

# THE JAMS JOURNAL

JOHN ADAMS MIDDLE SCHOOL

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## SCAVENGER HUNT

In celebration of St. Patrick's Day, search for the leprechaun's pot of gold on each page!



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# Volunteer Efforts for the Los Angeles Fire Victims

From Meal Donations to Fundraisers, Students Step Up to Support Those in Need.

By BRYNN WALKER

It was the morning of January 7, 2025, when the Palisades fire started. Strengthened by the winds, it soon raged across the hills. Since then, the 10 fires in the LA area, according to Cal Fire, have burned more than 50,000 acres. Over 23,000 residents have been displaced or evacuated, and more than 9,400 buildings have been destroyed, including homes. This may seem like old news, having occurred almost 2 months ago, but the fire left lasting effects—effects that can take months, even years to recover from. Volunteering can play a crucial role in rebuilding communities, providing support to those affected, and helping families overcome the devastation.

To someone who lost their home and everything in it, it is devastating. A devastation that can make it seem like their life is crumbling before their eyes. A volunteer program helping them to restore what was lost can feel like a ring buoy being thrown toward them during a thunderstorm in the ocean. The relief of not having to worry about clothes, food, or somewhere to sleep each night could be the thing that keeps them afloat, and JAMS students have contributed.

JAMS students generally have a positive attitude towards volunteering. When asked if they would be interested in volunteering for the fire victims, many responded yes for various reasons: they love helping others, it can help on college applications, or because it is a wholesome activity to do with a friend. Seventh-grader Saskia Heller said, “Volunteering is great because it is a way to be a part of your community and help people in need.” She and her family helped a local restaurant to hand

out meals to firefighters and others in need. Second grade students at Grant stepped up as well to raise money for the Red Cross. They sold bracelets starting at Grant, then set up shop here at JAMS on February 11th. Although many have not directly been affected by the fire, it is clear that JAMS students are community-minded and enjoy the idea of helping those in need. Forty-six percent of students have helped in some way, but a little under 50% said they don’t know how to get into volunteering at all.



*Volunteering is great because it is a way to be a part of your community and help people in need.*

**Saskia Heller**  
7th Grade



**Ms. Meshel's class of second graders came from Grant to sell bracelets and raise money for the Red Cross. Photo: Mr. Miranda**

It can be intimidating at first, but there are many ways to begin volunteering. For example, pet rescue organizations are in need of people to foster the displaced pets. Soup kitchens are more in need of volunteers than ever to prepare and serve food for fire victims and others in need. Similarly, volunteers are needed at distribution centers to hand out non-perishables, toiletries, and other essential items. Donation centers will utilize volunteers with the task of sorting clothes and other donations.

For those who think volunteering sounds great but feel unsure where to start, they are not alone—about 50% of JAMS students feel the same way. Students interested in distributing food, clothing, or other essentials can explore organizations like Project Angel Food, Pasadena Community Job Center, and LA Family Housing. For animal-related work, they can consider groups like the Canine Rescue Club, Best Friends Society, or Wetlands and Wildlife Care Center. Additionally, Airbnb offers a program to help house people in need.

The fires that have raged surrounding LA have destroyed and devastated thousands. As a community, people from all over California have responded with compassion, togetherness, and power. The response from Californians and many other communities is truly incredible and fills many hearts with hope. Students at JAMS have joined this cause and helped fire victims recover and rehabilitate, but we are not out of the woods. Any effort, big or small, helps millions of times more than you may think; it is crucial to consider volunteering for your community.

## Q&A with Aaron Christenson



**Q: What is the purpose of your organization Animal Advocacy Network (AAN)?**

**A:** I am the founder/director of AAN. The purpose of Animal Advocacy Network is to serve the Animal Rescue community during natural disasters and other animal emergencies.

**Q: What did you and your organization do to help during the fires in the LA area?**

**A:** At first, we assisted with large animal evacuations like ranch animals, then we started to help homeowners with pets that got cut off from their homes. We are actively looking for missing pets as well.

**Q: Do you have any memorable experiences?**

**A:** I moved a giraffe and two Egyptian camels to a safer location on their property. I also relocated two 100+ lbs tortoises, three 400 lbs farm pigs, and three rams.

**Q: What types of volunteering or donations do you think are most essential for fire victims right now?**

**A:** We are in need of cat and dog food, treats, beds, litter, and trays. Also, volunteers are in need to distribute these items to pet shelters and rescues.



# The Wonderful Wizard of Oz



JAMS/SMASH Theatre Company Unveils  
The Wizard of Oz as the School Musical.

By ANDREW ALLEN

**T**he Wizard of Oz, a musical fan favorite, will hit the stage as this year's school musical and is one of the most famous and recognizable musicals of all time, making it all the more exciting. It will be bigger and better than ever, featuring effects never before seen in a JAMS/SMASH Theatre Company production. This musical is going to blow us all away.

Theatre 31's got some exciting secrets in store. The original Wizard of Oz movie released August 25, 1939, with state of the art technology when movies were all in black and white. Near the start of the movie, when Dorothy sings the song "Somewhere Over the Rainbow", the movie suddenly transitioned into color. This remarkable feat was also one of the reasons the costumes were so eye-catching because they wanted to make the most of the new technology. Although it hasn't been confirmed, the costume leads Sara Jane and Christina Allen have talked about the Broadway production at JAMS starting off gray scale and transitioning into color! That's just the tip of the iceberg. According to Chad Scheppner, the director, Theatre 31's production will feature aerial arts. That's right, JAMS students will fly on stage performing mesmerizing moves for all to see. Making use of the state of the art theatre, the actors and actresses will literally spread their wings.

Everybody has heard the phrase "there's no place like home" at least once in their life, but people don't pay it much mind. This famous line is actually from the Wizard of Oz, too. In the story, Dorothy runs away from home, only to realize that her actions would hurt those she cares about. However, when she tries to return, she gets trapped in the magical land of Oz. After going on a long journey home, she comes to the realization that despite the troubles in her household, being with those she loves is far better than the outside world. It's a beautiful story about family and maturity. There's even more that it can teach. Look no further than Dorothy's three companions, as they each have a journey of self discovery. They gain the courage to save a friend, the heart to care for their peers, and the brain to have normal social interactions -much can be learned from the comedic trio. The show teaches wonders about self improvement and overcoming adversity.

The Wizard of Oz is a feast for the eyes. Featuring stunning visuals and colorful costumes made by the tech team, it will bring a blend of sensational nonsense and familial bonding. Don't miss the musical, coming to the Performing Arts Center May second, third, and fourth. The Wizard of Oz is sure to be a wonderful production.

## MEET THE CAST

### Dorothy



### Scarecrow



### Tin Man



### Cowardly Lion



### Wicked Witch



### Glinda the Good



Form left to right: Noah S., Kat C., Savannah B., Rosemarie M., Lucia A., Lorenzo B.

Photos: Andrew Allen

**Features roles:** Normally, in an audition, participants sing a song and share a story. The director then looks over the footage and assigns roles. This year, however, is different. With the new flexible casting, while the main roles have been decided, many featured supporting roles are left vacant to be decided later. That means that anybody who works hard can get the part!



# WE'RE OPEN.

After a Long Year of Renovation, the New JAMS Library is Finally Open for Business.

By NOVA MORGAN

**F**or months, JAMS students have been without a proper library, relying on the small and cramped space of Room 44. But now, after a full year of construction and anticipation, the brand-new JAMS library has finally opened its doors. More than just a place to borrow books, this state-of-the-art library promises to be a hub for learning and a safe, welcoming space for students to study, explore, and connect. The long wait is over, and the JAMS community is ready to make the most of this exciting addition to the JAMS campus.

Libraries have always been vital to communities, offering more than just books. Today, they provide study spaces, learning activities, and extra-curricular programs, making them hubs for education and personal growth. The newly renovated JAMS Library is no exception. With private study rooms, support for students with diverse learning needs, and a welcoming space for the school's Chill Fridays, it remains a vital resource for students. And, of course, it owns a rich collection of both new and classic books.

Why was the library renovated? According to librarian Ms. McLaughlin, the answer is simple: "The old library was outdated and, from what I've heard, had termites. Over the years, it became dingy and worn. Basically, the JAMS Library needed a massive glow-up!" With aging facilities and unwanted pests, the renovation was long overdue. Mrs. Mathews, a 7th and 8th grade English teacher, thought the same. She said that, "The old library was

drab and dark. It made anyone who knew that Lincoln (Lincoln Middle School) had a beautiful and modern library a little "salty". It gave the impression that at JAMS, books didn't matter to our students, and a wonderful place to read them was not something we deserved — both are untrue." She also added that, "The new library is amazing. It is still warm and inviting and is also multi-functional. Finally! Every person at JAMS deserves "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place" (Hemingway) to enjoy literature."

While the space may have changed, one thing remains consistent — the books. The previous library in Room 44 had limited shelving, forcing many books into storage. Now, with ample space, those long-hidden titles are finally accessible. Ms. McLaughlin shared that, in the first semester alone, around 100 books were checked out each week. "Library staff is always looking for more ways to get students reading," she added. "We sure hope that students walk through the front doors and are inspired to pick out a new book and become

readers!"

