

BASIS SCOTTSDALE GAZETTE

What We Learned in High School

Getting four hours of sleep is fun and all until you develop a crippling caffeine addiction.

Make friends with older kids; they teach you so much about life.

Sometimes, it helps to journal your feelings.

CJ's save lives.

It's sometimes better to cut things out if they're starting to weigh you down.

Family is the most important. Appreciate your family every day.

Don't be afraid of asking teachers or mentors for help; they're here for you!

Your hair only looks good when you have nowhere to go.

Learn how to use maps.

Punctuality is the bare minimum.

By: The Students in The Art of the
Personal Essay Capstone



Source: bsiclassof25 on Instagram

SAVE THE DATE

Valentine's Day: 2/14

Presidents' Day: 2/17

Boba Night: 2/20

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Not a Trend
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It's fun to hear about drama, but less so to be a part of it.

All it takes to make new friends is to go up and talk to them.

You're allowed to make mistakes. But don't make the same ones twice – that's not growth.

Go to Dr. Sahu's student hours – it will help you ace her unpredictable tests.

Never underestimate how difficult Señor Garcia will make the AP Spanish oral exam.

Thank goodness for the AP curve!

Write your goals out. It will help you be more motivated to complete them.

The best ideas sometimes come at 1:00 am.

Don't change for others. Be yourself.

You can accomplish anything with enough time and hard work.

Do not allow the fear of rejection to keep you from trying.

Nothing is owed to you.

Make your point straight to the other person for better understanding.

Be considerate of others, even if they are not to you.

People don't care if your outfit is bad or your acne is flaring up. Most people are focused on themselves.

Read as many books as you can. Reading builds character and will help you your whole life.

Do what you are truly passionate about.

Push yourself until you are challenged but save yourself before you drown.

Speeding isn't worth it.

Adulting is hard, but start making your own dentist appointments.

If you want to get through high school at BASIS, study every day.



Source: @bsiclassof25 on Instagram

Poetry Out Loud: A Night to Remember

by: Riya Bangalore and Claire Hong

Last month, 17 contestants shared the BASIS Scottsdale stage in a touching performance of pure, raw emotion. Some call this night a competition, but to the competitors, that night was more than just a contest; it was an opportunity to shine. And shine, they did! A monumental event deserves an article, so here it is!

Imagine this: a blinding stage light focused on you, solely you; a giant, unlit gym peppered with darkened faces looking up at you with unmistakable wonder; and a microphone carrying your every sound, every movement, every thought through the deathly silence of the auditorium for everyone to hear. Each competitor had the honor of experiencing this glory on January 24th at the Poetry Out Loud Competition.

In third place was Sesha Kuttalingam, who earned a spot on the podium with her flawless recitation and passion that touched the audience's hearts. Mikyle Hamidi, the runner-up, nearly won with his commanding stage presence and dazzling charm, astonishing the crowd with every stanza. Despite the fierce competition, only one poet could be crowned victor.

Her passion filled the entire auditorium from the moment she stepped onto the stage. Each syllable poured out of her as she bared her soul to us. The audience hung on every word, captivated by the sheer magic of the vulnerable, raw space her recitation created.

Her name? Krista Espiritu.

In hindsight, it was clear that Kris was winning material. When we interviewed her before the competition, we could see the deep emotional connection she had with poetry:

Kris E: "I've liked poetry since primary school! I find it interesting that poetry can paint a story without pictures and sometimes with few words. This is my first time doing any poetry-related competition, so I hope I can go farther in the medium with the competition!"

For some other competitors, this Poetry Out Loud competition was a way to keep themselves occupied. When we asked why they decided to compete, here's what the contestants said:

Vihaan M: Forced to.

Amelia V: Why not? That's it.

Lenny H: To crush my enemies.

The first and most important part is choosing the poems themselves. Each competitor is asked to carefully select two poems to memorize and recite, where they are scored on their accuracy, enunciation, movement, and understanding of the poem. Every competitor had a unique way of picking what to perform:

Eleanor L: I tried to find poems I connected to and enjoyed reciting.

