest



Wiest dives into the psychology of self-sabotage, explaining why we often hold ourselves back. She uses metaphor and insight to guide readers through the process of turning challenges into opportunities for growth.

The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F*ck
by Mark Manson



This refreshingly honest book argues that we only have a limited amount of "f*cks" to give so we should focus on what truly matters. *The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F*ck* encourages readers to stop chasing superficial positivity and instead find meaning through embracing responsibility, values, and self-acceptance.

Music for well-being: help or harm?



Music can have a profound impact on people's emotions and consequently, their mental well-being.

By Joanna Joseph

People don't often take into consideration how the music they listen to can reflect the current state of their mental health. While some see it as just something to pass the time, others may notice the connection between their personal experiences and their playlists, but just find it difficult to articulate.

Music is a universal language that helps individuals

express their emotions and thoughts and can even provide valuable insights into mental health, leading to further self-realization.

Many people also often use music as a coping mechanism in times of stress. For many, listening to their preferred genre of music gives them a safe space to process their feelings and thoughts or even find support from lyrics that suggest a common experience.

A study from the Universi-

ty of South Carolina Columbia conducted by Karly Pikel supports this idea and also reveals relationships between the frequencies of stress, anxiety and/or depression and even differences in the genres of music listened to by respondents with different personality traits, highlighting the personalized nature of music and its therapeutic benefits.

Ayushi Anuprova, a grade 12 student at King likes to listen to fast, energetic music

like rap right before a test to get pumped up and feeling confident. "I also listen to rock music because I feel like it lets me release pent-up emotions and it makes me feel lighter afterwards," Anuprova says.

While some people find that listening to music that differs from their mood helps to alleviate negative emotions, others feel the opposite and listen to music that aligns with their mood to feel better.

Grade 12 student Samantha Kaskens almost always has her headphones on but makes adjustments with her mood. "When I'm feeling low, I've found that turning off the music for a while is best for me because I end up choosing really moody music or interpret music that I normally enjoy, in a sad way," she says.

According to an article published in *Frontiers in Psychology* titled 'Music Use for Mood Regulation,' reliance on music during episodes of psychological distress does not always have positive outcomes. For instance, people with a ruminative coping style, common in those with clinical depression, tend to be attracted to music that intensifies depression symptoms. The article also says individuals with depression may struggle to select music that helps improve their mood, so the link between music and mental health is not always positive.

Can music make you smarter?

By Sharini Arulrasa

Ever wonder if listening to music can make you smarter? Music taste varies from person to person, and different genres can have different effects on listeners in terms of the emotions that the music invokes in them. However, some studies show that some specific types of music (like classical and ambient music) have special benefits in enhancing productivity.

A CNET article 'The best music to listen to while you work or study' discusses the "Mozart Effect." This theory posits that listening to Mozart's Sonata temporarily improves spatial reasoning skills which is basically the ability to picture and manipulate images in your brain. It was believed that this effect occurred more prominently after listening to Mozart's Sonata for just ten minutes. This "Mozart Effect" was later debunked as a direct link to increased intelligence, but some researchers argue that there are other benefits of listening to classical music.

For example, a study titled 'Music during lectures: Will students learn better?' from the *Learning and Individual Differences* journal found that college students who listened to classical music during a lecture learned more than those who did not listen to classical music during the

same lecture.

According to another study titled 'Listen to the noise' published in the *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, ambient music, which is a style of gentle, tone-based music, can help people with ADHD block out noise and work more efficiently.

Listening to music while doing a task creates a connection between the task at hand and the emotion, memories, or thoughts associated with the music which makes the task or information easier to remem-

ber and recall.

In an article released by the University of Central Florida called 'Music and the Brain: What Happens When You're Listening to Music,' UCF professor Kiminobu Sugaya explains that "if you play someone's favourite music, different parts of the brain light up, that means memories associated with music are emotional memories, which never fade out — even in Alzheimer's patients."

A Healthline article titled 'Music and Studying: It's

Complicated,' by Crystal Raypole discusses the pros and cons of listening to music.

"Music can improve your mood and help you feel more motivated to tackle important tasks, but it doesn't always work as a study tool," the article states.