Reading and literacy are essential for growing minds, and the new JAMS Library is here to help students thrive. More than a place for books, it's a hub for learning, reflection, and community. With its long-awaited renovations, the library is ready to welcome students into a world of knowledge and discovery. Ms. McLaughlin and the rest of the library staff only have one thing to say — we're open.

**"I hope anyone who walks into our new library space will feel valued, heard, and connected."**

**Ms. McLaughlin**  
JAMS Librarian



**Ms. Cohn and Ms. McLaughlin are excited about the newly renovated JAMS library.**

Photo: Mr. Miranda



**JAMS band members play an exciting symphony at the ribbon cutting ceremony.** Photo: Elizabeth Doan



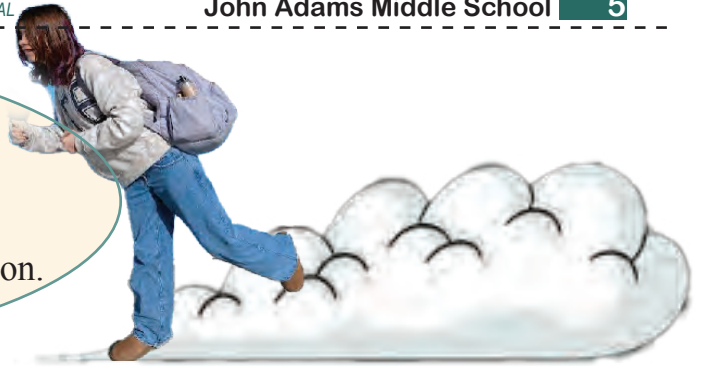
**JAMS students stand in bewonderment as they explore the new library.**

Photos: Mr. Miranda

# The Punctuality Problem

The Hidden Consequences of Hitting the Snooze Button.

By DELFINA CORDERO



Amount of students who often arrive late to school.

Hitting the snooze button might seem harmless, but for some JAMS students, frequent tardiness could have long-term consequences. From a recent JAMS survey, almost 6% of students always or very often arrive late to school. This is concerning because according to Attendance Works, a website about how students, teachers and parents handle tardiness, absenteeism is one of three signs that a student may drop out of high school and by 9th grade, attendance is a better predictor of graduation rates than 8th grade test scores.

## SMMUSD and the Importance of Being Punctual

Even if 6% doesn't seem like a big number, it still means that there are some students struggling with punctuality. SMMUSD encourages all students to arrive to school on time, even the 12% of students who reported they are sometimes late. But why? They are following the research--again, according to Attendance Works.com, there is an increasing amount of research discovering a direct link between school attendance and a student's academic success. And what is even more frightening is the longer term effects of missing school. In an article titled, "Understanding and Addressing the Surge of Chronic Absenteeism" by Abbie Misha on EdSurge.com, "chronically absent students are at higher risk for adverse outcomes later in life, including diminished health, increased involvement in the criminal justice system, and fewer job opportunities."

## Tardiness Consequences

Out of the 46% of students who have been late in general, only 10% have received consequences. The most common are detention, make up time, and parent contact. Seventh grader Matisse Fawcett stated, "When I was late, they sent an email to my parents and it made me feel sad." However, 59% haven't received a consequence for their tardiness. That is because administration and teachers are switching from punishments for chronic absenteeism to rewards for excellent attendance.

## ASB No-Tardy Raffle

ASB has recently introduced a solution to the punctuality problem. Students who arrive on time every day for a week are entered into a raffle, and each Friday, a winner from each grade is announced and rewarded with a prize. Sixth grader Elizabeth Ferrera feels that the ASB no-tardy raffle is unfair. She states, "I would like them to choose 2 people per grade level every time they announce the winners since it only happens once a week, and it is more fair for everyone because some people have won it more than 5 times, (even 6th graders) when some of us haven't at ALL." Students who have won a prize state received a Handels or a Wingstop gift card, but their opinions on it varied. A total of six people won said that the prize was worth it, but two people disagreed. Seventh grader Morgan Bitterolf got a Handels gift card for one small free cone. It wasn't worth it because it took six weeks to JAMS."

## Conclusion

Being late in middle school may not seem like a big deal now, but once one considers it's very hard to ignore it. Punctuality can help one become more disciplined in other areas of students continue to arrive to school on time it can increase success with future jobs, where it's important to be punctual. Skipping school once in a while might not seem like a big deal, but it can time, leading to struggles in high school, trouble finding a job, and making life more difficult in the future. So next time students think about hitting the snooze button, think how that one moment of extra sleep could awaken a lifetime of bad habits.





# FROM HOME TO HALLWAYS

By ELDEN FUR

Exploring the Unique Dynamics of JAMS Students with Parent-Teachers.

**"S**tudents whose parents teach and are involved in school have better attendance and behavior, get better grades, demonstrate better social skills and adapt easier to school," said The Annie E. Casey Foundation, a foundation devoted to child development and safety across America. Out of the 788 students at JAMS, four of them have a parent who teaches at the school. These four students are Nolan Mauck, Eloise Alexopoulos, Griffin Ruvolo, and Edmond "Eddie" Avedian. These students have different perspectives of a day at school compared to everyone else, they have different habits, experiences in class, and ways of learning, but they are still very similar to other students at JAMS.

According to Education Next, "throughout public schools in the United States, 48% of teachers have children of their own, but only 18% have children that go to the school they teach at." Less than one percent of students at JAMS have a parent teaching there. Sixth grader Nolan Mauck has First Period 7/8 math with his father, Mr. Mauck. Mr. Mauck teaches 7/8 math and a few 6th grade math classes. When asked if Nolan liked his dad as a teacher, he said "I don't really like having my dad be my teacher because it's a little weird to have him be my first middle school math teacher." However, Mr. Mauck disagrees, "I do enjoy having Nolan in my class. Initially, I was hesitant about having him as a student. However, now that he is in the class, I find it enjoyable seeing him each day in my first-period class." Now that Nolan gets to school when his father does, his habits have changed slightly. "Because my dad likes to get to school early, I sometimes have to wake up a little earlier. It was kind of nice one time when I was sick three times in a row. He was able to help me catch up with the class.," stated Nolan.

Ms. Alexopoulos, an 8th grade math and algebra teacher, has a daughter in 6th grade named Eloise. "I would love to have my mom

as a teacher. Having my mom as a teacher wouldn't really affect me or my everyday routine. I already visit her quite a lot and the only thing that would change would be me being able to ask her more questions about my work," said Eloise. "I would love to have Eloise as my student one day! I think there are pros and cons - from both of our perspectives! One pro for me is that I would get to spend more time with her and she would be forced to listen to me. A con from my perspective is that I would have to make sure that I'm grading her fairly (not being too easy or too hard on her).," stated Ms. Alexopoulos. Ms. Alexopoulos and Eloise are both very excited for next year, because Eloise will have the chance to be in Ms. Alexopoulos' Algebra class.

Mrs. Ruvolo's son, Griffin, is a 6th grader at JAMS. Mrs. Ruvolo teaches Math 8 and Geometry. According to Griffin, "I think that my mom is an amazing teacher, and she would know my weaknesses, so I would appreciate having her as my math teacher. My routine is practically the same, but when she has staff meetings on Friday mornings, I have to ride a scooter to school," explained Griffin. Having a parent teaching at JAMS is very beneficial for Griffin because Mrs. Ruvolo can help him with his assignments. But it can still be hard to teach him. "It would be easier to teach him because I understand how my child works and what he needs. But it would be harder because my child feels overly comfortable with me," said Mrs. Ruvolo. Although Mrs. Ruvolo hasn't taught Griffin yet, she previously taught Griffin's older sister, and it didn't go well. Despite that, both Griffin and Mrs. Ruvolo are excited for their turn.

These four students are seen as good students by their parent-teachers. Having a parent as a teacher at JAMS comes with challenges and opportunities, but for them, it has strengthened bonds, created new routines, and built meaningful connections in and out of the classroom.

## What do teachers and students think of having their parent or child at JAMS?



"I don't really like having my dad be my teacher because it's a little weird to have him be my first middle school math teacher. Because my dad likes to get to school early, I sometimes have to wake up a little earlier. It was kind of nice one time when I was sick three times in a row. He was able to help me catch up with the class. Most of the time I call him Mr. Mauck but sometimes I forget and call him dad."

- Nolan Mauck, 6th-grader



"I would love to have Eloise as my student one day! I think there are pros and cons - from both of our perspectives! One pro for me is that I would get to spend more time with her and she would be forced to listen to me. A con from my perspective is that I would have to make sure that I'm grading her fairly (not being too easy or too hard on her)."

- Ms. Alexopoulos, math teacher



"As far as whether or not I like having him as a student, I do but only in the sense that I get to see during the day. I thought it would be odd having my own kid as a student, but it has been surprisingly how much of a non-issue it is. It was the same with his older siblings. I think it would be a bigger deal if it were high school or college, where grades actually count."