Shraddha P: I chose the ones that felt the most empowering to me.

Amelia V: I messed around with filters on the POL Website until I found poems that clicked with me!

Aditi D: [I] Just choose emotional ones that I understand because it is easier to portray emotion, which engages the audience when you know the poem's meaning.

Vihaan M: Easiest ones.

Bobby H: The short ones.

For aspiring Poetry Out Loud competitors (We can only imagine you might be, since you got this far in the article), don't worry; there are experienced competitors here to guide you through the path of poetry. We managed to collect a couple of tips from the contestants for you:

Amelia V: The app MemorizeByHeart, available for free on the App Store, has helped me quite a bit. It has loads of features that gamify memorization and make it that much easier to recite!

Aditi D: I think EVERYONE needs more emotion when they are reciting their piece; it captivates the audience.

Kris E: When it comes to picking out poetry, I would say go for the ones you feel connected to, as it makes acting them out much easier!

Shraddha P: Pick the poems that either suit you best or you have a good understanding of.

Lenny H: To memorize, think of the poem as a song.

While this comment may not have pertained to any of the sections above, we thought it deserved an honorable mention for its... creativity:

Robert H: I beat the NJHS president with ease and tried farting to interrupt good people's poems

In the age of bland, repetitive pop songs, poetry, although often unappreciated, offers a unique beauty like no other art form. The Poetry Out Loud competition shows how wonder poetry can inspire every year.

It may take courage, time, hard work, blood, sweat, and tears, but next year might be your time to shine if you're willing to embrace it! And even if it is not, what's the harm in basking in the stage lights for a couple of minutes to enjoy the pure bliss and appreciation poetry brings to this world?

The Tennis Tiff

by: Mintra Waram

In the world of high school tennis, sportsmanship is the backbone of every match. What happened when such a backbone was to be cracked by unsportsmanlike conduct, heated disputes, and blatant disrespect? That's exactly what transpired in our most recent encounter with BASIS Chandler - a team that has time and again tested our patience, our character, and our very reputation on the court.

We sat down with our tennis coach, Mr. Hermann to get the entire scoop of what actually went on. "I would say he got into a tiff with me. I was very level-headed," said Hermann referencing the BASIS Chandler coach's meltdown. "Their coach took some onus on how we approached our match. He got a little out of hand."

Setting the scene: The match was at 4:30 on a Tuesday. If there is no traffic, it takes about 45-50 minutes to get to BASIS Chandler; with traffic, it's a monster altogether. For some of our players, it took an hour and a half to get there. Some left early from eighth period and still managed to be about 20 minutes late, which was kind of an inconvenience but just not avoidable.

And that's when the hostility started. The coach at BASIS Chandler, instead of acknowledging how tough it was to get there, decided to harangue our team with utter lack of professionalism and sportsmanship. "He wasn't happy with our arrival time," Hermann explained. "But what really got him going was how our players called their lines."

There are no referees in high school tennis, so players call their own lines. And our team, being pretty honest, in fact uses hand signals or whispers instead of calling across the court.

"Well, he assumed it was some unsportsmanlike conduct or cheating," said Hermann shaking his head, "which, by the way was not." "He reminded us on that point. And we are used to that."

Now, about the trend: this isn't the first time BASIS Chandler's coaching staff has found itself in hot water. As a matter of fact, their previous coach was let go because of "unsportsmanlike activity." And look, history repeated itself. But this time, it went further.

"Their coach used a vulgar set of language, swore at me and swore at some of our players," Hermann recalled, still seemingly appalled by the behavior. "To which I rose up against. I do not appreciate language of the such being used towards our varsity athletes, or really anybody. It's not a sportsmanlike thing to do."

Aggressive words. Aggressive actions. Yet, our team and staff kept their poise and composure and showed exactly what true competition should be made of, even in the face of defeat: respect, resilience, and unity.