In some cases music can be distracting but it definitely depends on the type. Avoiding music with lyrics, choosing slow instrumentals and keeping the volume low are good strategies for turning music into a tool for productivity.



Many students harness the power of music to "lock in" for their studies with some significant results.

A world of wonder in *Seussical the Musical*

The most splendiferous show has come to King!



Catherine Chang

The beautifully handcrafted props and expertise of the hardworking student performers bring King's rendition of *Seussical the Musical* to life!

By Nikita Hardial

With vibrant sets and enthusiastic grins, R.H. King Academy's version of *Seussical the Musical* opened with an artistically crafted scene between Dr. Seuss's characters JoJo the Who (Lucie Le Blanc) and the Cat in the Hat (Miriam Donnelly), which kept the audience hooked for the rest of the two hour performance. From the carefully handcrafted props and backdrops to the way the actors recited their lines with ease, it's clear that much hard work was put into this year's production.

The musical follows the journey of various characters

in Seuss's world, all warped into the story by Jojo's imagination. Many fan favourites, such as Horton the Elephant (Banujan Vansanthapalan), Gertrude McFuzz (Luciana Cardenas) and the Grinch (Maple Grysczyk) all play a part in the epic adventure propelled by the Cat in the Hat. King's rendition of the musical brought back childhood memories for many students, reminding them of the Seuss media abundant in the environment they grew up in; books, movies, illustrations and more.

The production itself was an amazing array of working parts and a wonder to see in person. "I enjoyed [the musi-

cal's] great sense of humour and how motivated and dedicated the students were while performing. There was so much emotional synergy in the air. It truly captivated my attention," shares Arickrish Gobikrishna, a grade 11 student who attended the opening night. "[The cast] was really well composed; for a high school musical, they exceeded my set expectations."

Those involved in King's *Seussical* production found the experience to be very reward-

ing. "I had a lot of fun in this course. I started with limited knowledge of musicals, most of which came from the movie, *High School Musical*.

Funnily enough, it ended up being pretty similar," says Laiba Hossain, a grade 12 student enrolled in the Theatre Technical Production class. "The course has many opportunities to learn different things from how to set up lights to

building set props. I've met many new friends and had an overall great experience."

Hossain's experience was not limited to the behind-the-scenes of the musical. As Thing One, she delivered an enjoyable performance while helping as a stagehand, moving props around.

King has always delivered with their musical theatre productions: from the rendition of the *Addams Family* in 2022, *Freaky Friday* in 2023 and countless other musicals in past years, the amount of effort is astounding and worth every standing ovation. This year's musical added a fun flair to the tradition with an ample amount of cheeriness in the props, backgrounds and faces of the performers. King's *Seussical the Musical* did justice to Seuss's ideas, keeping his childish and jolly art style alive in all aspects.

Many months of determination from the Theatre Technical Production class, King's Visual Arts Council, King's Tech Council as well as various staff advisors—most notably Caitlin Hussey, David

Michaud and Brian Chetwynd—has resulted in an enjoyable experience for all ages. This year's musical was full of excitement galore, why not come to next year's to see what's in store? You can sign up for the Musical Theatre class next year!

The arts: an invaluable emotional outlet



Nikita Hardial

Arts classes, such as band, give students the opportunity to unwind from the stress caused by other parts of their life. Many students find it to be a welcome form of stress relief and creative expression.

By Vidhi Jagesha

"Music class: where the stress is on the notes, not on you." In today's busy, fast paced world, it can be easy to get overwhelmed, especially when balancing academics, extracurriculars, and personal responsibilities. This quote, displayed outside the music room, cap-

tures the essence of artistic spaces and how effective of a tool art can be to improve mental health. From visual arts to performing arts to writing and more, art in all its forms is tied to mental health and emotional well-being. King provides many opportunities for students to learn about and practice art, from its Art and

Culture Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM) program, its various arts clubs and councils and art classes including music, dance, visual arts, musical theatre, and more.

Heather Shaw, a music teacher here at King talks about how art is tied to mental health as it challenges students to confront their inner selves.

"Take our vocal class as an example," she says. "Singing is one of the hardest instruments to learn because it's inside of us; it's intertwined with our identity."

Practicing art provides a unique opportunity to process emotions and develop many skills, including resilience and confidence.

