

# the accolade

March 2024 1801 Lancer Way, Fullerton CA Sunny Hills High School Volume IXIV, Issue 3

Earthquakes, cyber attacks and fire hazards. The Accolade looks into how these issues have prompted officials to start

# ARE WE SAFER?

ILLUSTRATION BY JINA HAN

## Progressive Mindset

District introduces unprecedented changes to keep campuses more secure | pg. 8

## Digging Deep

Is there a fault line underneath Sunny Hills? A look into this explains what could cause future quakes | pg. 17

## Tell Us Why

School officials should provide student body with district rationale for changes to emergency drills | pg. 26

# DEAR READERS,

**W**hen I arrived at Sunny Hills as a freshman four years ago, I did not step foot on campus. Entering high school during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic meant that my perception of safety was determined by news headlines and social media. Regardless, safety was a serious concern, especially amid the rise of anti-Asian hate.

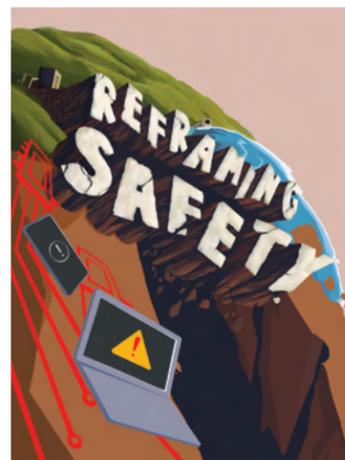
The importance of this issue became more visible in my sophomore year. As the pandemic was winding down, I was able to begin experiencing the high school life I'd imagined, though students were required to wear their masks until the second semester. Moreover, this constantly reminded me that the risks to our physical well-being were still lurking within campus halls. While adjusting to the new normal, concerns from before COVID-19 also resurfaced, including nationwide school shootings and extreme weather patterns.

Thankfully, such hazards did not reach Sunny Hills, but safety was undoubtedly becoming a more serious theme in our community. From a new signage cautioning "Authorized personnel only beyond this point" in the main office to more teachers wearing ID badges, my staff and I noticed the emphasis on personal welfare for all on campus. That's why we decided to dedicate our third publication to reframing safety.

With that being said, our school and district consistently employ new strategies to enhance security for our campus. In our "Shaping Standards" story (pg. 8), copy editor Nicole Park delves into our school district's push to install new alert devices and updated protocols to our emergency drills. We recognize that these policies can be both commendable and incomplete, which is why our staff editorial (pg. 26) communicates how safety should be revisited from students' perspectives.

Our stories also seek to investigate the diverse threats we may face. For one, the cover story, "Beneath the Surface" (pg. 17), probes into the faults under and adjacent to our community that causes the tremors we feel. Though Southern California is fortunate to be spared from traumatic earthquakes that wreak havoc in other regions worldwide, some of small magnitude recently occurred. In fact, when the Fullerton-area quake struck, it piqued our curiosity: What lies beneath?

Throughout the production of this issue and hearing student voices on safety, I've felt the shared interest in the policies that affect us. As much as this is our first publication of 2024, I hope that this issue reinforces the importance of safety and the regulations that create it.



Best,  
**Jaimie Chun**  
*Editor-in-chief*

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*The Accolade* is produced by the Advanced Journalism class of Sunny Hills High School and distributed during Period 3.

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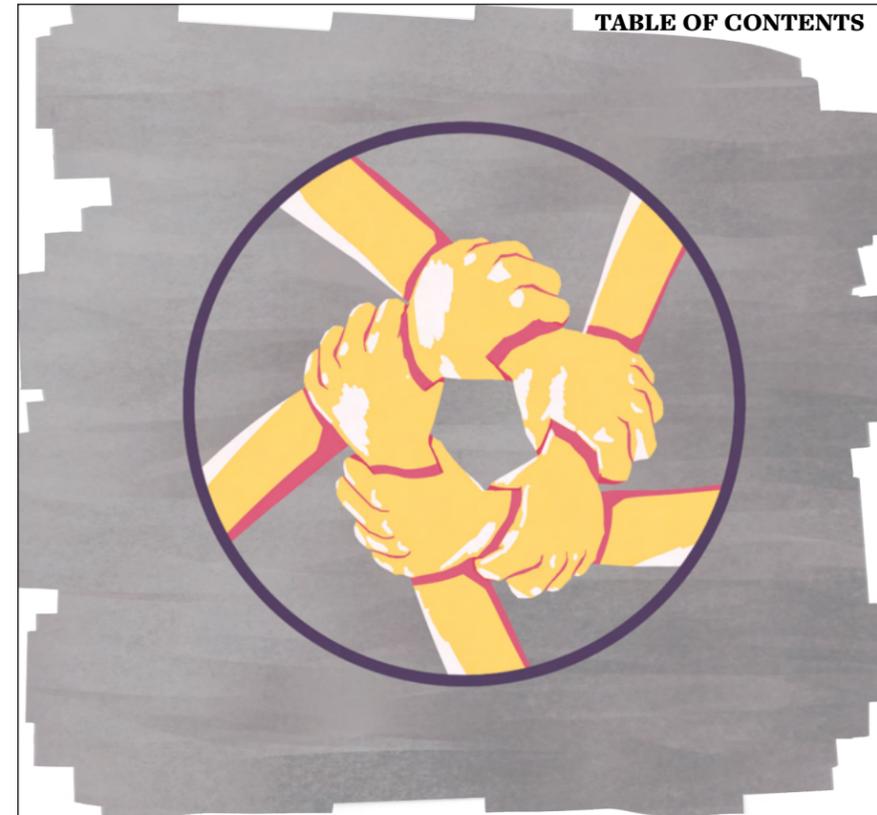


ILLUSTRATION BY **RYAN SHIN**

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2006 CSPA Silver Crown



# NEW GANG IN TOWN

Cybersecurity experts cite increased wave of ransomware attacks on schools

STORY BY IRENE PARK

It's known as the Medusa ransomware gang. Though the name is based on a Greek character known for turning those who meet her eyes into stone, cybersecurity experts say that moniker has been applied to this specific group of hackers because they figuratively turn people's personal data into stone.

For example, the digital attackers lock victims' files until a large sum of ransom money is paid.

According to informational technology [IT] group, securityboulevard.com, the Medusa ransomware gang started in June 2021 and has grown to have orchestrated several significant data breaches with most of its victims being educational institutions.

"Coast to coast, the educational systems include the Glendale Unified School District in California, the Hinsdale School District in New Hampshire and the Campbell County Schools in Kentucky," according to cybernews.com, a research-based cybersecurity publication.

This "group" is not alone.

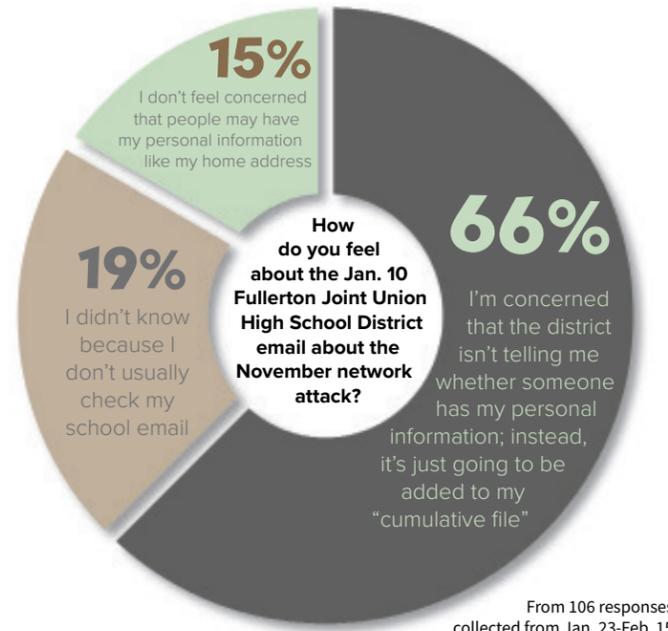
Between 2016 and 2022, for example, more than 1,600 cyberattacks were reported on schools, according to K12 Security Information Exchange, a nonprofit organization aimed at helping institutions prevent such digital assaults.

These situations have forced education officials to view safety beyond the regular school day, creating a new digital front to keep the data of all stakeholders — employees, students and their parents — secure.

As a certified information systems security professional, California State University, Fullerton, associate professor Mikhail Gofman said school districts are often a common target of ransomware attacks because they have limited resources to invest in cyber security for data that spans from teachers to students and their parents.

