Hancock Senior Wins almost $300,000 in Scholarship Money

In December, Wendy Barajas-Avilez found out Lafayette University in Pennsylvania awarded her a full four-year scholarship with the support of The Academy Group, an organization that creates world-class opportunities for young people from the nation’s most resilient communities.

“I didn’t expect this,” Barajas-Avilez said. “The main thing is we need to know our worth.”

Top Hancock Student Says Get Rid of Class Rank

By Andres Valencia

In the beginning of my freshman year, I was number one. Inadvertently, there was always a constant pressure to be in that spot for all my years in high school.

However, after my second year in school, I noticed that my ranking was falling; at the same time, my unweighted GPA was still a 4.0. I realized that other students were taking more AP classes than I was, but I was still taking honors classes along with other AP classes as well.

Nevertheless, in my sophomore year, I decided to take a regular art class instead of taking another AP class. I wanted to take art because it was a class that interested me and captivated my attention. I still desired to be number one in my class but not at the cost of taking more AP classes I did not want. Although some people may disagree and would want to have a ranking system in school because they feel the system encourages students to perform at their best, in my experience, it had the opposite effect because I focused more on the number of AP classes that I took rather than if I was going to enjoy the class.

Consequently, I want to see the ranking system eliminated because there is an intentional pressure for students to always maintain or achieve a certain rank. Furthermore, this discourages other students at the bottom. According to a blog post titled “The case for abolishing class rank,” Alfie Kohn writes, “A decade ago,

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Eliminate Class Rank

According to the National Association for College Admission Counseling, 40% of high schools had either stopped ranking their students or refused to share those numbers with colleges—a shift that apparently has had no effect on students’ prospects for admission.” This shows a trend among high schools that are eliminating class rank. In addition, the elimination of class rank would not affect future applications for college admissions.

In a Washington Post article, Moriah Balingit reports, "Dartmouth College’s Class of 2018 profile also lists statistics about how many of its students were top-ranked in high school, but with a notation that only a third of students came from schools that provide it." This shows that many top universities are not taking into consideration the class rank of their students; in contrast, many students still hold a high value of the ranking system.

Alfie Kohn also states that “teenagers won’t pursue an interest in, say, taking music or journalism for fear of lowering their average. Those classes normally do not carry bonus points.” Students are forgetting to pursue classes they are going to enjoy. There is a feeling of anxiety for students to have a great number of AP classes in order to ensure their ranking.

Joselyn a CPS senior in the top 1% of her class says, “I feel that it’s not fair for all of the students who do not want to take AP classes because they have extracurricular activities; at the same time, other students are just focusing on their schoolwork and not doing anything else, which places them in a higher ranking.” She thinks the ranking system at the school does not take into account extracurricular activities or types of jobs students may have after school. Her view of the ranking system has slowly changed over time. She says, “At first I was for the ranking system because it’s based on your grades, so your grades help you be in the top. However, as time passed I found out the way you were ranked and, in my eyes, this seemed unfair to just have your grades and amount of AP classes you take define your rank.”

Another CPS student who is also a senior and in the top 1% of his class is David Rodriguez. “I don’t believe the class ranking system is negative, but the stigma and culture around it definitely is. The numbers seem to get into people’s heads and force them to establish their value with their rank due to the pressure received from their peers and even parents when their number is made public.”

David is telling a dark side of the class ranking. People often expect students in the top to have a consistent number, which can cause anxiety and depression in some students. He also says, “People take one glance at your rank and believe they have the complete story. If you are at the top, they think you are better than everyone and you are guaranteed to make millions, and get into the best Ivy Leagues. If you are at the bottom, you are plain stupid and school is not for you. It is a double-edged sword we implicate upon ourselves due to our culture of comparison.”

While there are still many schools and students that support the ranking system, the facts demonstrate the system is archaic and does not accurately represent students’ academic and extracurricular achievements. If a school wants to have a ranking system it needs to take into consideration students involved in sports, extracurricular activities, community service, and jobs—not just the amount of AP classes a student has taken. While it may be true that colleges still consider a student’s ranking for applications, the data suggests that more universities and colleges are not taking into consideration a student’s ranking.