This year's star of King's production of *Seussical the Musical*, grade 11 student Miriam Donnelly, believes that art is possibly the most meaningful thing in her life. "I'm primarily a singer and performer and that brings me joy while also being an emotional outlet," she says. "For example, being in the musical theatre class, the creative freedom we have to play around with the characters and the songs is so exciting! Other times I'll just get out my guitar or sit down at the piano and belt out some emotional ballad. It's like music is my own personal therapist."

Many others share a similar experience and opinion about the value of art. Isabelle Mandas, a grade 10 student at King is currently in the Senior Strings class. "Creating art for

me is a very freeing experience and it feels like a way to escape reality and take a break from my biggest stresses. It is a way to let loose of your feelings and ideas, and gives you a chance to express yourself in a way everyone can understand." She also emphasizes that art doesn't need to be your main focus or career to reap its benefits—simply taking time to connect with it is enough.

This sentiment resonates strongly with Shaw, who recalls her time working in high finance and the tech industry before becoming a teacher. During this time, she felt some regret surrounding leaving the arts. She notices the same regret surface amongst students as well.

"So many grade 12s tell me they miss playing an instrument or being in band from grade 9, and they wish they'd stuck with it," she says.

"Everyone has creativity within them in some form, and nurturing it is crucial for well-being. We're not just engineers or mathematicians or scientists—we're multifaceted. Nurturing that creative part of ourselves is essential to living a full and balanced life."

SPORTS & HEALTH

Take the chance and join a sports team!



Beverly Ngosiok

Joining sports teams allow many students to form strong connections with their teammates through working towards common goals.

By Nikita Hardial

Joining sports teams has enriched the high school experiences of many students at R.H. King Academy. With gyms filled with supportive audiences and countless staff dedicated to the success of their student athletes, many can attest to the benefits of trying sports out.

“By joining a sports team, you foster a sense of community through regularly meeting and performing with a close knit group of people,” shares Maroof Sulaiman, a grade 12 student at King. “With them,

you go through the wins and the losses, but you go through them together.”

One of the biggest benefits of joining a sports team is easily gaining new friends along the way. With the common goal of trying to improve and win against other teams, it’s easy to build strong relationships.

“Being part of a sports team means being part of a group of other like-minded individuals who, just like you, want to use this opportunity to learn new skills and grow together,” Sulaiman says.

As a past member of King’s

ultimate frisbee team, Sulaiman has had memorable games during his student career. One was at Norman Bethune Collegiate Institute where although they lost the game it ended up being the highlight of his time playing ultimate frisbee.

“The game started and we were immediately faced with a playstyle we hadn’t seen before,” Sulaiman says.

“Quickly, we were forced to adapt, making counterplays and keeping up with the other team. In the end, we lost by a single point in the late minutes of the game but we were all super proud with our accom-

plishments. We went home that day a completely different team than we were just eight hours before and it was an absolutely amazing feeling.”

Even though losses are inevitable as athletes, they’re great learning experiences. Moreover, with the right team, sometimes they barely feel like a loss.

Besides being able to develop their skills in various sports, student athletes are able to improve in other areas as well. Irene Koumarelas, a grade 12 student on King’s lacrosse and curling teams says joining a team made her

learn how to manage her time differently. “Since you have an added time-consuming activity to your schedule, it sometimes forces you to get assignments done early and study for tests ahead of time,” Koumarelas says.

Taking on the role of a student athlete is undoubtedly a bit of extra work, nevertheless it’s fun and transforming. She found it much easier to manage the tasks thrown at her later on in her student career since she was able to practice time management through lacrosse and curling.

Beyond getting closer with one’s peers during after school practices, many opportunities arise to just let loose and have some fun. “My favourite experience was going to Kingston for OFSAA (Ontario Federation of School Athletic Associations),” Koumarelas says of her curling experience.

“Although we were there to compete, it felt more like a mini vacation because of how much fun we had, going out for dinner and seeing different parts of the city. Sports are really fun and they are a great way to break out of the monotony of school and bring some variety into life.”

Students of all ages at King have found solace in the teams they’ve spent seasons bonding with. “For me, the biggest benefit of joining the soccer team was making friends and creating good memories,” says grade 12 student Elizabeth Hughes. “Take the chance. You only have four years.”