"Oftentimes, security is one of the areas where budgets might either be cut or just might not be sufficiently funded," Gofman said. "So [hackers] know that public school districts may be sort of at a disadvantage."

The professor said if schools refuse to pay what hackers demand, which can range from six figures to millions of dollars, hackers can also reach out to the families whose data they possess and promise to withhold the information for a price.



And in some cases, they will publish the data on the web, which is what the Medusa gang did with the Glendale Unified School District in releasing student and staff names, addresses, medical data and parent information, according to cybernews.com.

"This could impact somebody's life in all kinds of ways," Gofman said. "Maybe down the road, somebody [could find] some sort of information about you and then use it for intimidation."

That was the concern that two La Habra High School teachers from the Fullerton Joint Union High School District [FJUHSD] had shared with trustees during the Feb. 6 school board meeting. Their frustration was centered on the Nov. 14 ransomware attack that hit the district, leaving students and all employees without internet access for two days.

"I have had a cyber security subscription with Lifelock for 10 years and beginning on Nov. 20, I received the first of 23 alerts that would come to me over the next two months that my information had been compromised," math teacher Carrie Forsythe said. "The alerts included that my information had been found on the dark web, my passwords old and current were also compromised and

attempts were being made to access my credit."

Social science teacher Misty Burt, who spoke to the board first, scolded district officials for taking so long to communicate information.

"Let me restate that the information, which was extremely limited, came to us nearly a month after the incident," Burt said. "This delay conveys a profound disregard for the responsibility the district has to the stakeholders and community to keep their information secure or at the minimum provide us with the information in a timely manner so that at the very least, individually we could take measures to best protect ourselves."

In an interview with *The Accolade*, Burt said she and Forsythe acted alone and did not contact the teachers union or any other peers about their public comments to the board.

Despite her stepping forward to do so, the teacher with 25 years in the district said she does not expect any other faculty members to do the same at future board meetings.

"It has been my experience that there is a general and overwhelming fear among employees of the district that they will be punished if they speak out against the administration," Burt said.

Trustees are not obligated to share opinions in response to those who speak during the public comments portion of their meeting. District officials have declined to give any more information to *The Accolade* about the November ransomware attack.

According to an *Accolade* poll from Jan. 23-Feb. 29, 66% of 106 respondents reflected their concern that the district isn't explicitly mentioning which students' data was breached while 15% aren't worried; 19% responded that they weren't aware that a ransomware attack had occurred.

"I think that the district should at least give some closure to us," sophomore Ruthanne DeLos Angeles said. "That way, we won't be worried about our information floating around."



ILLUSTRATION BY IRIS KIM

# SHAKEN UP

Students, teachers share their reactions to large earthquakes that started off 2024 in Southern California

STORY BY DAREEN HAGEKHALIL

ILLUSTRATION BY LINDSEY UM

**S**ophomore Connor Fancuberta remembered being tucked in bed on New Year's Day morning. Fancuberta was scrolling through his TikTok feed at around 7:30 a.m. while on FaceTime with his girlfriend. Only an hour later, he felt his bed suddenly shake back and forth.

"All of a sudden, I felt my room shaking, and I freaked out," said Fancuberta while recalling how he reacted to the 4.1 magnitude earthquake on Jan. 1. "I ran to turn on the lights in my room and checked on my girlfriend and my dad came in to check on me from the living room to ask if I had felt it."

With Southern California's recent earthquakes, the sophomore said he usually finds himself just as afraid, no matter how many he experiences.

"Whenever an earthquake happens, I get scared and I turn the light on — that makes me feel better," Fancuberta said. "The earth is shaking, and that's scary, so I usually hide in my bed."

The sophomore wasn't the only one who was greeted with an unexpected temblor to start off the new year.

"The earthquake woke me up from my sleep," said senior John Park, who was able to go back to bed after the quake.

## RATTLE AND ROLL

- Jan. 1: 4.1 magnitude; 16 miles from Long Beach
- Jan. 5: 4.2 magnitude; 5.5 miles from Lytle Creek
- Jan. 24: 4.2 magnitude; 1.5 miles from San Bernardino
- Feb. 9: 4.6 magnitude; 8 miles from Malibu

Compiled by Pricilla Escobedo  
Source: Los Angeles Times

"I was planning on sleeping in because I had stayed up late the night before, but I guess the earthquake had other plans."

The New Year's Day quake — the first of four that hit Southern California in January and February — occurred 16 miles from downtown Long Beach; however, according to the United States Geological Survey [USGS] website, the quake was felt all over Orange County, Los Angeles County and even Ventura County.

The four quakes, all above a 4.0 magnitude, shook up different parts of

Southern California on Jan. 1, 5, 24 and Feb. 9.

Just four days after New Year's Day, a 4.2 magnitude quake shook 5.5 miles from Lytle Creek near Rancho Cucamonga in San Bernardino County at 10:55 a.m. Another 4.2 magnitude one jolted the San Bernardino area 19 days later at 7:43 p.m. A larger, 4.6 tremor quake shook up the Malibu area on Feb. 9 at 1:47 p.m., making it the fourth over magnitude 4.0 to strike Southern California in a little more than a month.

Senior Kayla Devlin-Brown didn't recall feeling the Jan. 5 one, nor any of the other three, but remembers the reactions to the quake at her work at Knott's Berry Farm.

"It caused quite the commotion," Devlin-Brown said. "I didn't feel it, but the guests and my co-workers did; they were really shocked when it happened and wouldn't stop talking about it for the whole day, constantly [asking], 'Did you feel the earthquake earlier today?'"

The senior said she finds herself worrying about a potential larger earthquake since smaller, possible "precursors" have occurred.

"I don't necessarily worry about there being a bigger earthquake all the time,

but it definitely is in the back of my mind whenever a little earthquake pops up," she said.

While Devlin-Brown and visitors at the amusement park began their first weekend of the year with an earthquake, others concluded 2023 with a similar shake when a 3.3 magnitude one hit Fullerton on Dec. 4.

According to an online poll on the *Accolade* website that started on Dec. 5, of the 135 respondents, 33% didn't know about the earthquake, 26% checked to make sure their family members and pets at home, if any, were safe, 24% called or texted their friends to see how they were doing, 13% looked at their phone and checked social media posts and 4% ran for cover and remained there for the rest of the evening in case another, bigger quake were to follow.

"That earthquake was different because we were so close to the epicenter, so it felt a lot rougher than other [quakes] I've felt in the past," said junior Jessica Luna, who was in the 13% category.

“I think living concerned or in fear will only lead someone to be overly concerned [with] something that they cannot control.”

- science teacher Andrew Gartner

Advanced Placement Environmental Science teacher Andrew Gartner, who includes lessons about the formation of earthquakes in his course, only felt one of the four quakes in 2024; however, he expressed some concerns about their cause and if they are possible precursors to a bigger event.

"We live right next to a plate boundary, the San Andreas Fault, between the Pacific Plate and the North American Plate," Gartner said. "You know where the epicenter is, but you wonder what's

really causing these [four] earthquakes that are so big."

Gartner suggests that frequent earthquakes hint at the possibility of "the big one." Researchers at San Diego State University and the Scripps Institution of Oceanography said "the big one" is a massive earthquake above 7.0 magnitude along the San Andreas Fault that occurs about every 180 years. However, the most recent one occurred 300 years ago.

"There's a chance of it [happening] because we're on a plate boundary, and they're moving past each other on that transform fault boundary [when tectonic plates slide horizontally past each other]," he said. "It could be 100 years away, but we don't know for sure."

While some students seem to have thoughts about "the big one" after several shakes, others are more focused on the present.

"I don't really care about the possibility of a [larger] earthquake happening or how big it is," Fancuberta said.

Despite concerns, Gartner believes people shouldn't consume themselves with worry over its risk but still urges people to have a plan for when a larger magnitude ones hits.

"We should continue living [our] lives normally, but with some sort of emergency preparation [like] food and water," he said. "I think living concerned or in fear will only lead someone to be overly concerned [with] something that they cannot control."

In preparation for "the big one," Sunny Hills alongside many other campuses require students to participate in yearly earthquake drills.

According to the school's 2023-2024 Emergency Preparedness Information document, during an earthquake, students are advised to drop to the floor and face away from windows, cover their eyes with their arms, hold onto the table or desk legs while maintaining their position and evacuate to the basketball and tennis courts by the route designated for their classroom when directed.

School resource officer [SRO] Gene Valencia is trained in case of a large earthquake on campus and provides additional assistance to the school's set

## What you can do to protect yourself

**READY UP:** Create a plan with your family in case of the emergency

**BE PREPARED:** Have a resource kit ready at all times (e.g. food, water, first aid)

**STAY CALM:** Evacuate. If not possible, duck and cover

Compiled by Aiden Park  
Source: calacademy.org

protocols.