- Mr. Avedian, science teacher

## Building a Kinder JAMS with Second Step

A Social Emotional Learning Program to Help Students Be Better in School and to Reduce Bullying at the Same Time

By ANDIA BACAJ

From the time kids enter kindergarten, they are taught to be kind to people, but still some students bully, even in middle school. Therefore, JAMS began using Second Step this year in order

to decrease bullying and improve self awareness. Since it's across grade levels each grade is

doing a separate Second Step lesson. Sixth grade is focused on making good decisions. Seventh grade is grasping their self concept.

Eighth grade is discovering their identity. Second Step is a social emotional learning program (SEL). SEL teaches the ability to recognize other people's emotions.

Some of the skills that Second Step teaches are: solving problems peacefully, communicating with other people, and control being impulsive. Studies show that SEL improves academic success, according to SecondStep.org. JAMS started SEL instruction in all math classes then moved it to the other core subjects. All grades are taught the same unit, but different branches of that topic are taught in each grade. In addition, families are asked to participate by having

conversations at home about the week's lesson. Pupils participate in hands-on activities like talking in small groups to explore the weekly topic. Ms. Cowgill, JAMS counselor, said, "Some of the skills the

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school is trying to improve are being aware of other people's guiding principles." In fact, more than half of

people surveyed at JAMS said that the lessons are relevant to their lives. Fifty-nine percent of

students think Second Step will benefit them. Other schools that did Second Step lead to a 20% decrease in bullying. But it is too early to tell if it will have the same out-

come at JAMS as other schools. Countless students can look forward to Second Step being taught in science class next. While, school leadership is hoping it will lead to a happier, kinder JAMS

campus.

Second Step has stirred a range of emotions within students. They can look forward to Second Step being taught in science class next. While, school leadership is hoping it will lead to a happier, kinder JAMS campus.

*Some of the skills the school is trying to improve are being aware of other people's guiding principles.*

**Ms. Cowgill**  
JAMS Counselor

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## JAMS LAUNCHES NEW PODCAST FOR PARENTS AND STUDENTS

JAMS, in collaboration with the PTSA, has launched an official school podcast designed to provide parents and students with a deeper understanding of the school community. This new platform showcases the programs, people, and initiatives that make JAMS unique. Each episode features insightful discussions with teachers, students, and staff, highlighting important topics that shape the school experience.



Scan QR code  
for the JAMS  
Podcast Station

The podcast is available on Spotify, Apple Music, and Amazon Music. The first episode focuses on AVID and ASB, offering listeners an inside look at how these programs foster student leadership and academic success. Future episodes will explore key themes such as Social Emotional Learning and Restorative Justice. Listeners are encouraged to subscribe and stay informed about the latest conversations shaping life at JAMS.

## Eighth Grade Sweatshirt Design Contest Winners Announced

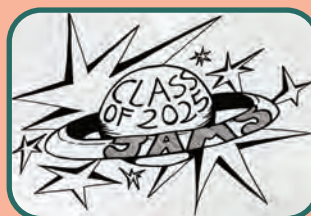
JAMS's 8th grade sweatshirt design contest has concluded, with Alex Bellanger and Cameron Cohen emerging as the winners. The contest, led by Ms. Aguilar, saw a tight competition that required a re-vote before their design was selected over Mia Patricio Ramirez's strong entry. Their artwork will now inspire the professional Class of 2025 hoodie.

Bellanger and Cohen's design features Saturn's rings, incorporating text within them. "We ex-

perimented with how the text would fit and decided part of it should be inside the rings," they explained. Coming up

with a unique concept proved challenging. "There have been so many designs in the past, and we wanted ours to stand out."

This victory was especially meaningful after they placed second in a previous yearbook cover contest. "We were sad our cover didn't win, but winning the hoodie design feels amazing," they shared. "It's exciting to see something we created become something the whole 8th grade can wear."



Alex B. and Cameron C. with their winning design.

Congratulations to Alex Bellanger and Cameron Cohen on their winning design!



# An Educator's Eternity

## The Causes and Effects of Low Teacher Turnover at JAMS

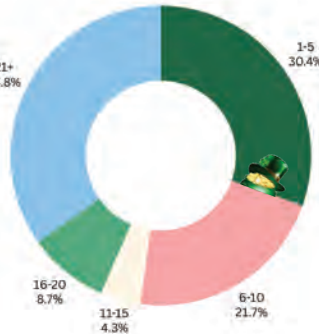
By KAITLYN NOSHO

Over the past three years, JAMS has welcomed only four new teachers, highlighting its remarkably low teacher turnover rate. Teacher turnover - the rate at which educators leave their positions, switch schools, or exit their profession - is a known challenge for many schools across the country. JAMS distinctly stands out with its stability, thanks to some key factors that contribute to its high retention of dedicated educators.

Teacher retention is essential for students' education. According to a study by AERA OPEN, high teacher turnover results in a drop in the academic performance of middle school students, especially in reading and math. In comparison, schools with good teacher retention have been found to have opposite effects. It positively impacts student engagement, behavior, and grades. It provides a stable learning environment with consistent expectations and a strong student-teacher relationship.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, eight percent of teachers in America changed schools, and another eight percent left their profession. At JAMS, this is not the case. Out of the teachers that responded to a recent survey, 48% have been teaching at JAMS for at least 10 years. Several reported starting because of JAMS' good reputation, school

culture, and student population. "JAMS is a wonderful school with a supportive, tight-knit community and a lot of outstanding history," said Ms. Blanchard, who has been teaching at JAMS for 18 years.



The number of years that teachers have taught at JAMS

There are many factors that contribute to turnover rates. For example, working conditions such as school culture, facilities, and decision-making power. JAMS meets many of these conditions. Mr. Salting, an 8th grade English teacher, expressed his appreciation that administrators are open to feedback and try to include teachers in decision-making as much as they can. Though, it can be different at other schools. A recent survey showed that numerous teachers who taught at other schools left because of stress and a lack of admin support.

Ultimately, JAMS has been shown to meet teachers' expectations and provide great working conditions. Numerous teachers have expressed their positive thoughts about JAMS and shared their liking of its overall culture. Teacher retention also builds a sense of community where people support one another. It is evident that their love for teaching here promotes student achievement. With many veteran teachers staying at JAMS for at least 20 years, it's really no shock that it is an educator's eternity.



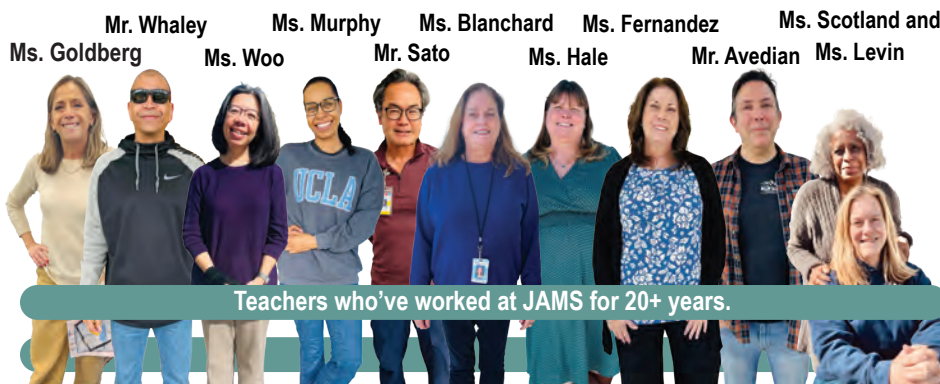
Cesar Chavez, an American labor leader and civil rights activist.

## Celebrating Cesar Chavez

By KAITLYN NOSHO

Cesar Chavez was a Mexican American farmworker, labor leader, and civil rights activist who fought to make life better for farmworkers in the United States. He was born in 1927 and grew up working in the fields, where he saw firsthand how unfairly farmworkers were treated. They worked long hours in the hot sun for very little pay and were often exposed to dangerous chemicals. Chavez believed that farmworkers deserved better, so he started the United Farm Workers (UFW) union to fight for their rights. Through peaceful protests, marches, and boycotts, he helped farmworkers get better wages and safer working conditions. His leadership showed that standing up for what is right can make a real difference.

At our school, we value being kind, connected, and compassionate, just like Cesar Chavez did in his fight for justice. He showed **kindness** by caring about the struggles of farmworkers and worked to help them. He stayed **connected** with people by bringing farmworkers and supporters together to fight for their rights. He showed **compassion** by understanding their suffering and never giving up on making their lives better. Chavez's story teaches us that when we work together and stand up for others, we can create positive change in our community and beyond.



Teachers who've worked at JAMS for 20+ years.