I understand that grades are important to students. They are still important to me, but there are other aspects of school that are not taken into account. When I started high school, my main goal was to get good grades and hopefully learn something from every class. However, when I found out that I was number one in my class, I felt pressured from peers and myself to not go down. There was always a constant fear of someone surpassing me and taking my ranking. Consequently, a ranking system made me more anxious about my grades and less concerned about class material.
Whatchoo Got to Say about the Last Issue

Mental Health Focus and New Dean

“Mental health is one of the topics student council continuously focuses on bringing attention to every year!”

--Giselle H.

“Many people deal with a lot of problems that can affect their life one way or another and knowing that someone like Ms. Garcia is there to talk to whenever gives students the confidence to open up.”

—Yessenia Garcia

“Ms. Garcia’s background will allow her to make good decisions about students’ actions and set the appropriate consequences.”

--Alejandro Patino

Gay-Straight Alliance Art Gets Vandalized

"Just because you destroy a piece of art doesn’t mean you silence the community. If anything, you gave them more strength to fight.”

--Carli Martinez

"I believe that all people should be treated as equals and we should cherish our differences and celebrate each other because there is no harm in portraying love.”

—Christopher Ortega

High Maintenance Building

“We have to make a change and create a positive environment. We cannot ignore our current issues and students’ complaints.”

--Juliena Sandoval

"The heating and air conditioning systems in the school are old and barely work. Our best bet is to try and repair them because getting new systems can be expensive.”

--Ricardo Monroy

“Hancock has had many issues with maintenance ever since I have arrived, and every year nothing has improved.”

--Valeria Luevanos

“The building is so uncertain to the point where we don’t even know what to wear because of the temperatures.”

—Briana Irizarry

“The students shouldn’t have to come in jackets to class. It’s the school’s responsibility to plan ahead of time.”

--Yesenia Salas

“A/C during the warm season barely does anything to provide relief from the heat.”

—Fernando Gallegos

Hancock Participates in the Hour of Code

The Hour of Code is a global movement to encourage computer science and computer programming.

With the help of Computer Science Teacher George Schmidt, Hancock students heard from a number of speakers who work in related fields and got to do some dances popular in video games.
Many teens in our community skip meals. This is one of the dangerous habits that is developed due to body shaming. “Studies suggest that 1 in 20 people will be affected at some point in their lives. Ultimately without treatment, eating disorders can take over a person’s life and lead to serious, potentially fatal medical complications. Although eating disorders are commonly associated with women, men can develop them as well,” says the National Alliance on Mental Illness. We may not notice it, but some of these people might be our friends, our siblings, our family, or our neighbors. It could be anyone in our community. I have friends who have been body shamed, in fact, I myself have been shamed before and have had body image issues.

I interviewed a female student at Hancock, who wishes to remain anonymous, I will refer to her simply as “she/her.” When speaking of some habits she has noticed herself falling into, she said, “I skip lunch and force myself not to eat anything at school, when I get home I eat and tend to eat more than I should. I only eat once a day during the week and on weekends I eat a lot, especially junk food.” She is not alone, there are other people who do this too; however, this habit can be very harmful. According to the National Health Services, “Skipping meals altogether can result in tiredness and may mean you miss out on essential nutrients.”

She also said that she has another friend who has issues with body image and wants to eat less, even though they’ve talked about these issues, neither of them has reached out for help. “Also, I have another friend who I suspect may have an eating disorder, but we don’t talk about it,” she added. According to a study run by the US National Library of Medicine and National Institutes of Health, “Forty-four percent of adolescent girls believed they were overweight and 60% were actively trying to lose weight even though the majority of these young girls were within normal weight ranges.” Trying to further drop their weight will only be harmful in the long run. Eating disorders can impact relationships with family members, friends, and coworkers, as well as functioning in academic settings and the workplace. When it comes to health, eating disorders can have long-lasting negative effects. Some consequences of eating disorders include heart disease, osteoporosis, and tooth decay.