"[My job] begins with advising my dispatch with what I have going on at my campus; [that includes] damages, injuries, deaths and threats," said Valencia, who doesn't recall feeling any of the four quakes. "I request the resources I need and begin triaging students and staff; if there is a threat or major police-related issue, I handle that immediately and I will perform life-sustaining measures if necessary, [like] CPR, and direct resources where needed."

The SRO said students should organize a plan of what to do during an earthquake outside of school, especially since they are so prevalent in Southern California, averaging 15-20 instances over a 4.0 magnitude every year, according to the USGS website.

"Living in California should come with the expectation that an earthquake is due at any time," Valencia said. "I do not worry too much about [quakes], but everyone should at least have a plan."

Some students even began thinking about safety in a different way because of these four temblors.

"After all the recent earthquakes, I sort of started thinking about where to go and what to do during one," Luna said. "Especially in case of a larger earthquake, I want my family and I to be safe."

**O**ne device with a pull switch is blue; another, light green.

Produced by Illinois-based BluePoint Alert Solutions, each equals the size of a 6-inch-by-7-inch red one usually seen in public places like schools and city halls to alert officials about a fire.

The difference with these is that the blue one, known as the Police Alert solution, is for anyone to activate to alert police about a life-threatening emergency, while the green one, called the Medical Alert solution, is for anyone to contact medical first responders in a health-related emergency, according to the BluePoint website, bluepointalert.com.

Fullerton Joint Union High School District [FJUHSD] director of safety and risk management Christopher Davis told trustees in a Sept. 9 meeting that the addition of each alarm should've been installed on all campuses — including Sunny Hills — in January.

But two months later in March, they are nowhere to be seen.

“School and FJUHSD officials are installing this system in either the hallway near the current fire alarm in Room 4 or the hallway outside of assistant principal Heather Bradley’s office in Room 6,” said principal Craig Weinreich, adding that district officials recently came to campus to consider where to install the gadgets. “No specific time frame has been set for when the device will be installed [during this school year].”

The BluePoint emergency system, patented in 2016, is used in schools, corporations, places of worship and more throughout 19 states, according to the BluePoint website.

It’s one of the many unprecedented changes that the FJUHSD has implemented for its campuses this school year in response to superintendent Steve McLaughlin’s focus on school safety.

Along with this alert system, other major updates include staff being required to wear district ID badges while walking around campus and new signage getting posted in the office wing from rooms 1-7. District officials have also recommended updating emergency supplies to be stored in a new container and adding a new protocol during disaster drills to ensure safety for all.

#### WHY THESE CHANGES?

The state requirement that all public schools must create and make available to the public its protocols for dealing with such possible dangers as fires, earthquakes or intruders — also known as the comprehensive school safety plan — was presented in Senate Bill [SB] 187, which was approved by then-Gov. Pete Wilson and signed into law in 1997.

Though recent laws adding to the plan were signed by Gov. Gavin Newsom in 2023, assistant principal and head of the SH safety committee Heather Bradley said the new changes are not related to the legislation. In fact, the FJUHSD has been going above the scope of these laws.

“We have had most of these practices in place for years,” Bradley wrote in an email interview with The Accolade.

The updated mandates, which took effect on Jan. 1, require changes to already existing school safety plans:

- SB 10, a response to the fentanyl crisis in schools, requires plans to include a protocol for responding to a student’s opioid overdose.
- SB 323 requires that comprehensive school safety plans address accommodations related to relevant federal disability

laws and requires that the annual evaluation of those plans ensures appropriate adaptations to school safety practices are in place for students with disabilities.

- SB 671 requires schools’ safety plans to include procedures to assess and respond to reports of any dangerous, violent or unlawful activity conducted at the school or at an activity sponsored by the school.

A condensed version of the SH safety plan is in the Student Handbook, but Bradley said the public can contact her at hbradley@fjuhsd.org for the whole thing, which is also a state Education Code requirement for it to be available for viewing.

#### SIGNAGE AND STAFF BADGES

One of the changes to the SH campus is more informational labels, which can be found in the offices and near the entrance of the school.

A large sign drilled near the entrance of the school states, “Visitors are required to check in with our administration upon entering campus.” Students can also spot similar signs reading, “Authorized personnel only beyond this point” in rooms 4, 6 and 7.

Along with these additions, SH staff members are required to wear a “sign” identifying themselves as faculty, as wearing district ID badges is now mandatory.

The badges that teachers and staff started wearing are similar to what employees wear in a corporate office like Google or neighboring Raytheon.

“I think the campus signs are helpful to staff and students,” said English teacher Christina Zubko, who’s on the SH safety committee. “Students should never go behind the partition as there is confidential information about other students that might be displayed on a desktop; also, these signs protect staff from visitors going behind the partition.”

#### THE CONTRACT WITH ICS4SCHOOLS

In the Sept. 9 Fullerton Joint Union High School District [FJUHSD] board meeting, assistant superintendent of business services Ruben Hernandez and Davis introduced the five safety focus areas of the FJUHSD: safety plans, partners, resources, safety drills and communication.

Going along with the “safety plans” pillar, Davis said the district has contracted for an unspecified amount of money with ICS4Schools, based in California, after it shifted to the Incident Command System [ICS] model, one that is used by first responders, and introduced ICS safety plans to staff during a training at the beginning of the 2023-2024 school year. This shift is important because this model allows for effective communication with firefighters and police.

ICS4Schools offers a unique safety system to schools to help prepare sites with an effective and organized emergency response protocol and serves with a mission to keep schools safe.

The company’s services include initial hazard assessment, identifying possible breach areas of concern and providing emergency supply kits and backpacks for classrooms.

An email was sent to Davis for an additional interview about changes at Sunny Hills, but he only advised to watch his presentation at the September district board meeting, which is available for viewing on YouTube.

#### STUDENTS GATHER WITH GRADE DURING DRILLS

Bradley said the biggest change in terms of drills across all dis-

trict campuses is the new method of student division in the emergency evacuation area, a change that resulted from the district’s contract with ICS4Schools.

First implemented during the Feb. 15 fire drill, students were divided into grade levels after meeting with their second period teachers like they have done in the past at the evacuation area — the outdoor basketball or tennis courts.

In the case of an actual emergency, each grade area will have a lead teacher with a walkie-talkie to communicate with administrators at the pick-up point, up Lancer Way, where parents will wait to reunite with students inside the baseball field, Bradley said.

To fulfill her role as the head of the safety committee for the second year, Bradley said she’s in charge of scheduling and looking over security procedures on campus and making any necessary changes.

Following each drill, a safety committee meeting is held, in which campus supervisors, teachers, Davis, Fullerton Police school resource officer Gene Valencia, teachers and members of the Parent Teacher Student Association attend, she said. At these meetings that usually have 8-10 people in attendance, the administrator works to obtain feedback on the drills.

“We’ve always had emergency evacuation procedures in place — our teachers and students do a great job of implementing all of these procedures when we do the practices,” Bradley said. “But there’s always room for improvement, so we’re open to trying these new suggestions and seeing how things go and then making any changes necessary based on what we see.”

Although she agreed with the assistant principal about how the drill was conducted, math teacher Amanda Shaw said one issue she noticed was the cluster of students trying to get in or out of the tennis courts to their grade level groups.

“When the juniors and the seniors exit the tennis courts, and then the freshmen and the sophomores have to enter, there’s a lot of bottlenecking at the gates, and I don’t think that’s really a good thing,” said Shaw, who is part of the first-aid team.

#### NEW AND IMPROVED EMERGENCY SUPPLIES

Bradley said locked bins, which can only be accessed by administration and custodians in an emergency, filled with safety and emergency supplies such as food and water are now located outside the weight room.

The supplies were in place before the contract with ICS4Schools, but they have been updated with search and rescue materials and

enough food and water to last students a couple of days, the assistant principal said.

Bradley said the changes are leading Sunny Hills in a positive direction when it comes to safety.

“I think the areas that ICS4Schools is changing are areas that we don’t always get to practice, like the parent pick-up after an emergency occurs,” she said. “So we’re trusting that this company, who does have prior experience with these things, is giving us good feedback that will help us in the future.”

**ATTENTION:** After students gathered with their second period teachers, assistant principal Heather Bradley picks up the megaphone to alert people to separate into their grade levels.