Exercise: the key to better mental health



Jordyn Booth

Daily exercise can improve mental health and reduce stress with school being a great place to enjoy it.

By Najiha Rahman

Ever heard the phrase, ‘Trust your gut’? Turns out, it might be more than just a saying. While the use is often non-literal, it’s more true than many people would think. Often, the body tries to inform the person about things the mind tries to suppress. For example, many people feel

nauseated before a presentation, interview, or exam. These reactions are often dismissed as “all in the head,” but they are just as real as the pain felt after stubbing a toe.

While managing mental health can be more challenging than physical health the good news is that just as poor mental health can lead to physical discomfort, physical activity

can improve mental well-being. While the physical benefits of exercise are universally acknowledged, it is also crucial for mental health. In a world where feelings of depression and anxiety are becoming more common and exercise among youth is on the decline, fitness is the key to maintaining a healthy mind. The benefits from routine ex-

ercise aren’t about just adding a healthy activity to your day—it also helps create discipline. A consistent workout or sports routine can help build discipline and focus when motivation is low while also providing a tangible goal to work toward. Discipline is also an applicable skill and can encourage good work habits and time management skills.

In addition, exercise can help comfort those with anxiety. During physical activity, especially in team sports or in nature, people often experience a shift in focus—moving away from worries or self-criticism to the present moment. It causes the heart to pump rapidly for positive reasons rather than due to anxiety or nervousness. This mindfulness aspect of exercise can give the mind a refreshing reset while improving mental clarity and reducing the mental clutter. Engaging the body allows the mind a much needed break to recharge.

When students hear this, they often argue that they have little time for sports due to their heavy workloads. It might even seem like exercise is a waste of time, but that’s far from the case.

As exam season approaches, students should be encouraged to make time for exer-

cise. Incorporating sports and physical activity into daily life to replace the time spent doomscrolling on TikTok can make a significant difference—not just for mental health, but also for overall efficiency. Studies by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) show that there is a clear connection between exercise and academic performance. It helps clear a foggy mind, improves sleep, and boosts memory and concentration. What should you do? Boost your academic performance by joining a sports team, either at King or outside of school. Going to the gym or even jogging on the spot and doing jumping jacks in your room before studying can make a difference.

Exercise is not just for physical health as it can be an easy-to-access aid for mental well-being as well. Regular physical activity can reduce stress, improve mood, boost focus, and enhance productivity. During periods of stress, making time for exercise can make a big difference in one’s mental health as well as physical health. As exams are fast approaching, make sure to go ahead and schedule some extra time for activities like yoga, exercise, or sports and intramurals at King.



Injuries and student-athlete well-being



Najiha Rahman

Injuries can make athletes feel useless, unproductive, and anxious.

By Miriam Donnelly

Most athletes are abnormally in tune with their bodies and aware of their health and what pains they should be concerned about. Despite their acute awareness of their bodies, athletes are often the most likely to ignore the signals their body is giving them and push through an injury for the sake of their sport. They are also more likely to suffer from severe injuries because of the intensity and frequency at which they exert themselves. Because of these factors, having a critical injury can have a serious negative effect on an athlete's mental health as well as their physical health, particularly impacting their self-esteem and social well-being.

Silvia Roy, a grade 11 student at R. H. King suffered a particularly severe injury as an

athlete. Her injury stems from her life-long involvement in physically-demanding activities. She is on a dance team, and has been since the age of 3. However, her dance career had a few bumps in the road since she was diagnosed with spondylolisthesis, a condition where a vertebra slips out of alignment in the spine. In 2023, she also experienced a spinal stress fracture and then she suffered from constant extreme lower back pain.

"Dance is the most important thing in my life. I didn't want to 'take a break' because I knew how that would negatively affect my dancing and I wasn't prepared to make that sacrifice," Roy says

Throughout the spring, her team was preparing for the National championships that were to take place in July of 2023. However, when the

competition dates finally arrived, she felt the impact of the decisions she had made not to rest during the months prior. Not only was she unable to participate in any of the individually judged competitions, but after forcing herself to dance in the group choreography, she could not dance, walk, or even stand up and sit down without help. Roy had to take five months completely off of dance to recover and is still in recovery to this day.