But this story is not over yet. On February 14, from 6:00 PM to 9:00 PM at Scottsdale Ranch Park, we face them again. This isn't just another match—it's a battle for redemption. It's a chance to show BASIS Chandler that we don't just play with skill; we play with honor.

And we need you there.

Read, Chat, Repeat: The *Road Reads* Podcast

by: Mintra Waram

Two juniors from our school, Jaiya and Sesha, have carved a niche for themselves where they delve deep into the world of literature. Their podcast, *Road Reads*, brings a fresh perspective, focusing on classic works but with a modern twist.

I got to sit down with them and learn more about their podcast and what makes it different.

"So I saw that you started your own podcast.

What's it called, and what is it about?"

Jaiya and Sesha started telling me about their vision: "It's called Road Reads, and it's a literary analysis podcast."

They just did their first episode, which was about *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen. "I saw you had your first podcast episode.. What was it specifically about? So, what's unique about it?"

Jaiya explained: "So each episode is going to be based on a book. And so the first one is on *Pride and Prejudice*. We just delved into the themes of *Pride and Prejudice*, but then there was an adaptation—our own twist to it."

Sesha said: "Yeah, we had some fun, like icebreaker questions, like, 'What song would you associate with each character?' and, 'What would the other character be like in modern times?' We had fun with it."

In short, it's like a book club, but without the other people; listeners can interact with the literary analysis in an engaging yet casual manner.

Of course, I had to ask what sparked the idea for the podcast in the first place. "What caused you to start this?"

Jaiya shared: "Well, we both share a love for the humanities. I still don't know what I want to do, but I'm exploring a path in the humanities. And also, I like talking about books. So it was just a fun way to put that energy somewhere."

Sesha remembered the eureka moment, "One day in APUSH, we were talking about some book or something, and we just kept going deeper and deeper into it. Eventually, we said, 'We should start a podcast.' And then we did it."

Jaiya and Sesha have found a way to make literature fun, engaging, and relevant. With deep analysis and light-hearted, entertaining discussions, *Road Reads* offers a new take on timeless books.



Check out Road Reads on Spotify!

A “Debate” Kid

Ever had a conversation with somebody about job applications, and suddenly they hit you with an impassioned speech about the capitalist enslavement of humanity? That’s what we call a “debate kid”--because chances are, they’re probably enrolled in Speech and Debate. Day and night, they work tirelessly to churn out groundbreaking philosophy on that weird Word document with the big highlighted words. And every Friday morning, high school teachers sigh in resignation as the same chunk of their roster disappears, off to some tournament in Tucson.

But is it worth it? What can 16-year olds debating over ancient philosophical dilemmas truly accomplish? Does debate truly create future world leaders, or just students who are likely to argue about the moral implications of everything? To find out, I embarked on a journey to interview the key players: Mr. Woods, the debate coach, Mr. Witz, the AP Literature teacher, two debate kids, and a *normal* kid tragically trapped in their midst.

What takes priority: debate or academics? For Mr. Woods, the answer was obvious. “High school isn’t just about grades. I think high school is the time in which you prepare for the rest of your life. Part of that is learning powerful skills and knowledge; and these powerful skills and knowledge have to do with communication, self-direction, self-purpose, executive function, all that. And that’s one thing kids learn in debate.”

When I asked Mr. Witz, he laughed and said, “Well, of course I don’t think debate is more important than AP Literature, because I teach AP Literature. But I do think debate has its place.”

by: Aarush Ravichand

Next, Mr. Woods had a pretty convincing answer as to why debate is such a big deal: “I think it can be even more important,” He says, “to do something that you care about, that matters in your life, that you get to be involved in—especially at a place like BASIS, for a kid who’s getting some B’s at BASIS; Chances are at a different school, they would be getting A’s.” Fair enough. Debate kids are passionate and motivated, even if they seem obsessive sometimes.