Society has many unrealistic expectations and beliefs on what beauty is and what the ideal body should look like. However, all of us are built differently, some are taller and some are heavier, but that’s okay. It’s important to keep in mind that weight doesn’t necessarily show whether you are healthy or not. Comparing ourselves to others and trying to look like the images we see on magazines and social media is natural, but harmful. Teenagers are at an age in which they are very vulnerable to this issue, we want to be accepted socially and we want others to like us as much as the ‘ideal’ and ‘perfect’ people we see in the media. When I asked what started this issue for her, she replied, “I look at old pictures of myself and check myself on the scale, which made me notice my weight gain. I see other girls on social media and it lowers my self-esteem.”

It is important to reach out for help, this is something that isn’t just physical, it’s also a mental issue. When I asked her if she had told anyone about this before, she said, “I haven’t told anyone other than you.” It’s important to reach out for help before the problem can become too severe. Usually, treatment may be tailored to fit the patient’s needs and problems as an individual. Psychotherapy, counseling, and/or careful attention to medical and nutritional needs, is often used as an effective long-term treatment. The National Eating Disorders Association is one of many organizations that has a helpline and has information for those who wish to help friends, family, or themselves.

Nationaleatingdisorders.org provides a short and confidential screening test. This organization’s phone number is (800) 931-2237.

Furthermore, the organization’s website and hotline can help you seek treatment near you. We can all help by supporting each other, accepting people the way they are, and spreading love and kindness to everyone. Some people may say that the school lunch is nasty; but, this isn’t the only option. We are allowed to bring our own meals from home, if we need to heat up food we can always ask teachers to let us use their microwaves. This way we can get the portions we want, the food we like, and the food that we need to be eating. We just can’t bring in food for other people. Our school allows us to earn off campus lunch, we can take advantage of this too if we don’t like the food here. The important thing here is that we feed ourselves and take care of ourselves, skipping meals won’t make us lose weight faster (as some people may believe) and it is unhealthy.
Everyday at school, we go through the best period of the day. That being, lunch. It’s the only time we get to socialize, not worry about work, and eat. It’s what most people look most forward to during school. The constant thoughts during your second period and some of your third being, “I wonder what’s for lunch”, “I’m so hungry”, or “I can’t wait to just sit and talk with my friends”. When lunch comes, it passes by so fast that some people tend to leave their trays and trash on their tables. It then becomes a habit for some students that it doesn’t only bother the staff but at this point, it’s bothering other students.

Everyday at the end of a lunch period, at least half the lunch tables (not including the tables in the back) have remains of the students’ lunch trays or trash because students are not picking up after themselves. This leaves more of a mess than necessary for the janitors to clean up because students are being inconsiderate. This is most likely not only a habit they do in the school, but they might do it at home too. If this is something they are comfortable doing at home, it’s going to carry on outside of home and deteriorate manners.

Kids depend on their parents, especially their moms, to pick up after them and clean everything; it doesn’t end. They rely on that dependency for so long on their parents, but that can’t last forever. It might be because I’m a girl, maybe not, but I was brought up at an earlier age to clean up after myself and not rely on my parents to pick up my dishes and clean my room. It’s not the same with my brothers though. Yes, they’re younger than me, but I was taught to clean after myself at a far younger age than they are now. A twelve and fourteen year old boy should be able to clean their rooms and take their dishes to the sink without having to be told to or expect someone else to pick it up. Whether they expect my mom to pick it up, or me, or my grandma.

There’s too much dependency with kids now, it’s said that, “one in four teens say they will be in their mid-20s before they will be able to support themselves without parental assistance, an increase from 12 percent two years ago”. Imagine a twenty year old, not knowing how to pick up their trash. It seems like this is what this situation in the cafeteria is leading to. Though it may not seem like a big deal to some, people need to open up their eyes and see the bigger picture. It’s not just that it’s rude to leave more of a mess for others to clean, but it’s going to affect the people causing the mess. After asking some students who tend to leave their trays and trash lying around, an anonymous sophomore had mentioned how they feel lazy which is why they leave their trash on the lunch tables. “I don’t know, I mean I pick up my stuff sometimes at home but I just forget or get lazy when it comes to cleaning at school,” this sophomore explains. When asking this student if they depend on their parents on cleaning up their mess when they don’t pick it up, they responded with, “I mean yeah, or whoever ends up coming across it, I would assume they’d pick it up.” This being a brief indication that this student does rely on others to clean after them, which leads to them taking their habits from home into the real world.