FJUHSD contracts with new company, modifies safety regulations

STORY BY  
NICOLE PARK  
PHOTO BY  
JAIMIE CHUN

# SHAPING STANDARDS

# Can a Pikachu sticker violate safety codes?

The Accolade takes you behind the scenes of fire inspections on campus

STORY BY KEVIN LEE

When Jose Alarcon visits Sunny Hills classrooms and offices, he usually comes in dress shoes, jeans and a T-shirt.

Accompanied by head custodian Andres Alvarado, the nearly six-foot-tall official may get the attention of a few students who tend to wander their eyes away from the teacher in front of the classroom or their work on their desks.

But, teachers are unlikely to introduce Alarcon to their students, who will remain oblivious to the reason for his visit — to ensure an environment free from any potential risk of fire lighting.

“I think I have seen him before, but I never really thought about what he did,” said sophomore Abigail Compton, who saw Alarcon in her zero period English Honors class. “It’s pretty cool that he goes around the school to make sure that nothing burns down.”

Alarcon’s official title is fire prevention specialist, one of three safety professionals in the Fullerton Fire Department [FFD].

One of his responsibilities is to fulfill California Safety Code 13146.3, which requires “a city or county fire department or district providing fire protection services to inspect every building used as a public or private school within its jurisdiction.”

The inspections are scheduled usually a week in advance between Alarcon and assistant principal of instructions and operations Sarah Murrietta.

Starting every fall semester, the FFD coordinates with the Fullerton Joint Union High School District [FJUHSD] maintenance and operations division to examine the educational institutions for any possible fire code violations every month.

## ALL IN A DAY’S WORK (VISIT)

But what does Alarcon look for during his inspections?

The fire official said it’s his job to check for working “EXIT” signs, fire extinguishers, fire alarms, etc. Once the inspector leaves, he said he sends an email to either Murrietta or the head custodian to notify them of any concerns from his visit.

If he spotted infractions, the email will include a list of violations that must be addressed within a month until his next scheduled appearance, Alarcon said.

## EVEN A PIKACHU STICKER COULD BE DANGEROUS

The funniest concern Alarcon has jotted down was when he saw a Pikachu sticker in a precarious spot in one of the SH class-

rooms.

“The Pikachu sticker was placed on the fire alarm strobe light and on the alarm,” said Alarcon, who couldn’t recall how long ago this occurred. “It was pretty funny because when the fire alarm went off, the Pikachu sticker would shine.”

A similar infraction occurred during a Jan. 24 fire inspection on campus, he said. The fire department official noticed blue tape covering a part of the red fire alarm in math teacher Mariam Tan’s classroom.

“This is definitely an issue that should not occur, as muffling the alarm may cause it to be drowned out by other items, such as a student with earphones listening to music,” said Alarcon, who reported no other major concerns after that visit. “Every second counts in emergencies, and delaying notification may delay evacuation.”

Tan said she acknowledged her infraction and immediately removed the tape upon getting a Jan. 29 FJUHSD email about it.

“Generally what I do is I put blue tape over just the alarm part of the red box so that instead of being ear-piercingly loud [when the alarm goes off], it is just super-duper loud,” said Tan, who shared her faux pas with her zero period Pre-Calculus Honors class. “I do feel remorse, and I should have been called out for it, but I was sad because it was really loud.”

## SURPRISE! YOU GET TWO FIRE EXTINGUISHERS

Besides spotting concerns regarding fire hazards in the classroom, Alarcon said he has to check if the campus meets updated fire codes, especially involving safety equipment like fire extinguishers.

At the start of the school year in August, for example, district officials installed an extra extinguisher in Room 138 and the cafeteria, adding the total number to two in each location.

“I think that it’s great that they have more extinguishers because in case of emergencies where someone might not be able to access one, it gives them a chance to use the other,” said senior Isaiah Zermeno, who usually gets his lunch from the cafeteria. “It’s never bad to have a backup plan.”

So the next time Alarcon comes to Sunny Hills, students can be assured that someone is working in the background to prevent any fires from starting or spreading.

“I rarely, if ever, find any big problems during my inspections,” Alarcon said. “But, even if it’s very likely nothing will happen, I believe that for the safety of students, I should go through each classroom to prevent fires from igniting.”

**“Every second counts in emergencies and delaying notification may delay evacuation.”**

— Fullerton fire inspector Jose Alarcon



IMAGE USED WITH PERMISSION FROM FULLERTON FIRE DEPARTMENT  
**FIGHTING FLAMES:** An unknown firefighter removes vertical ventilation on a structure to clear smoke and superheated gasses to help occupants escape the blaze and allow other first responders to enter the structure to extinguish the conflagration.

# the STUDENT VOICE

Senior steps into new role on the school board mid-year

STORY BY JULIE JUNG



**CAMPUS NEWS:** Student board representative senior Kathleen Sweeney shares updates about each campus at the Feb. 6 Fullerton Joint Union High School District board meeting.

SOURCE: Screenshot from Feb. 6 FJUHSD board meeting

**W**hen senior Kathleen Sweeney was first sworn in to become the new student representative on the Fullerton Joint Union High School District [FJUHSD] board of trustees Dec. 12, she had just finished her away soccer game against Sonora High School.

Then the next month on Jan. 9, Sweeney had returned from another away game against La Habra before taking her seat for her second board meeting at the district office.

That explains why the two-sport athlete wore a varsity letterman's jacket featuring Sunny Hills school colors of black and gold with CIF and Freeway League badges on the back and a volleyball and soccer ball on the left sleeve.

"I didn't have enough time to change," Sweeney said.

By the Feb. 6 meeting with no previous game to compete in, her attire was in stark contrast to what she had worn before as she showed up dressed in a white collared shirt underneath a black suit jacket.

"My sports seasons are over, so I don't anticipate showing up in that jacket again," Sweeney said. "I have my business attire already picked out for the next four months until my term ends."

Those are among the sudden adjustments Sweeney has had to make since taking over the role mid-school year as the FJUHSD's student board member. Before that, the senior served as the district's vice chairwoman of the Student Advisory Council [SAC].

Ironically, her new title was something Sweeney had applied for near the end of the previous school year in April. That position ended up going to then-junior Esmeralda Lozano of Sonora.

But that became open again – district officials have declined to explain what happened because of student confidentiality — in November as no one sat in the student board member's seat during the Nov. 14 meeting.

"I thought this was a really cool opportunity for me to put myself out there and work with so many different people within the district on how to improve the schools and make a difference within each students' life," Sweeney said, recalling why she submitted her student board member application last year.

According to the 2023-2024 FJUHSD student board member application information, the responsibilities of a student board member are the following:

- to present to the trustees at each

**"I THINK STUDENTS AND ADULTS ARE DRAWN TO HER OUTGOINGNESS AND CONTAGIOUS POSITIVITY."**

**girls volleyball head coach Amanda Donaldson**

meeting a report comprising highlights of events from all of the district's campuses

- to cast a preferential vote for all items on the board agenda, which involves providing student input as a formal opinion but does not count toward the final vote
- to preside as chairperson of the SAC

As the new SAC chairwoman, Sweeney has to organize monthly meetings to discuss school-related ideas and issues with members of the SAC – the ASB presidents and two additional members of each school in the district. (Sonora High School student senior Grace Nevis has since replaced Sweeney as the SAC vice chairwoman.)

## ORIGINS OF LEADERSHIP

Besides her involvement in girls soccer as the team's captain and the goalie and girls volleyball middle blocker, it's clear Sweeney is not one to shy away from leadership roles.

On campus, she serves as the Associated Student Body assemblies commissioner, who's responsible for writing the script and planning the theme and activities of each event – usually held during double second periods on a Friday.

"It's not really something that just sparked freshman year or anything... I was in leadership at my elementary school," Sweeney said. "I was in leadership at my junior high, and then I was in leadership at Sunny."

Principal Craig Weinreich, who has sat next to the senior at her previous three board meetings, said she has adjusted well to her new responsibilities.

"Whether it was student board reports [that she gives], she fits in great," Weinreich said. "I think she has the kind of personality and ability to interact well within

the board with our other board members and other district employees."

Girls soccer head coach AJ Arenas supported Sweeney's decision to add another off-campus task to her loaded schedule.

"Katie did mention to me that she was a student representative [on the school board], and I was excited for her because any chance you have to lead, represent the school or serve the better good, you have to seize the moment," the head coach said. "I strongly believe there is a reason for everything, and this was meant for Katie."

Girls volleyball head coach Amanda Donaldson was at Sweeney's induction ceremony last December since that was also the same night the girls volleyball team was recognized for its accomplishments during the season, reaching for the first time in the program's history the semifinal round of CIF playoffs.