But then we had to get down to the real issue: Skipping class every Friday. Mr. Woods acknowledged the huge demand debate expected teachers to accommodate for, “But here’s why it’s okay,” he said. “The only kids that should be doing that are those who are responsibly doing well in their courses. *And if they’re not, they shouldn’t be missing classes.*” Mr. Witz stated a similar point: “It really should be your responsibility to ask your teachers what they want you to do, and keep up with the work because you’re only missing for an extracurricular—you shouldn’t fall behind in your academics.”

However, what frustrated Mr. Witz more was the disregard for planning: “I do my weekly lesson plans on Saturday morning. So if I find out Tuesday or Wednesday that a bunch of kids are leaving, it’s already too late. Secondly, I’ve noticed a lot of students leaving for tournaments were not on the official list. So they’re choosing to be gone, and I didn’t even know that was an option.” It isn’t an option, in fact—you’re skipping class without reason. Even if they’re maintaining academic responsibility, debate kids still create inconveniences for teachers.

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Finally, to get the real perspective, I turned to the debaters themselves. TJ, an experienced debater, estimated that he spent “probably upwards of six hours a day” on debate. That is 25% of his life. A quarter of his existence, dedicated to “oh, cutting cards, redoing speeches, and judging practice rounds.”

“Why do you prioritize debate over leisure?” I asked.

Saish: “Because I want to win.”

TJ: “But I actually do it unlike this guy.”

Saish: “Have you won a single tournament ever?”

TJ: “Uh...no.”

This little interaction reminded me of Mr. Woods’ wise words: “Trying to win an argument is generally a bad idea. Trying to communicate effectively with other people is a good idea. That can actually be an impediment with debate. Some kids become kind of insufferable and obnoxious, because they just really double down on trying to win all the time, and nobody wants to be that kid’s friend. Hopefully that kid has good friends who’ll just tell them to stop. ‘Shut up, we’re not in debate.’”

The entire interview was derailed multiple times by sudden, urgent debate-related outbursts:

“Oh my god, Stanford preps are open.”

“Wait, do we have to rank them from start to end?”

“Bro, I’m not jacking this.”

What was happening? Were these coherent sentences? Were they still speaking English?

I pressed on, asking why they thought it was okay to skip class. “Because you already have five days of school,” Saish reasoned, “Sometimes you gotta miss a Friday.” It was a bold justification, similar to saying, “You already have two legs, sometimes you gotta break one.”

Next, both wanted me to note that “the debate we do [as in skepticism] is very different from the debate people perceive debate to be like.” Saish added, proudly, that “it’s also much more fast-paced and unintelligible.”

When I asked why they prefer skip to—oh, you know, the actual topic, Saish explained: “Skep negates the resolution. The resolution says the US ought to do something. Skep denies the premise that anybody ought to do anything. It’s strategic because LD is a value-based debate. So absent any value, you can’t affirm.” Maybe I’m spending too much time with these goons, but that kind of made sense. This would have been a fascinating philosophical discussion if it hadn’t immediately been interrupted by, “Oh, Von’s coming.” Saish, suddenly alert: “Actually? Could he be the one?” And just like that, they were back scrolling on Tabroom, as if our entire conversation had been nothing more than a commercial break.

After hours of interviews, existential debates, and barely decipherable jargon, I had reached my conclusion. Debate kids are very insufferable. They miss class to go to tournaments they rarely win, and they derail conversations with announcements about Stanford prep rankings.

And yet...despite their chaotic energy, these students are sharp, passionate, and capable of arguing their way out of any situation—which, let’s be honest, is a skill more valuable than most of what’s in a textbook. They think critically, communicate effectively, and develop an unparalleled level of confidence. So yes. Debate might be annoying. But it’s absolutely worth it.