This little lunchroom mess is not only a situation for the Hancock’s staff, but also for those making the mess. It makes the job of these hard working janitors more stressful. Lunchroom manager, Ms. Peggy, talks about lunchroom staff member, Jerry. “When Jerry’s not here, you can tell the difference. It’s not the same when he’s not here—he comes and sets up tables in the mornings, takes out the trash, but it shouldn’t be on him to do that all the time. It doesn’t make his job easier when kids keep leaving their stuff behind,” Ms. Peggy explains. Though it’s a load of stress on the staff members, it also harms the amount of dependency these kids have on others to do basic things for them that everyone is capable of doing for themselves, or should be. If these kids start picking up their trash, put it on their trays, and carry it to the trash can, this will lead them to be more independent.
Ya know we gotta get all “educational.” Figure out who or what this humor—and, yes, it’s humorous—is criticizing. What change is the comic suggesting in the subtext? (Look it up. The word. Not the answer to the question, cuz . . . uh . . . you won’t find it. Yeah. So . . .)

By Froylan Castillo, Jr.

*What Up, Brain?*  
Written by Jorge Hernandez

*Love and Science*  
Illustrated by Ixchel Ledeza
Hold up. Hoooooold. UP! Now this one’s a little “controversial.”

Before you accuse staff of not having a sense of humor—because we do have one—we’d like students to know that we want our school to be a place where students feel safe and respected.

During students’ morning arrival, staff follows the guidelines established by the CPS Department of Safety and Security for metal detector searches. However (and underline this next part), if a student shows probable cause to be searched, that student is searched.

If at any time you feel unsafe because of another student or have probable cause (reasonable proof or suspicion) that another student is under the influence of drugs or alcohol, please tell a staff member. Thank you to the students in Comic Book Club for sharing their perspective.

Oh, yeah. What does this comic subtextually reveal about the stereotypes our community has about those who are “trouble?” What stereotypes should we consider about personality? Appearance? Or gender?
Benefits of Playing an Instrument  By Francisco Sosa

Last summer, I spent my time at home sleeping and web surfing when I realized that I needed a hobby to dedicate myself to. My boredom quickly went away and evolved into liveliness. Now, most of the time went to understanding and practicing the keyboard. I had a goal for the end of summer: to master this. Each day, it gave me this strong sense of accomplishment and made me more confident.

People underestimate the value of knowing how to play an instrument. Knowing how to play at least one can take us far. People should pursue their interests despite the excuses they give themselves. There will obviously be struggles in the beginning, but practicing consistently will overcome the struggle. Knowing the benefits that come from playing an instrument is also motivation. They keep our brain sharp, enhance coordination, and foster our self-expression. For me, learning an instrument gives me a hobby and a talent to add on for myself. I picked up an instrument thinking how rewarding it would be to expertly play this. Mastering an instrument gives me a place to devote my time to. Once I got the hang of things, I would attempt to compose a couple of pieces on my own.

A research by John Hopkins University shows that musicians have a stronger and more diverse neural structure than non-musicians. Another article lists the physical, mental, and emotional benefits that happen to us when we pick up an instrument. The benefits include strengthening the brain to process information, improving mental performance and memory, as well as using all parts of our brain to focus on a piece to prevent attention-deficit disorder.

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Finding where to learn an instrument and choosing one that doesn’t take a bite out of our wallets can be tricky. Youtube is a great place to start; there are plenty of videos that will cover the basics of playing an instrument. For example, Andrew Furmanczyk has great videos for people who are beginning to play piano. A channel I used was the Hoffman Academy.

“The Spirit”
Art by
Jose de Jesus Garcia

The Signature is published every month October through June in print and online versions on our Website. Submit your art, photography, or writing. See Mr. Salazar in 201.

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