"I think students and adults are drawn to her outgoingness and contagious positivity,"

Donaldson said. "She's a kid you just don't ever see sad. There are people who struggle in a room full of strangers, and then there are people like Katie who thrive."

## ADDRESSING SAFETY

Sweeney takes over as a student board member at a time when the district is undergoing new approaches to its safety plan on all of its campuses.

She said the district remains proficient at enforcing students, teachers and staffs' well-being at all levels.

"Generally, I feel that we are safe, and the district and the administra-

tion has done a good job at that," she said. "But we all need to be vigilant and aware of our surroundings and just cautious because anything can happen."

At Sunny Hills, Sweeney said she hopes to address with school officials how difficult it is for student motorists to exit campus parking lots year-round.

"I just hate that parents basically camp out for their students after school and wait in lines in the actual parking lot instead of the pickup lines," she said. "It makes it a lot more difficult for students to get out because they block our blind spots and even just block us from getting out."

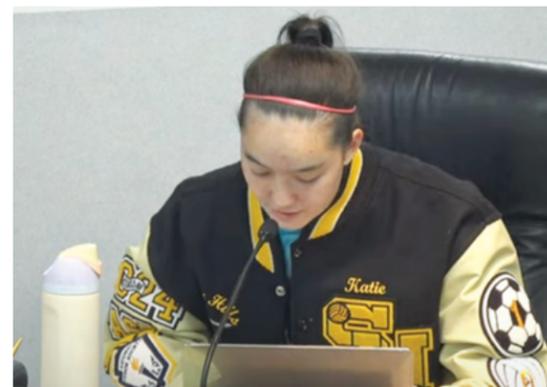
## MORE ROLES TO COME?

Interacting with students from other schools in-person at SAC meetings and through consistent messaging, Sweeney said her favorite part of the typically two-hour long board meetings is listening to representatives speak about school activities.

"I don't know why I'm interested in what the other schools are up to, but I am, and I think that's what makes it more interesting for me, and I like seeing when all the kids from different schools come and get awards," she said.

The student board member said when her term ends after her last board meeting on May 14, she may take up the idea of serving alongside the trustees again – putting her name on the ballot to get elected by voters.

"Maybe when I get older, and I'm actually done with whatever else I want to do with my life, maybe I take it up again," Sweeney said.



**SCHOOL PRIDE:** After returning from a girls soccer game, Sweeney delivers her campus recaps at the Jan. 9 FJUHSD board meeting.

# CyberPatriot members address artificial intelligence impact on ransomware attacks

STORY BY CLAIRE LEE

# L

Last summer, rising senior Stephanie Joo decided to take an online course to earn a cyber security certificate.

Joo discovered an open curriculum provider, courseera.org, to take the class titled, “Google Cybersecurity Professional Certification.”

One of the main things she learned was about how artificial intelligence [AI] would affect the cybersecurity industry.

“I learned that AI will obviously make protecting systems a lot easier because you don’t need constant monitoring,” said Joo, vice president of the CyberPatriot club. “But if it gets into the hands of hackers, its abilities would benefit them because they would be able to hack into many systems at a faster rate.”

CyberPatriot member junior Ethan Kim said he learned how hacking that utilizes AI has become an increasing problem around the world.

“I read a report about an AI company in Korea for malware testing,” he said. “They were able to hack into some pretty secure software, and it proves that it’s become way easier after the development of it.”

Similarly, last November, the Fullerton Joint Union High School District [FJUHSD] experienced a ransomware attack, but neither Joo nor Kim can say if the breach succeeded because AI was used.

“The wifi likely went down in order to shut down connection to the district,” Joo said. “This is so the hacker may not be able to continue to get into their systems.”

Despite AI becoming the focal point of technological advancement, the vice president said though it can be useful to the field, it cannot take over human jobs in cyber security.

“Of course it can analyze data and other simple and mundane jobs,” she said. “However, I don’t think it can take over because there is a big importance in being able to reason on what would be the best choice given the situation.”

Meanwhile, the other changes the club has experienced involves the CyberPatriot practices hosted at Troy High School,

where many of the club members began to rely on attending after the inconsistent practices here.

The Troy program decided to limit the beginner and advanced classes to students on its campus, except for some SH students, who have been attending the practices for a long time.

“All FJUHSD students were able to attend Troy practices last year,” Kim said. “This year, it’s different because the classes became restricted.”

Since it was first approved as a campus group in 2019, founder Remy Garcia-Kakebeen — a freshman majoring in Mathematics at Princeton University — wanted to focus on preparing members for the national CyberPatriot competition.

“We hope to reach nationals at least once within the next four years, and maybe even win the competition,” Garcia-Kakebeen had told *The Accolade* in a story about the club’s formation.

Amid the challenges of navigating the internet with the risk of getting hacked, the CyberPatriot competitions help students learn how to increase technological defenses and prevent further disruption by cyber-terrorists.

This 2023-2024 school year, one of the teams advanced to the semifinals while competing in the platinum division, the highest section level in the National Youth Cyber Defense Competition.

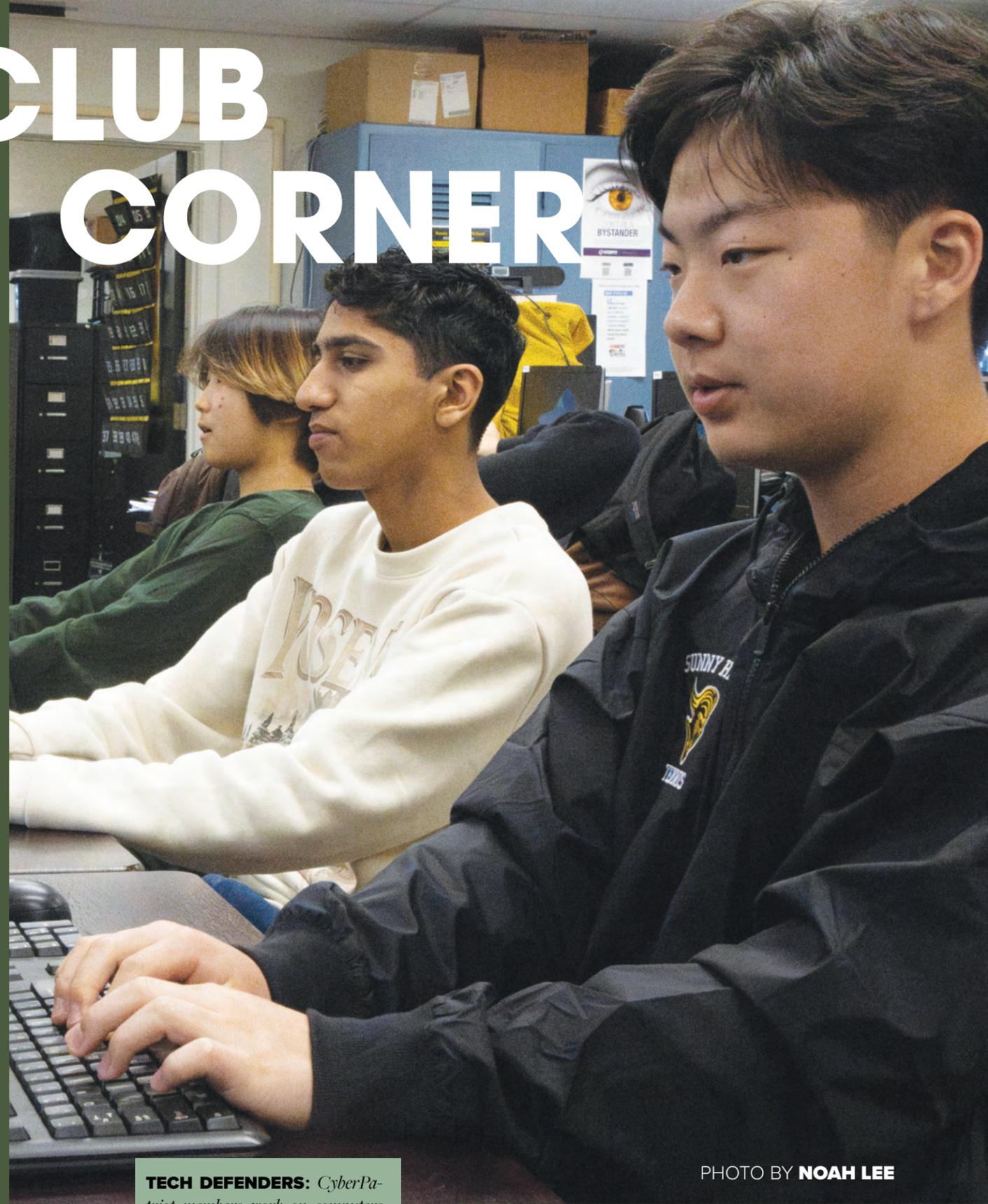
“[The club] helps you learn how to protect and mitigate systems in general,” said Joo, who plans to utilize her certificate to apply as a computer science major in college. “It’s useful because it also teaches you the process of how these hackers obstruct systems.”