Alert Alert: High Volume Inmate Escape!

by: Valerie Polukhtin

The warden of BASIS Scottsdale Maximum Security Prison issued an alert on Wednesday, February 5th, at 7:00 a.m., that 70 prisoners escaped the facility sometime last night between 6:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m. Civilians are warned to remain vigilant and report any suspicious behavior to local law agencies.

That's the essence of the situation: greeting students as they enter the school on February 5th. This year's senior prank theme was jailbreak. Payton, the co-head of Leadership, "really wanted to emulate the captured feeling all the students at BASIS feel," and this was the "most creative way to do it." Ms. Antal provided a different interpretation of the theme, claiming it reminded her of *Hamlet* and how Denmark is like a prison.

Upon entering the building, several classrooms could be found ransacked. Ms. Antal's room included a giant, chaotic pile of chairs in the corner, cardboard signs with key phrases from her class, like the "Court of Scholars," and Adam Sandler photos hidden throughout the entire room. When asked, Ms. Antal loved the homages from Adam Sandler to Bennet and Royle.

In Mr. Hermann's room, all the desks were overturned, and every surface was covered with stickers as a windstorm swept through his precious supplies.

The windows to the upper school MPR were covered with brown paper, meant to represent an escape tunnel. Seventy wanted posters displayed a photo and a funny crime committed by the various students.



Source: Aswita Kode

Most notably, overnight, people had written graffiti all over the lockers. This varied from "ESCAPE" in giant bold letters with long arrows leading to the doors to tallies for the number of days spent stuck here or even funny hearts pronouncing the (imaginary) love of people like Rianna and Yeawon.

Lastly, on the day, many of the seniors showed up in prisoners' costumes or wore some combination of orange, black, and white clothing, helping to unify the theme.

The overall effect was enjoyable and amusing, if a bit underwhelming. Kaleb, a current junior, found the prank "more boring than last year," but he holds even less hope for his grade's prank next year. Another junior, Sahethi, agreed with his sentiments, finding the theme incoherent (she didn't even understand it until I told her). However, both juniors agreed that the writing on the lockers was a nice touch, arguably the most interesting part.

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The general consensus was that it was enjoyable, but compared to last year's class, it almost felt anticlimactic.

Unfortunately, the process wasn't without its hiccups.

The prank planning was last-minute and lacked participation. Despite opportunities to discuss it in the grade-wide group chat or at senior lock-in, few engaged. Leadership can organize and prepare, but without overall enthusiasm, it falls flat. One senior, preferring to stay anonymous, said, "We should've started planning earlier," criticizing the theme and budget.

Ironically, the most frustrating part of the prank was also the most memorable—the chalk marker drawings on lockers. Despite being labeled erasable and pre-tested, they were stubborn to remove. Plain water and disinfectant barely worked without intense scrubbing, taking nearly three hours and multiple people. Even then, a light grey residue remained, requiring polishing.

Overall, while the set-up process was fun and the final product was temporarily amusing, low participation and a couple of unpredictable bad choices left some advice for how next year's seniors should proceed.



Source: Aswita Kode



Source: Aswita Kode

REVIEWS

Luigi Mangione is Not a Trend

by: Valerie Polukhtin

Two-hundred fifty-six. That's the number of holds on this book when I went to request it from my library system. That's a wait time of nearly a year and a half to borrow one measly little e-book from the Scottsdale Public Library. People are desperate to read the story that set everything in motion—the book that inspired the events surrounding Luigi Mangione and turned him into more than just a viral sensation

You've most likely heard of this book by now. *Delay, Deny, Defend* by Jay M. Feinman ;almost the exact words found on the bullet casings at the site of the murder of Brian Thompson, CEO of UnitedHealthcare. Many people are aware, often through first-hand experiences, of flaws in the American health insurance industry. You might not have to deal with insurance claims yet, but if you've ever seen your parents stress over a denied medical bill or had a school sports injury that led to a surprise hospital charge, you've already brushed up against the system's flaws. Still, I think many are unaware of the true extent of the issue or simply don't wish to consider the topic that easily.