Micah B. participates in a virtual reality tour of Anne Frank's house for Ms. Mathews's English class. Photo: Mr. Miranda



In Mr. Sato's engineering class, Philemon A. and Samueale T. construct their Rube Goldberg machine. Photo: Liza Hall



Chau "Mary" P. works on her interactive student notebook in Ms. Hale's social studies class. Photo: Elizabeth Melbourne



Max N. builds molecules for his stop motion project in Ms. Guirguis's science class. Photo: Nova Morgan



Theodore R. joins the ASB drumming circle, creating rhythms and beats during lunchtime with peers. Photo: Kahlan Roberts



Ava T., Ethan C., and Logan M. construct windmills during Mr. Avedian's hands-on science class project. Photo: Mr. Miranda



Mr. Garnreiter leads students in a dynamic and engaging concert band practice on stage. Photo: Andrew Allen

# Every Step Counts

## Uncovering the Significance of the Step It Up Fundraiser

By KAHLAN ROBERTS

**W**ith energy flowing and “G Money” hyping up the crowd, the Step It Up fundraiser turned the JAMS campus into a festival of fun. During the fall semester, JAMS hosted its annual “Step It Up!” fundraiser, a day filled with exciting recreational games and activities on the field. For five years, this huge event has been a highlight of the school’s efforts to raise funds, making it one of the most eagerly anticipated traditions of the year. This iconic fundraiser

**\$30,147**  
was raised this year during the  
Step It Up fundraiser



Step It Up's iconic face - G-Money

influences both kids and parents to raise money by offering eye-catching prizes and having a quick and effective process for creating an online donation system. Step It Up is incredibly unsung by students at JAMS and should be recognized for its many benefits it has to the school.

This year, Step It Up has raised an unbelievable sum of \$30,147! This amount of money not only covers the PTA budget, but gives JAMS some extra money to pay for new fun events on campus. Thanks to ASB, the money source this year is off the charts! ASB Co-President Ryan Chapman said, “I think that Step It Up went very well this year. We also raised a lot of money as well.” Usually, when a school uses a fund-

raising program, the company tends to keep 50-60% of the total earnings. In this case, Step It Up has kept around half of our total donations, or about \$30,000. Although this money situation may seem doubtful, the fundraiser actually takes money out of their own earnings to pay for most of the Step It Up experience, which costs about 10,000 to cover. This is one of the reasons why the Step It Up fundraiser is very important to our school.

Step It Up is used as the JAMS go-to fundraiser because of its record-breaking techniques to persuade students and parents to do-

nate. This year, the fundraiser offered a sloth blanket, a noise maker, and even a mini fridge to those who donated to the fundraiser. Out of the very few students who won the mini fridge, 7th grader Sloane Drellichak was one of them. Sloane said, “I use the mini fridge a lot. I also thought that the prizes this year were very good.” Sloane is also one of the few students that got enough money to receive one of the higher numbered wristbands. Wristbands are what the program uses to divide students into groups; the higher the number is on one’s wristband, the more money that a student has raised, and the more prizes

that they will receive. V.I.P wristbands are handed out to students who have raised \$50 or more, and allow these selected students to participate in the fun activities of Step It Up during lunchtime.

Even though JAMS has been doing Step It Up for such a long time, the ASB team has had some alternatives for a new main fundraising event. They were considering options that were easy to run, have a 50% or better profit share, and one that is so successful that JAMS gets to keep around

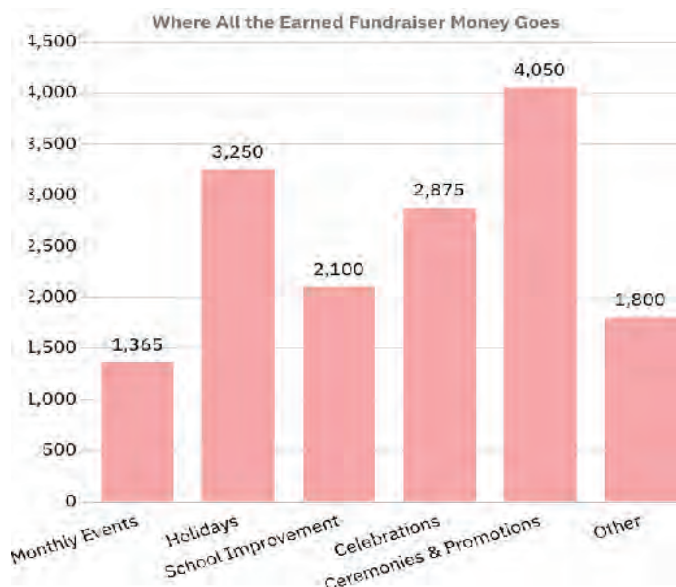
\$30,000. Although this may be hard to find, the main idea that came up in this brainstorm was a color run. The only doubt about holding this activity is that JAMS has a synthetic grass field, so it may be a difficult cleanup process. Overall, the fundraiser meets all preferred standards and brings JAMS lots of money.

As one of the most important sources for money at JAMS, Step It Up’s importance is dismissed by most. Students are rewarded with prizes, and parents don’t have to worry about a long online process. New activities would not be possible without the amazing people who donated. Be sure to recognize Step It Up for its benefits to students, parents, and the school.



7th grader Maelle D. has some fun on the Step It Up obstacle course.

Photo: Kahlan Roberts





# MEDAL READERS SHINE IN GOLD MEDAL CHALLENGE

By KAITLYN NOSHO

One hundred and ninety-five books have been recorded by JAMS Medal Readers. The library's Gold Medal Reading Challenge started at the beginning of the year and now has 37 participants. These students have worked hard to expand their reading and reach medals. Already, three students are Bronze Medal Readers, two are Silver Medal Readers, and one is a Gold Medal Reader.

Participants log their books in a Google Form created by Ms. McLaughlin, the librarian. Students consider the book they read and answer a few short questions. Ms. McLaughlin shared that she was very impressed with the students' thoughtful and reflective responses. She intended for this challenge to encour-

age students to branch out with their reading and help them build a habit of being adventurous with their reading. This goal has been very successful so far.



Finding the perfect book, Darci B. and Matisse F. search for a reading book in the new library.

Photo: Mr. Miranda

On January 31st, there was a celebration for all students who participated in this reading challenge. Readers were invited to the library for an exclusive tour of the new space. In May, there will be the Medal Ceremony to publicly celebrate all of the readers who completed the challenge. This ceremony honors JAMS readers, especially those who have dedicated time to expanding their reading into different genres. Reading is an invaluable skill, and every student will benefit from increasing familiarity with multiple genres.



**GOLD: 24+ TITLES**

**Eloise A.**

**SILVER: 16+ TITLES**

**Philemon A.  
Leo E.**

**BRONZE: 8+ TITLES**

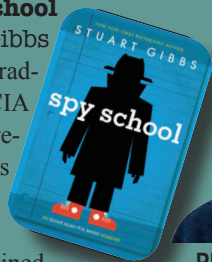
**Hailey N.  
Andia B.  
Brikena B.**

## THE BOOKMARK

### Spy School

by Stuart Gibbs

This book is great for 6th graders! Benjamin, a junior CIA spy, solves mysteries like real-life challenges. He shows the need for life skills to overcome them. Readers will be inspired and entertained throughout the 13-book series.

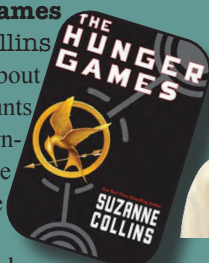


**Philemon Ayele**  
6th Grade

### The Hunger Games

by Suzanne Collins

This dystopian novel is about Katniss, a girl who hunts in the woods. The government forces kids into The Hunger Games, where they fight until only one remains. Katniss takes her sister's place—will she survive?



**Phoebe Brooks**  
7th Grade

### The Astonishing Color of After

Emily X.R. Pan

"My mother is a bird" is Chloe's big realization in this sad but funny story about a middle school girl coping with loss. I recommend it for mature readers exploring racial identity and a loved one's suicide.

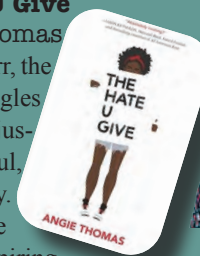


**Josie Harris Orgill**  
8th Grade

### The Hate U Give

by Angie Thomas

I needed a jolt of hope. Starr, the teen main character, struggles to find her voice against injustice. T.H.U.G. is a powerful, realistic, yet hopeful story. Let's gather as a lunchtime book club around this inspiring novel. See me for a copy!



**Ms. McLaughlin**  
Librarian

JAMS students recommend these book titles that can be found in the school library. Check them out! - Ms. McLaughlin



## Lunar New Year

**L**unar New Year at JAMS was a lively celebration marking the Year of the Snake. People born in this year are known for being intelligent, resilient, and loving, as well as calm, resourceful, and deep thinkers. The Year of the Snake also symbolizes personal growth, reflection, and wisdom. The school was filled with color and tradition, with ASB students, teachers, and families leading various events. Students participated in educational presentations about the cultural significance of the Year of the Snake and its role in different Asian traditions. The celebration fostered unity and appreciation for the AAPI community, highlighting its contributions to JAMS' diverse culture.