“[The club] helps you learn how to protect and mitigate systems in general. It’s useful because it also teaches you the process of how these hackers obstruct systems.”

— CyberPatriot Club vice president senior Stephanie Joo

*The CyberPatriot Club meets on Thursdays during lunch in Room 42. For more information, contact club president Abhijit Sipahimalani at 800022909@fjuhsd.org.*

# CLUB CORNER



**TECH DEFENDERS:** CyberPatriot members work on computers in Room 42 on Thursday during break.

PHOTO BY NOAH LEE

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After the Dec. 4, 3.3 magnitude earthquake with the epicenter near Fullerton, *The Accolade* investigates whether a fault line runs under Sunny Hills

**WHAT LIES BENEATH**

ILLUSTRATION BY **LINDSEY UM**

STORY BY **CHRISTINE YOO**

A few minutes before the nearby Fullerton earthquake on Dec. 4, 2023, sophomore Rhea Ji was sitting at her desk, solving problems on a printed worksheet for her Chemistry Lab event at an upcoming Science Olympiad competition on Saturday, Feb. 3.

When the ground began to lightly shake, Ji said she paused, realizing what was happening, and resumed her work once the trembling stopped.

“Since I grew up in California, I never really paid attention to earthquakes unless they came out on the news,” she said. “So when that earthquake happened, I honestly just went on with my night and didn’t really think too much about it.”

Others approach these shakers with a different perspective, especially those studying such natural phenomenon.

“What goes through my mind is a mixture of concern and interest,” said Zachary Eilon, an associate professor at the University of California, Santa Barbara, who specializes in seismology, tectonophysics and inverse theory. “I first check that I and

my family are safe; then I try to ascertain whether there was any damage; then I dive into the data available and try to learn more about the earthquake for my personal and professional interest.”

The U.S. Geological Survey [USGS] records roughly 10,000 earthquakes in Southern California each year — most of them go unnoticed by residents.

However, the five Southern California earthquakes that happened in the last three months have caused some to wonder what fault lines exist in Fullerton, especially if any exist under Sunny Hills.

**A TALE OF TWO FAULTS (HERE'S THE FIRST ONE)**

On Dec. 4, 2023, at 8:09 p.m., a 3.3 magnitude, which was downgraded from a 3.5 a day later according to USGS, earthquake with a depth of 6.6 miles shook Fullerton. It occurred around 2.64 miles east from Sunny Hills in Fullerton.

The Southern California Earthquake Center [SCEC] studies earthquake processes while supporting research and education in different areas like seismology and earthquake geology. It does this through collaborations with other organizations and joint

projects with earthquake engineers.

According to an email sent by the SCEC Community Fault Model Fault Associations to SCEC’s director of communication, education and outreach Mark Benthien on Dec. 4, 2023, at 8:23 p.m. the same day, the association estimated a 43% probability that the earthquake happened on the Yorba Linda Lineament, a fault running from Placentia through Yorba Linda and up to Chino Hills.

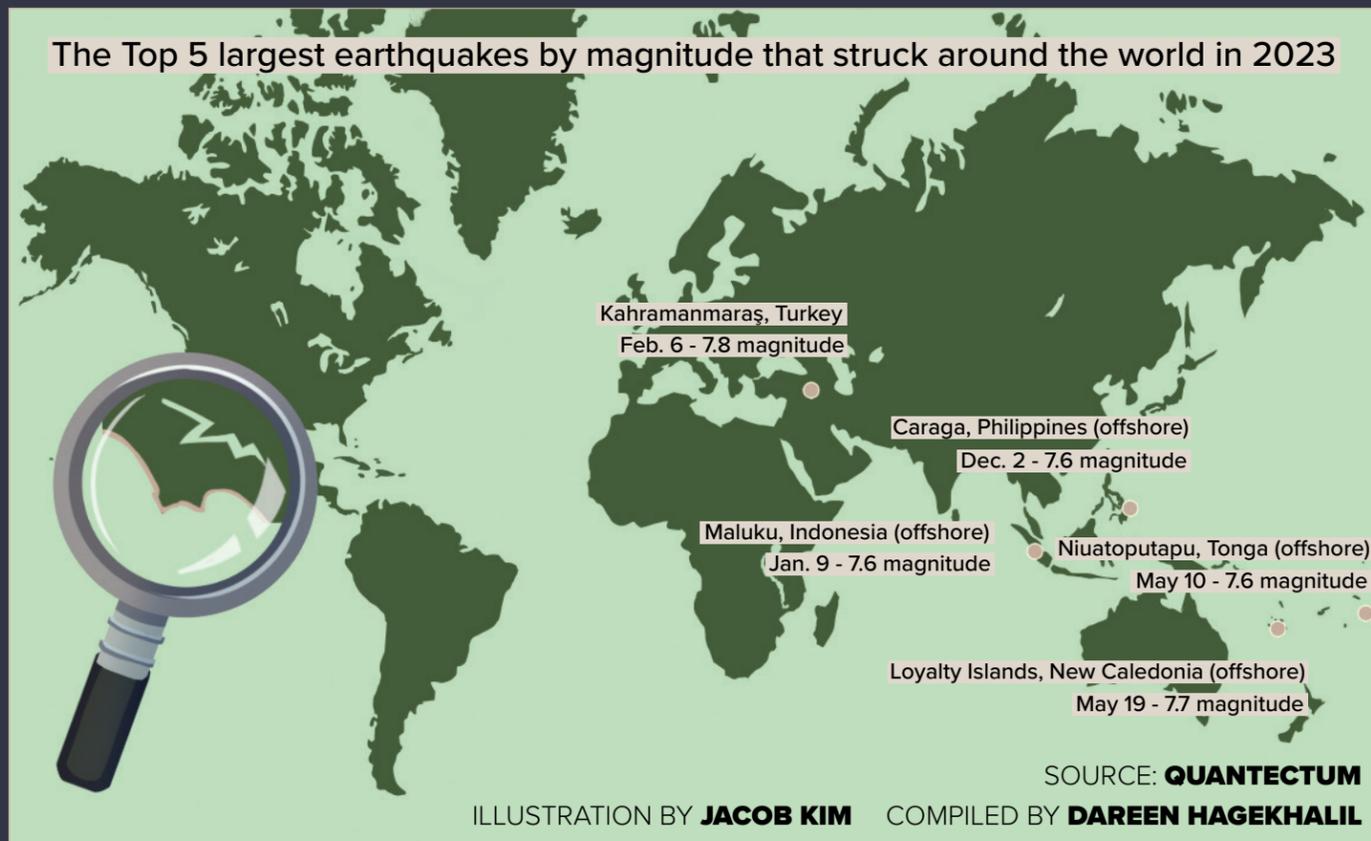
Benthien said because of the lineament’s smaller size, the risk of major earthquakes remains minor.

“The Yorba Linda Lineament is too small to have a large earthquake, and it’s not something you should be too concerned about,” he said. “What we need to be concerned about and understand is that there are many other faults that can have earthquakes of many sizes.”

Whether the ground moves because of a nearby fault or a fault miles away, it’s important to be wary of all of them — not just one, Benthien said.

“There are many faults that can have large earthquakes all over Southern California,” the director said. “There’s not some magic place where you can be that’s necessarily better than another.”

## The Top 5 largest earthquakes by magnitude that struck around the world in 2023



### HOW IT HAPPENS

Faults are locations with a particular weakness where it's easier for the crust to break. When stress accumulates on that fault, an earthquake occurs.

"At some point at the very beginning there must have been an event, some rupture, that created a fault," Eilon said. "It's kind of like if you break a toy or tennis racket and then super glue it back together and start using it again — it's more likely to break in the same place because that's the weakest bit."

With that in mind, the associate professor said earthquakes also have an element of randomness.

"Good seismologists do not do earthquake prediction," Eilon said. "There's a certain amount of inherent randomness to how earthquakes start and then propagate, and it's either extremely difficult or impossible to do a big prediction."

Instead, seismologists do probabilistic forecasting to estimate the chances of an earthquake of a certain size in a certain time-frame, he said.