It's easy to mention that the United States is one of the few first-world countries without universal healthcare. It's easy to sympathize when someone has their medically necessary claims denied. It's easy to complain about co-pays on top of regular insurance payments.

But it's much harder to ask ourselves: where do these problems originate? How do we fight them? What would it take to fix the system? The explosion in popularity of this book after the shooting is a clear sign that people care and are ready to approach this problem.

Feinman's nonfiction book, published in 2010, beautifully answers these questions without unnecessary fear-mongering. Feinman begins with the origins of insurance, which can be dated almost 5,000 years back to Babylonian merchants spreading the risk of cargo lost at sea amongst many investors.. The oldest extant insurance company in the United States, the Philadelphia Contributionship for the Insurance of Houses from Loss by Fire, was founded by a volunteer group of firefighters led by Benjamin Franklin in 1752. Mass incidents, like the Great Chicago Fire of 1871, which destroyed more than 17,000 buildings, bankrupted many insurance companies, but the industry has been preserved through those times.

So yeah, insurance has been around forever. But the way companies operate today? A whole different story. The companies realized their most significant expense was their claims, so paying less in claims meant keeping more profits. Insurance companies work when they pay what they owe—no less, no more—to policyholders who file claims.

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But that was no longer the case.

Feinman explains what this entails: trickier contracts, private consultants like McKinsey & Company, advertisements geared toward price, tactics to deter arbitration, misleading information, and more. To get a full picture, it's best just to read the book yourself (if you can get a copy!).

What truly elevates this book is the inclusion of one chapter on how customers can respond to these changes and one on how we can change the system. Feinman reminds us that no matter how friendly they seem, insurance companies are strictly business. His advice? Choose a company known for paying claims, actually read your policy (don't assume anything), and look for hidden exclusions. Most importantly, don't be afraid to ask for help—companies count on you staying uninformed.

In his final chapter, he outlines how we can reform this system. His main point is that regulators and lawmakers must prevent and punish these companies for their wrongdoings. This includes releasing withheld information about claims practices and ensuring companies are bound to the rules of their contracts.

The entire book is also interspersed with stories of various people wronged by insurance companies. Kim Zilisch lost her fiancé in an accident but only got a fraction of her claim settled a year later after taking it to court. Theodore Price was struck by a car in 1995, but his insurance claims weren't paid until a year later. The countless Hurricane Katrina victims, now homeless, are struggling to get insurance to pay for their homes with evasive water and wind coverage plans.

And while disasters like Katrina might seem distant, these tactics are the same ones used against everyday people—whether it's a car accident, a family fighting for cancer treatment, or someone like Luigi Mangione, caught in the crosshairs of a broken system.

These very real hardships—grieving dead family members, becoming permanently disabled, or losing homes in natural disasters—emphasize Feinman's point: insurance companies have a certain obligation to their policyholders. He writes that "Good faith and fair dealing is their expectation. It is the very essence of the insurer-insured relationship" (Feinman 26). A business's profits should not come at the expense of its morals or clients.

The only warning is that this book isn't exactly light reading. At times, it dives into legal jargon that might make you wish for a SparkNotes version. This may throw off some people since, after explaining it in layman's terms, the jargon around specific legal processes or laws can be confusing for those without a background in it.

Overall, this is an incredibly enlightening read, useful to those from many backgrounds: those working with insurance companies (like medical professionals or auto shops), those filing claims, or even those like me who are curious about what all the media attention is for.

PUZZLES

Valentine's Day Word Search

by: Aarush Ravichand

Test your Valentine's Day knowledge with this festive word search! Can you find all the love-themed words hidden in the puzzle?



ARROW

SERENADE

SOULMATES

CHERUB

SWEETHEART

CUPID

BOUQUET

VALENTINE

LOVEBIRDS

ROMANCE

Knock knock!

Who's there?

Peas!

Peas who?

Peas be mine!



Happy Valentine's Day!

Picture credit: Shutterstock

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