## Valentine's Day

**V**alentine's Day at JAMS was a blast, thanks to the awesome efforts of the Associated Student Body (ASB). The school was decked out in red and pink, creating a fun and festive vibe. ASB brought the love with their Valentine's Grams, a tradition where students could send sweet messages and little gifts to their friends, teachers, and maybe even a secret crush. The excitement was in the air as Valentine's Grams were handed out all day, spreading good vibes and bringing everyone together. It was a great way to celebrate the day and highlight the kindness and unity at JAMS, making it a memorable experience for all.



## Food Trucks

**F**ood trucks at JAMS have totally changed up lunchtime, bringing in an awesome variety of flavors and making lunch something to look forward to. Now, whenever the trucks roll onto campus, there's a buzz of excitement as students get to choose from gourmet tacos, artisanal burgers, and all kinds of international eats. Organized by ASB, Food Truck Days offer a fun break from the usual cafeteria food and turn lunchtime into a social event where everyone can try new dishes and hang out. It's not just about the food—it's about bringing people together and making lunchtime even better!





## Tree People

Sixth graders from JAMS took a field trip to TreePeople's Environmental Education program, where they got hands-on experience learning about nature, sustainability, and climate action.

The program, based in Los Angeles, encourages students to engage with the environment through experiential learning, problem-solving, and nature stewardship. JAMS students participated in activities that deepened their understanding of environmental equity and explored potential green careers, all while fostering a stronger connection with the natural world.

Supported by social-emotional learning, the program also emphasized hope and fun, making the experience both educational and inspiring. The field trip left students excited about their role as future environmental leaders, ready to make a difference in their communities.



## AVID College Tours

AVID students took an exciting trip to USC and UCLA for a college tour. They explored the campuses, attended a basketball game, and learned about student life. Tour guides shared insights on academics, dorms, and activities, giving students a glimpse of what to expect in college. Many were inspired by the experience, realizing the possibilities for their future. The trip encouraged students to start thinking about their own college dreams and goals.



CAUGHT OF CAMPS



Revamped for the Modern World, These Hands-On Classes Teach Essential Life Skills, Spark Creativity, and Prepare Students for the Future.

By FEVEN BELAY

**"S**ometimes we take for granted that kids know how to wash dishes," said Susan Turgeson, president of the Association of Teacher Educators for family and consumer sciences. This observation raises an important question: should Home Economics and Woodshop classes regain prominence in schools? These courses equip students with practical skills like cooking, sewing, and carpentry, which are invaluable for navigating everyday life. They have come a long way from the past, and have since revamped their focus on students' education, teaching them valuable life skills they can use in the future.

FACS (better known as Home Economics) is an influential class that helps to shape students into responsible people. It is mostly focused on cooking, cleaning, learning how to do taxes, etc. This class was more popular back in the 1950s-60s, but has come a long way since then. Before, Home Economics was considered a feminine class only, and would teach women how to care for their husbands and children. However, these classes were remodeled, and instead focused more on teaching everyone how to take care of themselves properly, and taking responsibility in regular households or chores. "When I was taking Home Economics and Woodshop classes, I thought it was really fun to make things with our hands. I made a duffel bag from sewing, and I even got to take it with me and properly use it. I also enjoyed learning how to cook and clean. It was nice to have a break from the normal

## Back to Basics: Why Home Ec and Woodshop Deserve a Comeback



A group of girls learning how to cook during a Home Economics class back in the 1960s.

handbook stuff we were used to in other classes," stated Ms. Bucchioni, 8th grade English teacher. JAMS students also believe that Home Economics is a good class to take. A recent survey showed that 77% of students at JAMS think that Home Economics is still relevant today.

Woodshop classes have also been modernized since then. This class is focused on teaching students skills in building, measuring, and also learning how to work with wood efficiently and safely. It was also rebranded, and changed the name



A group of boys surrounding a device used for a woodshop class in the 1960s.

from woodshop to Career Tech Education (CTE) Like Home Economics, in the 1950s-60s this class was heavily implied for men only. It also had more variety forms of experience, like metalworking, electrical, and technical foundations. Unfortunately, due to budget cuts, this class was reduced to smaller classes and harder to find in schools that supply the funds for this class. However, 55% of JAMS students believe that Woodshop classes are still relevant today.

Although a good population of the JAMS community believes that these classes are still beneficial to students, there are a multitude of reasons why these classes are fading into the distant past. One of these reasons is because of budgeting cuts. As school funding became a matter of standardized test scores in reading and math, the budget tightened for classes that taught more hands-on learning and responsibilities. However, these skills can definitely be helpful for students today, and in the future. "Quite a bit of Home Economics is paying attention to detail and following directions. It's the same with Woodshop. You would have to be precise with stuff, making projects, building, constructing, and students are also building critical thinking skills. Even exposure to different things can lead to passions one might not have discovered by themselves," science teacher, Ms. Jurewicz stated.

Modern Home Economics and Woodshop go beyond practical skills—they help students grow, explore careers, and build independence. From kitchen confidence to carpentry and design, these classes spark creativity and problem-solving, preparing students for life's challenges and opportunities.

### Do you believe the skills from these classes are essential?



"These skills are not necessary to us now, because in middle school things like these are done for us. But in high-school, you would need to learn these better to prepare for the future."  
- Maddie Dishman, 7th grade



"For cooking and cleaning definitely. But I don't know about woodshop. It would be a fun activity, I guess, unless you're really into working with stuff."  
- Amelia Troutman, 6th grade



# Cracking The Code

## Are DeltaMath and DreamBox Really Adding Up for Students?

By LIZA HALL

U.S. math scores were lower in 2023 than they were in 2019. After all the learning setbacks from the pandemic, schools everywhere have been trying to find the best way to help students get back on track in math. It has been clear that during COVID schools, especially American schools, have lost a lot of math progress. When our school noticed a decline in math scores, they introduced new programs to help improve student performance. Since 2020, we have been using DeltaMath and DreamBox to tackle this challenge

DeltaMath is the newer of the two programs, being founded in 2009 by Zach Korzyk. He founded it when he wrote a simple program on substituting values into the Quadratic Formula and got a lot of positive feedback from his students. This student feedback prompted him to create content for the rest of the year. Now, the program is used by more than 100,000 teachers and 4 million students and the creator has won the Sloan Award which is awarded annually to early-career researchers whose creativity, innovation, and research accomplishments make them stand out as the next generation of leaders.

DreamBox, on the other hand, was created in 2006 by an entrepreneur named Lou Gray and a Microsoft employee named Ben Slivka because they wanted to create a math program that makes math fun and entertaining for students of all ages. According to 7th grader Morgan Bitterolf,

*I prefer Dreambox over Delta Math because Dreambox changes or learns based off of your mistakes and tries to help you.*

**Morgan Bitterolf**  
7th grader

"I prefer Dreambox over Delta Math because Dreambox changes or learns based off of your mistakes and tries to help you. Meanwhile, Delta Math doesn't try and help you, or give you a problem that's more at your level." The program prioritizes proficiency, individual instruction, progress, and growth. DreamBox was a finalist for the CODiE Award in 2022 for its innovation in tech and programming. It was a finalist in the categories, "Best Personalized Learning Solution" for its reading program and "Best Mathematics Instructional Solution for Grades PreK-8" for math. Though DreamBox was a finalist in both categories it only won in reading.

DreamBox and DeltaMath have helped so many students across the country and they both are critically acclaimed and have been noticed by big award companies for their innovative and engaging way of teaching. With awards and recognition people would think that the students using these programs would love them just as much as the reviews say, but is that actually true for JAMS?

According to a recent JAMS survey, 84% of students prefer DeltaMath over Dreambox and 89% of students feel as though DeltaMath helps school improvement school wide

### Top Math Programs

Source: [desmos.com](https://www.desmos.com), [lemnopoly.com](https://www.lemnopoly.com), [mondulo.com](https://www.mondulo.com)

1. Khan Academy (120 million users)
2. Desmos math (75 million users)
3. Prodigy Math (50 million users)

versus DreamBox. Even though these students seem to think that DeltaMath is the better program, DreamBox is still helping. According to Ms. Warren, a math teacher at JAMS, "I believe that Dreambox also has a positive effect but it may not be as easy to see since the skills that students work on in Dreambox are meant to help with practicing personal math skills based on what students know in general." She also later stated that, "Yes, students' scores have gone up when they are doing it (DreamBox) consistently. Some students just let the time run up and don't take the work seriously so their scores do not change but students who do the required lessons and time have gone up and some have even gone up way more than I would have ever expected."

DreamBox and DeltaMath are both critically acclaimed math programs known for their unique way of engaging students. Students think that DeltaMath is the better of the two and they enjoy learning with this program better than with DreamBox. Even though students prefer DeltaMath, DreamBox is still helping students fill in personal gaps in their math proficiency. So, whether students like them or not these two programs were made to help students and have been awarded for just that. Even if it feels like it's not helping personally, maybe the solution is looking at the big picture.