"Those couple of months when I was unable to dance were some of the most miserable of my entire life... I was tired of being hurt, I felt physically un-fit and inadequate, and like I was letting down myself, my coach, and my team," she says.

An athlete's performance is never at its peak when they are suffering from an injury. Typically, the athletes who sustain severe injuries are the ones who spend a considerable amount of time dedicated to their sport and have high expectations for themselves. Being unable to perform to their desired capacity can result in feelings of inadequacy, especially for an athlete whose validation comes primarily from their sport. Performing 'inadequately' could seriously affect their self-esteem.

"Not being able to perform the way I wanted really dampened my confidence. And I

had practice four times a week for two hours... so I spent at least eight hours a week just not being good enough," says Isabella Perreira, a teenage athlete from Scarborough who experienced repeated Grade 1 and 2 ankle sprains over the course of a year.

Of course, the drive to fight through the pain is not always rooted in the athlete themselves, but often pressure can come from their coach, team, or parents. It can be good for young people to have someone pushing them to not give up, but the other side effect is that they internalize the belief that their feelings are not important enough to be heard. Similar to the feelings of inadequacy, this can quickly spread to other branches of their life until they believe that their feelings are simply unimportant.

Whether it be because they were forced to bow out, or they are simply not performing to the best of their abilities, athletes will inevitably feel as though they are letting their team down. The relationship between an athlete and their

teammates can be one of the tightest relationships they will ever experience.

"They've absolutely become my life-long friends. We've seen each other at our ugliest -physically and mentally- and once you get to that point you've simply made an unbreakable bond," says Diara Jones, a 16 year old soccer player from the community.

Nobody wants to let down the people that mean the most to them in life. Silvia Roy describes feeling like she disappointed her team after performing the group number at

the National Championships in '23. "It feels like you're disappointing your family. They are my best friends and they were all so dedicated to the performance. Despite all that, it wasn't a flawless performance and it felt like it was mostly my fault."

No matter the sport, no matter the athlete, no matter the skill, every athlete has the potential to experience the emotional trauma that comes with a physical one. The mental health of athletes is not spoken about as frequently as it should be, as physical and mental health are not mutually exclusive.

"I was tired of being hurt, I felt physically un-fit and inadequate, and like I was letting down myself, my coach, and my team,"

- Silvia Roy

Battling pressure: stress of King athletes

Balancing sports, school and mental health

By Pethmi Jayatunge

High school is a time for exploration, growth, and personal development, but for student athletes the stakes are often much higher. The pressure to perform both academically and athletically can create intense challenges leading to a complex balancing act that many young athletes struggle to navigate.

For many athletes, like Sahara Meighlal-Sarwan, a grade 12 student at King who has been playing soccer for more than ten years, it feels like the desire to excel in sports can become deeply tied to one's individual sense of self-worth. "There's so much pressure each time you step on the field to perform," she says. "Sometimes the anxiety gets so strong I feel that how I play represents who I am as a person. My self-worth gets tied to my performance. It's crazy to say that out loud."

Meighlal-Sarwan acknowledges how easy it is to spiral into self-doubt after a mistake like hitting a bad corner kick or losing possession of the ball. "In these moments, I remind myself why I started playing this sport. It's my passion and love for the game that keeps me motivated," she says.

While Meighlal-Sarwan recognizes the pressure stu-

dents are under, she also highlights the need for recognition of various sports beyond the most popular ones. At R.H King, sports like basketball and volleyball dominate attention, but she believes it's essential to showcase other successful teams.

"The Girls Varsity Soccer Team at King remains undefeated for two years! The curling team qualified and dominated in OFSAA! There are so many accomplishments that need to be highlighted," she explains. "As a multi-sport athlete, I've seen many teams that deserve more recognition."

In addition to the emotional pressures that come with competing at a high level, balancing sports with academics is a constant challenge. Fallon McGroarty, another student-athlete in grade 11, says that being a student athlete means that academics come before athletics. "For example, if I need to study for a unit test that's the next day, I'll skip practice to study even more." She explains how difficult it can be to juggle the demands of homework and sports practices, sometimes staying up late after a two-hour practice to complete assignments.

However, McGroarty has learned to manage the pressure by staying present. "Handling

pressure can have a huge effect on your performance," she says. "I've found that staying in the moment has given me the most success. It's easy to think about past mistakes or future outcomes and when you do that it leads to more errors."