"We can actually measure the time it takes for energy to travel from the earthquake to the sensors and the speed of the energy," Eilon said. "We can then work out the distance from the seismic station to wherever that earthquake was; we do this for multiple stations and then draw circles of the distances, and the one place where those circles overlap is where the earthquake happened."

### SO IS SH SITTING ON A FAULT OR NOT? (THE SECOND FAULT)

According to the USGS, the Puente Hills Blind Thrust Complex is a fault system that runs 25 miles and consists of three separate segments labeled Los Angeles, Santa Fe Springs and Coyote Hills.

Although it is difficult to determine the exact distance of the

fault to Sunny Hills, the Coyote Hills segment runs almost exactly along beneath Sunny Hills.

The system was first identified in 1999 after a 6.0 magnitude tremor 12.4 miles east of Los Angeles on Oct. 1, 1987 — the shake being dubbed as the Whittier Narrows earthquake.

Since then, seismologists have categorized the system as "blind," meaning the segments are buried under the layers of rock in the Earth's crust rather than rupturing up to the surface.

“

**This is not that big, so you don't need to be worried every day you go to school, but it's something the school should be prepared for.**

- UCSB associate professor Zachary Eilon

”

"Because the system is blind, it makes it harder for us to find or be alerted by its presence," Eilon said.

The chance of a 6.7 magnitude earthquake on the Coyote Hills segment, which could cause ample damage, is only at 1% average in the next 30 years, Eilon said.

"There are uncertainties in the chances, but it means that every year there's maybe a 30th of a percent chance of a 6.7 earthquake hitting that fault," he said. "This is not that big, so you don't need to be worried every day you go to school, but it's something the

school should be prepared for."

The chance of an earthquake occurring directly under Sunny Hills is still a possibility, the associate professor said.

"Theoretically there could be an earthquake directly beneath the school," he said. "Note that large earthquakes do not occur at a single point in space but involve rupture of some patch of the fault."

According to an April 2003 article published by Science, the Puente Hills system itself is still classified as active, and seismologists estimate four large earthquakes on the fault in the last 11,000 years, with the most recent set being between 200 and 300 years ago.

Despite the rare chance of such a large rumble in the nearby fault line, a March 2017 report by a team of scientists from USC, Harvard University and UCLA shows how the Puente Hills system fault's speed in which they slip against each other have increased.

Such a bump in the slip rate illustrates the growth in frequencies of earthquakes along this segment over time and the potential increase of safety hazards where these faults lie.

"I don't think the risks have changed enormously, and the fact remains that the Puente Hills thrust system has earthquakes relatively rarely," Eilon said. "But that doesn't mean there couldn't be one tomorrow, or it may be perfectly possible that there isn't another one for another 2,000 years, but it's important to think about the risks that come if one does happen."

According to an April 2014 Orange County Register article, an earthquake on the Puente Hills system could cause around \$250 billion in damage and take the lives of 3,000-18,000 people in the Orange and Los Angeles counties.

"I never knew we had a fault under our school," Ji said. "I'm not really too concerned for a big earthquake, but I think earthquakes in general are something I want to start being more prepared for."

ILLUSTRATION BY **LINDSEY UM**

### THE RISKS

Alongside its damaging effect as a whole, if a large earthquake were to happen on the Coyote Hills segment, the shaker would create a detrimental impact at Sunny Hills as well, such as infrastructure collapsing and fires, Eilon said.

"Historically, fires have been very significant causes of damages after earthquakes because quakes can sometimes rupture gas systems and that can lead to fires, so you want to build your buildings really well and have people prepared to react in an appropriate way," Eilon said.

Liquefaction refers to when shallow properties like soil and sediments, especially those with a lot of groundwater, are shaken and lose their strength, posing a risk.

Although Sunny Hills is not directly a liquefaction risk zone, it can be exposed to incoming liquefaction from other areas such as Anaheim and La Habra, two risk zones. This could cause damaged and fallen buildings and the ground can sink or crack, Eilon said.

"I think we should talk about earthquakes more, and people should know about it, but there's been a lot of small earthquakes where we live, so I feel like we kind of got desensitized to it," senior Vicente Cortez said.

With these reminders and subtle warnings, it's crucial for students and faculty to remember the dangers that come along with earthquakes, even while living in Southern California.

"I hope students can take the risk of earthquakes really seriously — that doesn't mean worrying about them all the time, of course," Eilon said. "We all live in California, and we're kind of bought into the risk, but it's definitely something you should have thought about and be prepared for."

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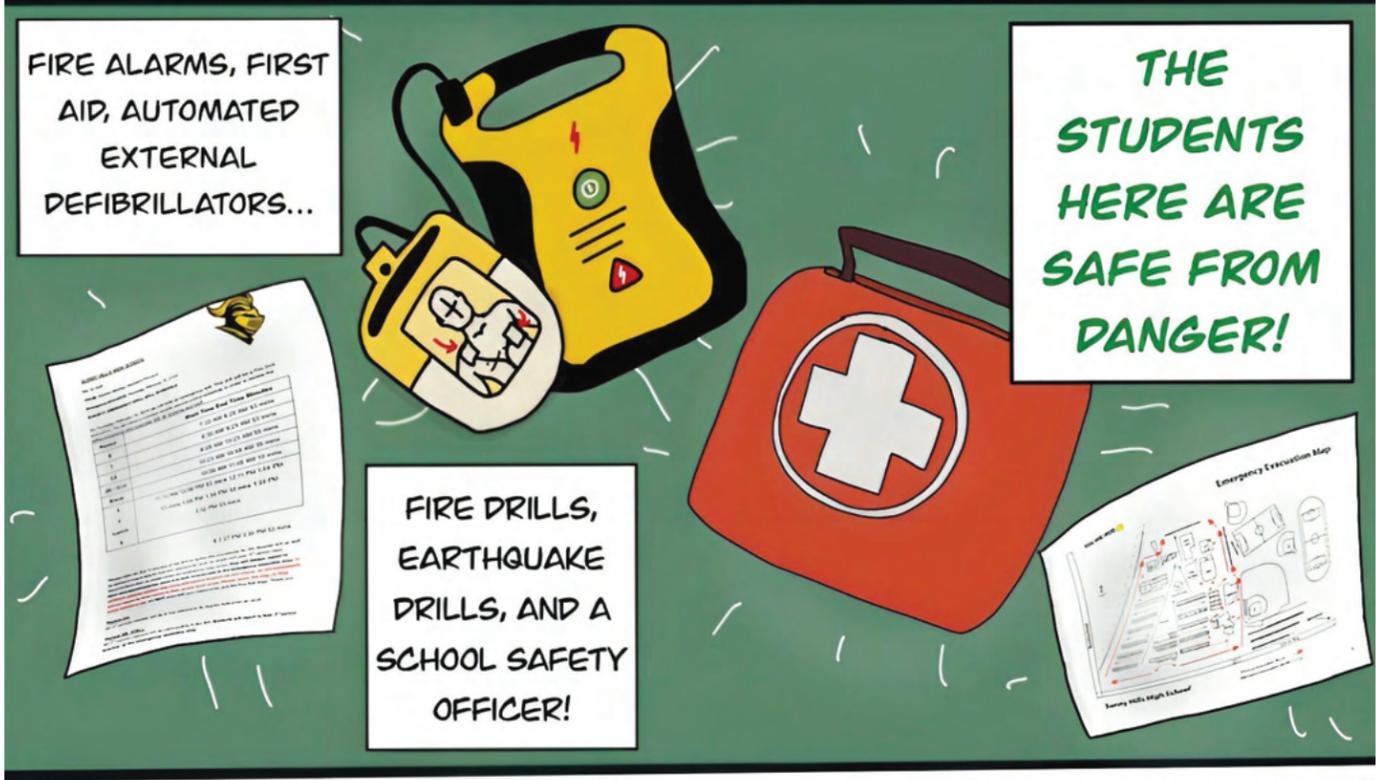
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Q&A

# TAGGED

The Accolade’s asst. business manager Aashna Dialani conducted a Q&A with student resource officer, Gene Valencia, who works for the Fullerton Police Department and oversees student safety at Sunny Hills. Valencia addresses the recent spate of graffiti found on Jan. 26 on the fencing along the entrance to the west parking lot of Sunny Hills. Repeated vandalism has also occurred on a wall outside the town homes near the field close to the back side of Target in Amerige Heights Town Center. Is a new group of taggers or gang members emerging in our community? Could increased surveillance with high-tech cameras be an effective way to deter future acts of property damage? (Answers have been edited for length and clarity.)

**What are the consequences of graffiti?**

The consequences depend on the graffiti damage. Damage above \$400 results in a felony.

