

Why seniors drop classes and activities 2nd semester

Students stray from usual routines in last months before college

by Alyssa Pak

The words “second semester senior” mean excitement for many seniors. There’s less pressure to keep grades high and students can take a second to pursue passions they might not have had time to do first semester. But another popular option is for students to drop a class or extracurricular.

Senior Suzi Callis explained that she dropped Symphony Orchestra because she had to stay up late doing homework every night and didn’t get much sleep.

But quitting orchestra at school doesn’t necessarily mean dropping music altogether, as Callis continues to take private lessons for violin outside of school.

Another area that seniors may decide to cut back on is sports. “I was hesitant to sign up for track because most of my friends were quitting, but I went to two practices to give it a chance,” said senior Chloe Solon, a cross country and track runner since freshman year.

“The team atmosphere was

different since so many people had quit, and I didn’t like running in the cold because I wasn’t as motivated to work hard and get faster. I wasn’t gaining anything from it since I wasn’t motivated to try my best, and I wasn’t excited to go to practice, so I decided to quit,” she elaborated.

Solon said that she’s been able to find other ways to work out during the winter months and is much happier with the time she now has to spend with her friends before leaving for college.

For other students, the motivation to drop courses was more based on receiving college credit for taking AP classes.

“I found out that the colleges I wanted to go to didn’t take AP credits from college, so I figured there was no point to be stressed out all the time if in the end it doesn’t matter,” said senior Grace Hackett who dropped AP Chemistry.

Many students agreed that getting into and committing to a college has a strong impact on motivation. The general thought process is that once a student is accepted into college, grades no longer matter.

“Once people get into and have committed to a college they kind of stop trying in school. School is no longer about trying to get an A, it’s about trying to pass,” said Hackett.

Whether students see this as an opportunity to experiment with learning strategies that fit their needs best or spend their time on other activities other than school, the pressure is certainly lower.

While colleges aren’t going to rescind a student for simply dropping out of an activity, Solon pointed out that “When you are still applying to colleges, you are being evaluated for your actions and run the risk of being rejected.”

Students have found that the effects of dropping an activity or class can have are often positive and beneficial for their overall well-being.

“I now have fifth, sixth, and seventh free since I dropped orchestra, and I have gotten all my homework done at school which has increased the amount of sleep I get and reduced my stress significantly,” said Callis.

Sometimes it seems like there’s a certain stigma surrounding dropping an activity and students may worry that their peers will think that they’re slacking off.

I’ve heard people say it’s irresponsible to drop extracurriculars or sports just because colleges won’t know, and also that it shows you aren’t dedicated or never really liked it in the first place. I don’t think this is necessarily true, because although



I enjoyed track other years, it was completely different this year and was missing the aspects that had previously made me enjoy the sport,” stated Solon.

Hackett agreed, saying that “Some people are embarrassed because they feel like everyone is judging them for dropping, but that

just isn’t the case. No one cares.”

Extracurriculars and certain challenging classes give students the opportunity to grow mentally or physically, but at the same time, decreasing the time spent on those activities can give students exposure to new experiences.

“For the three years that I did it, track was a lot of fun, and it allowed me to spend time with great people and enjoy a team environment. But it felt like a totally different

team this year since I was in a different group with a different coach and teammates who I didn’t really know. I also wanted to try new things for my last few months living here, and a substantial after-school commitment like track prevented me from doing that,” said Solon.

What’s worth watching on **NETFLIX** this week

“Sex Education” on more than just sex

New show tackles complexities of teen relationships

by Claudia Levens



As I sat in the library commons during lunch one day, I overheard a group of Sophomore boys discussing the new Netflix original show “Sex Education.”

“Dude, I called it in the first episode” one of them retorted at his friend who had just exclaimed his surprise at one of the show’s most profound character development moments that takes place in the final episode.

And since I’ve finished watching “Sex Education,” a show suffused with numerous heartfelt character moments, I’ve heard more buzz about it than the typical Netflix show. And not just from clusters of Sophomore boys but from my friends, people in my advisory, and my classmates.

Now it could simply be the exposure-effect, but I think there’s a vulnerability about Sex Education that resonates with people.

On its surface, the show tells the story of Otis Milburn who runs an underground sex-clinic for the sexually ignorant students at his school.

But beyond the brazenly honest conversations, the show is about the awkwardness and vulnerability of teenage sexuality.

Senior Colin Reinhart said that he was initially hooked by how outrageously awkward Otis’s character is, but that over time he began to empathize with many of the journeys the characters went through.