McGroarty also advises younger athletes to lean on their support systems, whether that be coaches, teammates, or family. "I truly believe that you cannot succeed as an athlete without the people surrounding you," she affirms.

For others, like Agaran Jeyaruban, a grade 10 student, the drive to be the best at his sport is what fuels him to keep pushing through the mental hurdles. "The motivation behind me being an athlete and participating in my sports is just wanting to be the best at my sport and win," Jeyaruban says.

Yet, this competitive spirit comes with its own pressures. "There have been many times where my anxiety and overthinking has taken over on the court and resulted in me not performing at my best," he admits. "I cope with it by being connected with my teammates on the court to remind myself that they have my back. Focusing on the next play is better than letting my overthinking dictate my performance."

Time management is another area where athletes face difficulty. Bentley Cummings, a grade 9 student at King, has learned to balance his academics and athletic commitments by prioritizing his schoolwork. "I do my homework first and then, once I'm finished with school stuff, I can go and hang out with my friends," Cummings explains. "But if I have practice or a game, I finish my work the day before or right when I get home."

Despite the strategies Cummings uses to manage his time, the pressure to excel both academically and athletically can be overwhelming. "My dad

helps me a lot so I never want to let him down. I want to impress my friends, so that adds to the pressure. I don't want to be judged for doing bad," he says.

Many student-athletes struggle to navigate the pressures of excelling in both school and sport. Whether it's the emotional weight of performance anxiety or the practical challenge of balancing homework with practices, the demands are high. For these athletes, the key to managing the pressure lies in support, motivation, and the drive to keep doing the absolute best that they can.



Pethmi Jayatunge

With time running out, player nerves can reach an all-time high.

B-SIDE

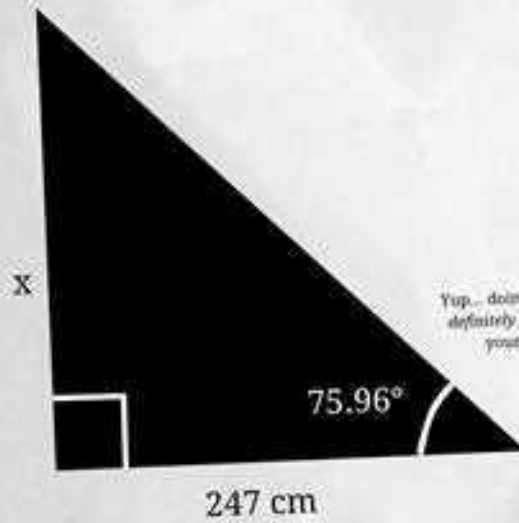
Can you find all 7 phone numbers?
(we bet you cant!)

1 8 0 0 6 6 8 6 8 6 8 7 3 5 1
 8 8 1 3 1 8 0 0 2 6 8 9 6 8 8
 3 1 5 5 5 2 4 2 3 3 1 0 7 7 7
 3 1 8 5 5 2 4 2 3 3 1 0 7 7 7
 2 1 8 5 2 2 4 2 3 3 1 0 7 7 3
 9 8 0 0 6 4 8 6 8 6 8 7 3 5 3
 4 1 8 6 6 6 2 7 3 3 4 2 6 8 0
 8 1 8 5 5 2 4 3 3 3 1 0 7 7 6
 6 6 1 8 6 6 8 6 3 0 5 1 1 1 3
 5 1 8 7 5 2 4 2 3 1 1 0 7 9 6
 0 1 8 5 9 2 4 2 3 3 0 0 8 7 6

- Kids Help Phone**
1-800-668-6868
- Black Youth Help Line**
1-833-294-8650
- LGBTQ Youthline**
1-800-268-9688
- Indigenous: Hope for Wellness
Help Chat**
1-855-242-3310
- Trans Lifeline**
1-877-330-6366
- Naseeha: Muslim Mental Health
Help Phone**
1-866-627-3342
- Assaulted Women's Helpline**
1-866-863-0511



Solve for x, rounding to 3 digits.
 The answer is the number to call or text for CAMH's 24/7 Suicide Prevention Hotline.



Yup... doing a math problem is definitely going to help lower your stress levels...