**Surafel D. stays focused in advisory, sharpening his math skills with DeltaMath practice.**

Photo: Liza Hall

## BY THE NUMBERS

[deltamath.com](https://deltamath.com), National Center for Educational Statistics, [dreambox.com](https://dreambox.com)

**6.2 million**  
people use DeltaMath across the country

**2,300**  
lessons are available on DreamBox

**35%**  
of students reached the proficient level of math in 2022

## FRESH FACULTY FACE



### NEW TECH SUPPORT

JAMS welcomes Mr. Chris Overton as the new tech support specialist, ready to help students and staff with all their tech needs. Before joining JAMS, Mr. Overton worked for 10 years as a paraeducator at Franklin Elementary, but his passion for technology started long before that. A lifelong tech enthusiast, he grew up gaming and recently got into T-shirt design, blending creativity with his love for computers. Fun fact: Mr. Overton was once a JAMS student himself back in the '90s, making his return to campus as staff even more special.

Students who need help with their school devices should fill out a request form first (see QR code below). He's available before school and during lunch on most days: Monday through Wednesday and Friday from 12:30-1:30 p.m., and Thursday and Friday from 12:00-1:00 p.m.



Scan QR code for the JAMS Student Device Support form.

## Should middle school students be required to complete volunteer hours in order to promote to high school?

Giving back or too much to ask? Some believe that requiring volunteer hours helps students build responsibility, leadership skills, and a sense of community. Others argue that middle schoolers already have busy schedules and that volunteering should be a choice, not a requirement.



*"It can help them understand their community and the aspects of a job for the future, and help them understand what topics they are interested in and manage their time better."*

**Jade Martinez**  
8th grade

*"No, because if people are really busy with school work and extra curricular things they won't have time for that. Also, if you can't find any work it's not fair that you can't go to high school."*

**Emma Alvarez**  
7th grade



*"It's a good idea to have people have to help out with the community."*

**Tiffany Maisch**  
8th grade

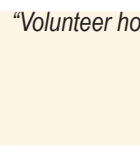
*"I think that if you don't have time on your hands, focus on your studies, because that is the most important, but if you have some free time, it could definitely benefit and shape your future for the better. It should be strongly encouraged, but not required."*

**Elizabeth Pash**  
6th grade



*"Doing volunteer hours can be very helpful for young people in life."*

**Bella De La Cruz**  
8th grade



*"Volunteer hours should be optional and for people that are willing - not required. I mean, it says 'volunteer' for a reason."*

**Olivia Noonan**  
8th grade



*"Students should be required to complete volunteer hours because that way students can say that they have more volunteer hours for when they go to college, and that gives them a better chance of getting into any college they choose to go to."*

**Alma Badelt**  
7th grade

*"Some kids don't have support that they would need to volunteer, although it should be strongly encouraged for those who have the support and time to do it."*

**Teddy Pesapane**  
6th grade



*"They should because it teaches responsibility and I think it prepares you for high school."*

**Mayla Furano**  
7th grade

*"It would be nice for people to volunteer, but people have many things to do after school and their parents do too. I think that it should make your grade higher if you volunteer, but you do not have to."*

**Kahya Strock**  
6th grade





# CLUBS AT JAMS: The Key to Connection

By ANDREW LEE

Imagine walking into school and immediately finding a group of people who share your passions—this sense of belonging can make a world of difference for students. Sources say that having clubs at schools help students boost self-confidence and enhance social skills. What do you think? According to Collegiate Gateway, it states that, “Pre-teens and early adolescents are embarking on a period of immense social and emotional growth.” So there is factual evidence that clubs help students with many skills.

On campus, there are many different clubs that can be beneficial to students’ future. They can be beneficial by helping students define their identity, better their teamwork skills, and also help work on their leadership skills. At JAMS, nine teachers were asked about the significance of the clubs they teach, with one of the questions being: What makes your club unique and why did you choose this club? The response that stood out the most came from Mr. Fizz, who leads the soccer club. He explained, “Soccer is a sport that brings everybody together. In our case, we have 30 students with different levels of abilities. It allows everyone to contribute and learn to take responsibilities within a team setting.” This highlights how participating in clubs can offer valuable experiences that benefit students’ personal growth and teamwork skills for the future.”

Some might believe that certain clubs aren’t beneficial for students’ futures, but each one likely contributes to a unique



Students work together in coding club with Ms. Warren. Photo: Ms. Warren



*My calligraphy club helps students improve their penmanship through practice and writing exercises.*

## Mr. Miranda

English and journalism teacher

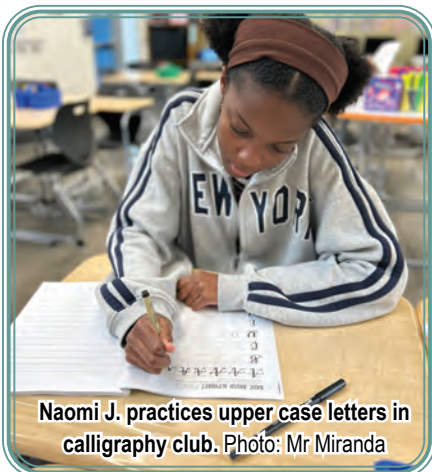
career path. Take Ms. Rattan’s club for example - her club was focused on playing with and learning about Hot Wheels. When we asked her why she chose this club she said, “I chose this club because I think Hot Wheels are really fun! They are also a great way to practice the engineering design process.” Just like Hot Wheels can help develop an interest or passion for engineering, Legos can do the same as well. According to Ms. Gonzalez, who leads the Legos club, “Students get to build with Legos! I chose it because Legos are fun and inspire lots of

thinking and creativity.”

Calligraphy Club was also offered as a club option, that helps students develop critical writing skills. Mr. Miranda said, “It is unique because it gives students a chance to work on their penmanship and allows students to improve and practice their handwriting.” According to Calligraphy-Skills.com, “Each calligraphy skill is made up of a fact to understand, a movement to practice, and an examination of the results. It is the “art of giving form to signs in an expressive, harmonious and skillful manner”. For students, it can help them improve their motor skills and memory attention and many other great skills for the near future. Another way to practice penmanship and a great way to be creative and expressive is drawing. According to Ms. Alexopoulos, “Drawing can be very therapeutic and calming for kids. I also love supporting their creativity!”

Students have also expressed their opinions. Logan Farr said, “I think clubs are important because they help you make friends. Sometimes you connect to some students, sometimes you don’t.”

Clubs play a vital role in students’ growth, not just at JAMS but in schools everywhere. Throughout this article, we’ve explored the many benefits they offer, from building skills to shaping future opportunities. By getting involved in JAMS clubs, students can discover new passions, develop valuable experiences, and set themselves up for success. Don’t miss out—take advantage of these opportunities and make the most of it.



Naomi J. practices upper case letters in calligraphy club. Photo: Mr Miranda



Dalia M. shows off their masterpiece in drawing club. Photo: Ms. Alexopoulos



Brandon S.V. holds a snake in reptile club with Mr. Avedian. Photo: Steffi Griffith

# AVID: LEADING, LEARNING, AND LEVELING UP AT JAMS!

By ANDREW ALLEN

The AVID program at John Adams Middle School is making a big impact on students by helping them prepare for the future while also giving back to the community. AVID students have been actively completing community service projects, working toward their 12-hour yearly requirement. Through these projects, they are developing leadership skills and learning the importance of helping others. Ms. Murphy, the AVID advisor, has been guiding students through these experiences and encouraging them to stay committed to their goals.

This semester, AVID students had the chance to hear from guest speakers who shared insights about their careers, inspiring students to think about their own futures. A field trip to USC gave them a firsthand look at college life, motivating many to set higher education goals. AVID also hosted a Family Night, where parents learned how to support their students' academic journeys. These experiences help students stay focused on their dreams while strengthening their connections with school and family.

In addition to academics, AVID also focuses on building a positive school culture. The new Peer Mediation Program trains students to help their classmates resolve conflicts in a constructive way. Fun Fridays give students a chance to build friendships through team-building activities, and semester awards recognize their hard work and achievements. Ms. Murphy and the AVID program continue to provide students with valuable opportunities, ensuring they grow into confident and successful learners.



Students present in front of families about AVID activities during Family Night.

Photo: Ms. Murphy



AVID students engage in peer mediation with others to foster conflict resolution.

Photo: Ms. Murphy



Former JAMS AVID student, Sofia Gutierrez, talks to the students about being a Sports Broadcaster. Photo: Ms. Murphy



Beaming with pride, students celebrate their achievements after an AVID awards ceremony.

Photo: Ms. Murphy



Students collaborating to solve a math problem together with a peer tutor, Adelaide G.

Photo: Ms. Murphy



## Balancing Safety and Student Voice: The Debate Over JAMS' 'Comply First, Complain Later' Rule

By ELIZABETH MELBOURNE

Few schools' policies spark debate quite like JAMS' Comply First Complain Later rule. It tells students to listen first, then criticize the instructions after complying. It is put in place to help guide students through an emergency. However, the undertones cannot be ignored. Numerous students have criticized it. To the teachers, the instruction is used to make the day go smoother for both students and staff. So, when the student voice conflicts with the school's rules it tends to sprout a debate on whether the instruction is effective.