“The director was able to touch on a lot of very important topics, specifically struggling to cope with

one’s sexual identity, all while masking the seriousness of the topics with humor,” he said.

Note: We’re about to infiltrate spoiler territory, so if you haven’t seen the show, take this opportunity (after reading every article in this newspaper) to question what your doing with your life and watch it.

Senior Sophie Beitel agreed with Reinhart, noting how it was possible to empathize with every single character.

“I see myself in Eric especially because he has this conflicting desire to express himself and explore his identity freely but he also wants to be accepted by his family, friends, and peers, and those two things are often at odds with each other,” she said.

Beitel also appreciated the care taken by the show in portraying diverse types of love on a level playing field, referencing the inclusivity of numerous racial, sexual, ethnic and personality types.

“It represents more than one kind of person and more than one kind of experience, and the depiction of all the different kinds of relationships in our lives in general feels more accurate than any other show I’ve seen,” she said.

One of the shows many diverse story lines centers around Otis providing counseling to a young lesbian couple. Inevitably, the solution to their lack of chemistry came down to the same principle as almost everyone else who went to Otis for help-- communication.

And communicate they do: throughout Sex Education, we see

Otis counsel teens worried about their bodies, their desires, and their relationships, creating a space where students can work through the messiness of growing up today.

Reinhart corroborated: “it had a lot to say about the way we live and treat people in the 21st century.”

Beitel said, “It’s real. It’s full of mistakes and awkwardness and learning and bravery.”

Otis himself must reconcile with his own sexual repression, since, despite his complex understanding of relationships and ostensibly sex-positive home, he is incredibly uncomfortable about sex. “Let’s take things slow,” he tells a classmate, and they proceed to hold hands for 45 minutes.

In another memorable story line, the headmaster confronts the school when an image of an unknown student’s vulva is shared without her consent. “It’s my vagina,” a wave of students assert, standing in solidarity with the targeted girl. The shame associated with the image fades, and the targeted girl stands too: “It’s MY vagina,” she claims proudly.

Beitel, who called this one of her favorite scenes, said “it was both hilarious and really empowering.”

Along with Netflix’s Big Mouth, the show follows a trend of more frank and positive depictions of growing up, updating the well-worn subject material of high school relationships.

Ultimately, “Sex Education” is an ode to the intricacies of our relationships: parents and kids, best friends, older and younger generations, as well as young people falling in and out of love.

“If you want to understand teenagers, watch this show. If you want to laugh and cry, watch this show. If you want to feel understood, watch this show,” Beitel said.

“Bird Box” goes viral despite controversy

Netflix thriller has been viewed by 45 million people

by Simren Dadwani



If you haven’t seen Bird Box, you’ve heard of it. The movie came out Nov. 12, 2018, and since then, people have been hyping it up.

The movie tells a story of an ambiguous but terrifying force that decimates the population by tempting you to look at it. But if you look at it, you’ll be compelled to commit suicide.

The main protagonist, Malorie, is a pregnant young artist who is forced to live her life in the darkness with two kids and a stranger named Tom. Despite showing carelessness and negligence towards the health of herself and her child, she comes out of this hectic epidemic learning the importance of family.

There has been subsequent discussion about the movie and students have shared many different views. Junior, McKenna Fox said she thought the movie was really interesting.

Junior Zoe Ray said, “I think that it was over hyped. I only watched it because I saw it all over Instagram but I don’t think it lived up to the high expectations.”

Julia Zwolinsky believes students were attracted to Bird Box because of a similar thrill of suspense seen in 2018’s “A Quiet Place.”

Many students also shared some opposing feelings towards the movie and plot.

Senior Bennett Blake though it was a unique concept for a movie, however, Blake believes the film

doesn’t deserve a second watch.

“It’s interesting that Netflix is willing to experiment with controversial subjects. I would recommend it to others because I think it is important to pop culture,” said Blake.

A big part of the controversy is also in the persuasiveness of suicide. The basis of this movie is largely built upon suicide. If people don’t wear their blindfold and if they see that creature, they’re compelled to kill themselves.

“I could see how it would be a sensitive subject and I would not recommend this to every person,” he said.

Similarly, Fox said, “The movie was different because of the suicide aspect, I feel like that’s something still very controversial.”

On the other hand, the movie even inspired their audience to do the Bird Box challenge, where people try to reenact the movie in real life and record themselves.

“I liked the movie, but personally I understand why it could be controversial because it made people want to do this dangerous challenge,” said Sophomore, Sophia Canchola.