JAMS has two mottos: first, "Kind, Connected, and Compassionate", and second "Comply First, Complain Later." While the school values kindness and connection, the second motto, 'Comply First, Complain Later,' raises questions about the balance between authority and students' voice.

When surveyed, both students and teachers agree that the Comply First, Complain Later guide would work when used correctly. Sixty four percent of students and 92% of teachers said it would be effective in an emergency. Additionally, teachers that said they have been in 5-6 emergencies reported that it is an effective tool. In the survey, 7th grader Sophia Vintinner wrote, "I think we should be able to complain, because sometimes the person is right and should have the right to complain." This is a good example of the argument surrounding this instruction. Students are not willing to

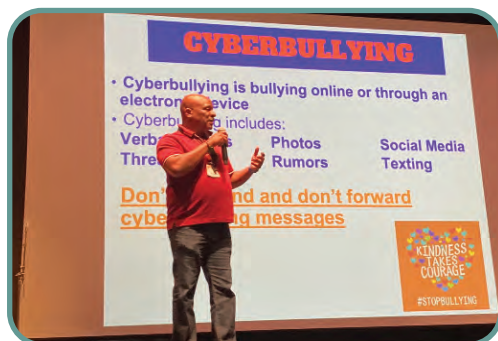
always follow it, and teachers urge them to follow it so the day goes on smoothly.

One 7th grader, Laylani Moore, raised concerns about the rule, she expressed why she felt uncomfortable with the Comply First, Complain Later instruction. There were two reasons why she disliked it. One, she believed that complaining was a natural way for people to process things and that it was a normal response. She said "I feel like sometimes complaining is how people process and it's normal." Two, the wording made it feel like the teacher is always right and always has good intentions. The student expressed how they don't think a teacher would take advantage of this rule in a negative way, but that the concern is still present.

“

*Comply First, Complain Later is meant to be used purely for safety and to more easily keep the classroom running.*

**Dr. Eure**  
Assistant principal



Dr. Eure helps explain the effects of cyberbullying during a Kindness Assembly at the beginning of the year where the "Comply First, Complain Later" rule was introduced. Photo: Kahlan Roberts

The school has the Comply First, Complain Later rule because it helps to run a class and balance a student's safety with their concerns. It is important to follow school rules, but it is also important to question them when need be. Experienced teachers and staff have stated that in emergencies this rule works to keep the students safe. Teachers work hard to keep students safe and classes running. However, in the end, it is a tool to help the class continue to teach and thrive as a school.

# COMPLY FIRST, COMPLAIN LATER

“

*I think the Comply First Complain Later rule isn't working at all, so we need to find something that will make it work. Maybe asking for more parents to volunteer and watch the kids, and I feel like none of the adults say the phrase, so it might help if adults around campus indoors and outdoors start using it.*



**Elizabeth Ferrera**  
6th grade

Should we eliminate the "Comply First, Complain Later" rule?



“

*I think that even in the heat of a stressful moment you might want to complain but it is important to comply.*



**Eva Bernknopf**  
8th grade

# JAMS MUSICIANS SHINE

By KAITLYN NOSHO

Several talented musicians from John Adams Middle School proudly represented JAMS at the 2025 SCSBOA All-Southern Honor Bands & Orchestras and All-State ensembles. Selected from over 2,400 auditioning students, these musicians showcased exceptional skill and dedication. Honorees include Liam Gillespie-Breslo (bass, grade 7) in the CODA All-State Jr. High Concert Orchestra and Charlie Nord (french horn, grade 8) in the CBDA All-State Jr. High Symphonic Band. SCSBOA All-Southern selections include Indy Gugenheim (french horn, grade 6), Roan Haykinson (percussion, grade 8), Charlie Nord, Kaitlyn Noshko (clarinet, grade 8), and Ross Sullivan (clarinet, grade 6). Their achievements highlight JAMS' musical excellence.



Kaitlyn N., Charlie N., Ross S., Indy G., Liam G. B. and Roan H. represented JAMS at various groups and organizations in the state.

## THE HEART OF JAMS: THOSE WHO KEEP IT RUNNING

By ANDREW ALLEN

The women of the John Adams Middle School main office and attendance office are the heart of the campus, ensuring that daily operations run smoothly while creating a supportive and welcoming atmosphere for students, staff, and families. With diverse backgrounds and years of experience, they bring dedication, efficiency, and a strong sense of teamwork to their roles. Whether assisting students,

coordinating school logistics, or handling essential administrative tasks, they work behind the scenes and on the front lines to keep the school functioning seamlessly. Their commitment to JAMS goes beyond their responsibilities, as they foster connections, support the school community, and contribute to a positive and organized learning environment.



**Ms. Malone**, Administrative Assistant and Principal Support at JAMS, handles payroll, budgeting, and office needs while assisting students and parents. A former JAMS student, she values the school's strong community and teamwork. With 1.5 years in education, she plays a key role in keeping school operations smooth and loves being part of the JAMS family.

**Ms. Osaki** has been with SMMUSD for over 15 years, supporting counselors and administrators while managing records, transcripts, and campus logistics. She enjoys helping staff and seeing students grow. Behind the scenes, she plays a key role in maintaining a functional and welcoming school environment, ensuring everything runs smoothly for the JAMS community.



**Ms. Fagnoli**, formerly a special education teacher at John Muir, now thrives in the attendance office. She enjoys the variety of her work and appreciates her supportive colleagues, Lisa and Jenelle. Being around students makes the job especially rewarding. A little-known perk of her role is that she works only ten months a year, allowing her to enjoy summers off.

**Ms. Davis** joined the John Adams attendance office after working at Will Rogers, excited for the change and her children's former school. Her busy days involve handling attendance and more. She loves her co-workers, sharing laughs while working as a strong team, and enjoys knowing the students. Though students may not realize it, she and her team work hard while having fun.



**Ms. Beekman** transitioned from being a stay-at-home mom to working in the JAMS attendance office after volunteering at her kids' schools. She enjoys seeing students grow from 6th to 8th grade and keeping up with the latest middle school trends. Her role includes managing attendance, answering questions, and assisting students. Jenelle works part-time and values her team.



# Wellness Awareness

## How to Locate and Utilize Wellness Resources on Campus

By ALENA COX

**M**ental health and wellness often aren't appreciated. Just how important is it? Actor Robin Williams once said "If you're that depressed, reach out to someone. And remember, suicide is a permanent solution, to a temporary problem."

Eighty nine percent of JAMS students believe that mental health is a pressing matter. According to the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, depression occurs in 13% of 12-17 year olds, anxiety in 32%, eating disorders in 3%. But where does one go? There are many resources around school that could help one with all that might be bothering them. Though it's important to note, There are always some safety procedures that have to be taken. It's always okay to reach out, but it's never okay to sit in silence.

Everyone has bad days, but when asked if mental health resources are easy to find around JAMS, 41.4% of students said, "no". For starters, the most obvious and probably the best place some could go would be the counselors. Another possibility being the comfort/ wellness room, a welcoming quiet place to take a break from a tough day. If a student needs someone to talk to they can go to a trusted teacher. Lastly, are friends. Everyone struggles in a way, one's friends would be most likely to relate and just listen when they need to. If it's too hard to reach out to someone the suicide help-line on the back of the student ID is always there.

If one is struggling they should not sit in silence. The National Library of Medicine states that "They (scientists) suggest that such isolation in prison leads to increased distress, depression, as well as increased prevalence of self harm in adults"

So, we are not prisoners, but if one isolates themselves, the effects on their mind aren't good. That's why a lot of time people snap and don't mean the words they say. They say whatever comes to mind, whether true or not, in an attempt to make their friend understand the loneliness they're feeling at that moment. Next, Mental health matters because it can wear a person down. Speaking up can lead to improvement, restoring motivation and boosting academic performance. One won't feel as exhausted and unwilling to do the work.

If there is a constant unhealthy environment around students then it can promote long term mental health issues. In an article from Very Well Mind, "The environment and mental health are intrinsically connected. The places where you spend a

lot of time- home, work, school, and even socially - can have a significant impact on your mental well-being". This applies to students too—bullying or unkind treatment can make them dread school. A supportive, inclusive environment fosters participation, friendships, and mental well-being.

Don't be the cause of anxiety; create a space where students feel safe and valued.

### JAMS Wellness

**Wellness C**  
Room 44 a

**Mental Health C**  
Ms. Gutierrez, R

**Counseling Interns (**  
If interested, contact your g

**Social Work Interns (ind**  
If interested, contact your g

### Agencies Partner

**SEW - Social Emotional**  
**Family Service of**  
**St. John's Couse**  
**LACOE - Los Angeles Cou**  
**Maple Couse**  
**YRT - Youth Res**

If interested, contact your g



## Meet Our Counselors



**Room T2**

Ms. Zargar is the 8th-grade counselor at JAMS, where she has been supporting students for seven years. She believes that building relationships with

trusted adults is essential for students, as it can be challenging for them to seek help without that connection. She recognizes that emotions such as shyness or embarrassment can make it difficult for students to reach out when they need support. Dedicated to fostering a supportive environment, Ms. Zargar strives to help students navigate these challenges. A fun fact about her - she loves Minions!



**Room Q7**

Ms. Check is the dedicated 7th-grade counselor at JAMS, where she has been supporting students for 18 years. She understands that while some students find it easy to ask for help, others may struggle, as everyone has their own comfort level when it comes to seeking support. Ms. Check is committed to creating a safe and welcoming environment for all students. Outside of school, she enjoys staying active, and a fun fact about her is that she loves rollerblading along the beach in her free time.



**Room Q8**

Ms. Cowgill serves as the 6th-grade counselor at JAMS and leads the peer mediation program. With 29 years of experience as a counselor at both JAMS and Malibu High School, she is dedicated to supporting students in navigating academic and personal challenges. For those who know their grade-level counselor, accessing wellness resources is straightforward, but for others, it can be more difficult. Passionate about student well-being, she works to bridge that gap. A fun fact about Ms. Cowgill - she loves hockey and is a devoted Vegas Golden Knights fan.

# Balance or Boundaries?

## The Impact of Elective Requirements on Student Exploration

By LIEL TEWODROS

**E**lectives play a crucial role in shaping students' academic experiences, offering them the chance to explore new interests while developing essential skills. In fact, roughly 56% of students at JAMS believe that electives that allow all students to partake in has positively impacted their learning. However, without elective requirements, students might not have enough direction when choosing their courses. They could pick electives based only on interest without considering whether they have the skills needed to succeed, potentially choosing courses that don't necessarily align with their strengths. This leads to the debate on whether or not elective requirements should be implemented.

Requiring certain electives can be beneficial when it comes to a student's educational experience. For example, electives like art can help students develop creativity and gain better attention to detail, which are valuable skills in every field. Exposure to subjects outside core academics ensures that students gain a well rounded skill set, allowing them to think more critically which can help with adjusting to different situations in different places. Ms Blancard states that "I would prefer teaching a class where all students have mixed experiences, but it can also be easier when everyone is closer to a certain level." This also means that students are not only more likely to succeed academically, but are also better prepared for future career opportunities. Adding on, students are more likely to see success in the elective course being taken. Implementing requirements in order to get in a course means prior knowledge in a specific area that revolves around the desired course is undoubtedly necessary. Having the knowledge beforehand of a course increases the chance of long term success.

While adding requirements can offer plenty of benefits, it can also be disad-

vantageous. These requirements can create barriers for students to explore new different interests. When students are forced to choose electives based on what is needed rather than personal curiosity, they might miss out on discovering new skills, and may make students reconsider their academic direction. Instead of fostering a well rounded education, these requirements often force students to prioritize practically over curiosity. Ultimately, students are prevented from fully exploring the range of knowledge that could shape their academic/career choices.

Elective requirements can be more effective when applied to advanced courses. "It is an advanced class, and if your work in that class is not advanced, you will not perform well in an advanced class." 8th grader Cameron Cohen suggests. Advanced electives such as advanced art and honors choir typically require specific skills which makes them more suited for entry criterias. These courses build on a student's strength and provide a deeper level of learning. In contrast, regular electives like string orchestra and symphonic band offer students the chance to explore a wide variety of interests without needing specific background knowledge. By setting requirements for more advanced electives, schools can ensure that students are better prepared for these specialized subjects.

While elective requirements can offer significant benefits, they also present challenges that limit students' ability to explore new interests. Balancing the need for specialized courses and allowing flexibility is important. By reserving requirements for advanced electives and allowing more freedom in general courses, schools can ensure that students are well prepared and encouraged to explore a broad range of electives. This allows students to prepare for current and future success.



*If anyone was allowed in an advanced elective, it wouldn't be considered advanced anymore.*

**Josephine Cho**  
8th grade



Playing harmoniously, Rukaiyat D. practices her violin in Symphony Orchestra.

Photo: Liel Tewodros



Belting out a beautiful note, choir students use their voices to tell a story.

Photo: Liel Tewodros



Crafting with her whole heart, Mia P. outlines a creative design in art class.

Photo: Liel Tewodros



## How Students Use Music to Concentrate, Connect, and Calm Their Minds

By STEFFI GRFFITH

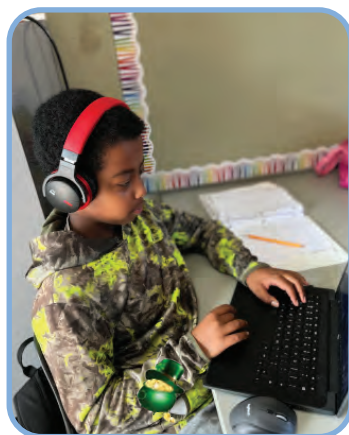
# JAMS Jamz

Whether it's blasting their favorite songs or playing soft instrumentals, many students swear by music as their ultimate study companion—but does science back this up? Phyllis Medina PhD, program director of Psychology at the University of Maryland Global Campus, says, "The right choice of music, such as instrumental or ambient music, can help block out distractions, improve concentration, and maintain attention during study sessions." (Medina). However, improving attention span is not the only reason we listen to music. While music can aid concentration, many students prefer listening to their favorite artists. Music is also a way for students to express their identity, emotions, and relate with their peers.

Music can affect the school day in different ways. It can help students lengthen their attention spans, increase information retention, and improve concentration in class and out. However, some students feel music is distracting in class when trying to concentrate. Eighth-grader Aubrey Houtz said, "Classic rock or anything really intense is distracting to me because it's just too busy to focus.". Studies show that instrumental music or calming music can help students pay attention and block out distractions while doing work in class. While more upbeat songs with lyrics can actually distract us from what they are trying to accomplish. Researcher Bill Thompson, who has a MA and PhD, and his colleagues conducted a study. They put two people next to each other, one with classical music and one with upbeat music playing. The person who was listening to classical music focused better, while the person listening to upbeat music was more distracted and worked less.

While music in classrooms is a point of conversation, most students don't worry about their concentration in class. They focus on the fun upbeat nature of music and the community that liking a certain artist or genre brings. Many students also














tend to gravitate towards high-energy music with explicit lyrics. Some people have emotional connections to songs that may remind them of a loved one who has passed, a good time they have had, or a special feeling. These songs can be fast, slow, happy, sad, and all the things in between. Most students at Jams listen to music, so a survey was sent out to try to figure out which songs were the most popular. Songs like Espresso, Not Like Us, HOT TO GO!, and See You Again are just a few popular choices around JAMS.



**Narel T. listens to music in class while completing his math assignment.** Photo: Steffi Griffith

JAMS, like many other schools, has a strong music foundation within the student community. But why do kids listen to music anyway? Kids use music as a way to express their identity and relate to their peers. Friends can bond over songs and artists, also finding new friends through music. While good music can also reduce anxiety, and affect mood. Listening to a happy, upbeat song might make someone feel more happy or uplifted throughout the day. In a stressful situation, they can also listen to music they are comfortable with to calm their stress and anxiety. There are many ways music helps the younger generation and these were just a few, there are many more ways music can be a constructive part of daily life.

Music can be beneficial in many ways, like improving concentration, putting themselves in a good headspace, and calming them down. Jamming out to music is a fun pastime for students at JAMS and other places alike. As fun as music can be, it is also crucial to many students and their success in school. As simple as music is, it has had a profound impact on many people's lives. Having so many different types of songs easily accessible helps people find the right type of music for themselves. Music of all types has helped shape our society. Whether it is jamming out to their favorite tunes or locking in to some Mozart, music can help people focus and be the best version of themselves.

-  **It Ain't Over 'Til It's Over**  
Lenny Kravitz
-  **We're Going to Be Friends**  
The White Stripes
-  **Stargazing**  
Myles Smith
-  **Everybody Wants To Rule**  
Tears For Fears
-  **Disco**  
Surf Curse
-  **Yellow**  
Coldplay
-  **HOT TO GO!**  
Chappell Roan
-  **Messy**  
Lola Young
-  **luther (with sza)**  
Kendrick Lamar, SZA
-  **BIRDS OF A FEATHER**  
Billie Eilish
-  **Saturn**  
SZA
-  **Close To You**  
Gracie Abrams
-  **Rock with You - Single**  
Michael Jackson

Scan the QR code  
to listen to more of  
the student-created  
JAMS Jamz on Spotify.



# SPOT THE DIFFERENCE!



AVID students Aiden C., Maya M.H., Addy G., and Andrew A. construct a gingerbread house during Fun Friday. Photo: Ms. Murphy

## ANSWER KEY

1/ Boy on the right: black hair to blonde. 2/ Boy's clothes (right) changed to a purple dress. 3/ Gingerbread house: icing added. 4/ Girl (middle right): plaid antlers to purple. 5/ Boy on the left changed to an old lady. 6/ Girl (middle left) hat changed to pink. 10/ Girl (middle right) bracelet removed. 11/ Poster: Native American replaced with an old man (left). 12/ Poster: covered in pink (right). 13/ Bowl now filled with soup.

## The JAMS Journal

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