**What are your thoughts about whether the Amerige Heights Homeowners Association should look into adding high-tech surveillance cameras along properties, such as common area walkways, fencing, walls that stretch the distance of a car and utility boxes?**

I think all people should have some type of surveillance footage in their homes. In today’s world, it might help with a bigger investigation. You might have a Ring camera, but when officers or detectives can’t find something on their camera and a vehicle drives through the neighborhood, we could use different Ring cameras to put it together. For instance, we might get three letters of a

license plate and then get more surveillance footage from four or five different cameras. I think that Amerige Heights is a very safe area, but I think every house should have surveillance.

**What was your reaction to spotting the graffiti on the white fence at the entrance of the west parking lot?**

I noticed it when I was on my way to school in the morning. ... I stopped to look at it because obviously, there are certain gangs in our community of Fullerton. I looked into it, and it did not appear to be gang-related, so I put in a request for it to be removed by the city. (As of March 5, the definite source of the graffiti is still unknown).

**Besides property damage in our neighborhoods, is graffiti common on school campuses?**

Yes, kids try to graffiti the bathrooms. It has been going on for years across all the schools in Fullerton that at least have some graffiti. Usually, it’s just kids tagging or writing inappropriate, immature things. I know the principal, the assistant principal and the administration asked me about [the markings] and requested for it to be removed immediately. They wanted to make sure that it wasn’t an issue or concern, and I assured them that it was not. We got it removed two days later and then we moved on.

**Did you ever think that something like this would happen?**

Yes, graffiti can be in any neighborhood, but there are times when it’s completely spontaneous, and it can be anywhere. People out of town, people in the area or someone just passing by — [reasons for vandalism] can be a host of different explanations. It has happened, and I wouldn’t be surprised if it will happen again because we can’t completely control it, but typically we don’t have that issue our community.



PHOTO BY ASAPH LI

**UNUSUAL MARKINGS:** As students leave campus, they spot graffiti markings on the gate of the west parking lot Jan. 26. Since then the writing has been removed.

“IF YOU SEE SOMETHING, THEN SAY SOMETHING.”

— student resource officer Gene Valencia

**When Amerige Heights residents and students see property damage on walls and fences as they enter and leave campus, should they fear for their safety? That something like this could happen on the fences or walls near their own homes?**

I don’t think that it’s a breach of safety at all. It’s obviously a bad thing that happened, but I’m not concerned that there is any type of gang affiliation or infiltration into the school. Based on my experience from working in the streets, there are different types of graffiti that indicate certain things. If there is tagging in another person’s territory saying certain things, then you can tell that there is going to be some type of incident that is going to follow because they are both trying to cross one another. I just think that people should always report these things because we don’t want it to become a trend. If you see something, then say something.

**Is the graffiti on the fence a sign of anger or disturbance among the student body?**

No, I can’t be certain because I don’t know everything, but I wouldn’t say this is an act of anger or anything against the student body. It seems to have been an immature kid, teenager or even adult who decided to vandalize the area, which happened to be near the school — not technically on school property but nearby.

**How can this tagging incident better prepare Sunny Hills to look out for sightings like this in the future?**

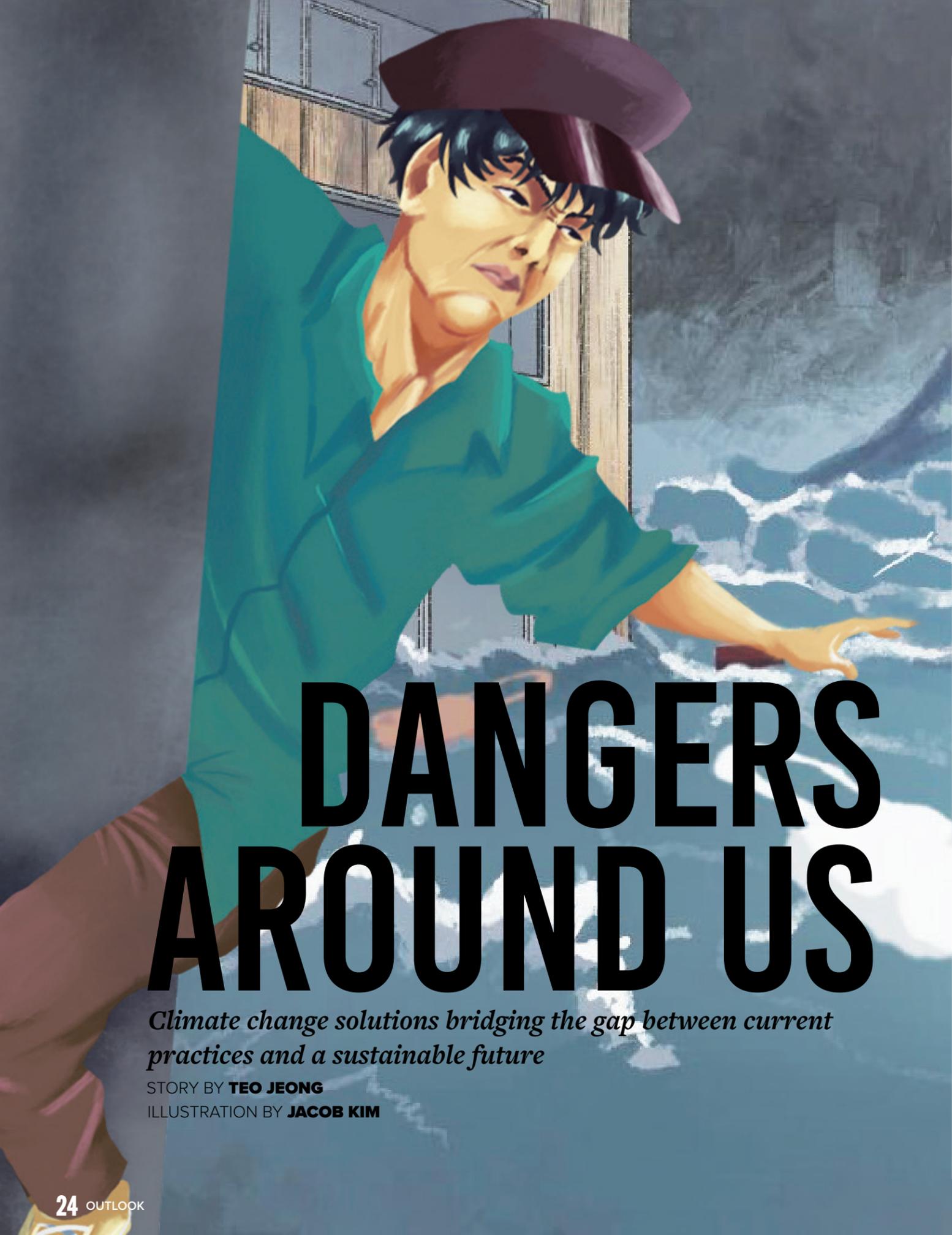
It happened on a weekend, so it’s kind of hard to prepare the student body for it. If you are on campus, just pay attention to what’s going on around you. Write things in a notebook so that if there’s a person who’s tagging this name or crew, say something so that we can figure out who it is and handle him/her appropriately, whether that is criminal charges or suspension, etc.

**What can we, as students, learn from this incident?**

Vandalism can happen to anyone or any place, so just be cautious and aware of it. Keep a lookout and do what you can to prevent it and when you do see it, report it. Graffiti does happen. It can happen anywhere: bad or dangerous areas and even safer or nicer places.



theaccolade file photo  
**ON THE LOOKOUT:** Student resource officer Gene Valencia makes an effort to engage with students and staff while on campus.



# DANGERS AROUND US

*Climate change solutions bridging the gap between current practices and a sustainable future*

STORY BY **TEO JEONG**

ILLUSTRATION BY **JACOB KIM**

**A**cross Erika Hernandez's TikTok (@whaleswee) feed are video clips featuring weekly climate news and ways on how to live greener. From slideshows that convey environmental messages to posts promoting sustainable products, Hernandez, a Class of 2023 Appalachian State University graduate who majored in environmental science, is an influencer who uses her social media platforms to foster awareness about climate change.

However, recent natural disasters, including Hurricane Hilary, that brought havoc to global communities have made her role as an environmental educator all the more important.

"I'm also doing something a bit less related, but still environmental services, so I help people if they have been affected by any flooding or mold, any fire, and I help them restore their stuff and clean," Hernandez said.

Though a Jan. 19 Los Angeles Times article proposed the theory that the storms were not related to greenhouse gases, some climate change experts said a connection between the phenomenon and atmospheric rivers exist.

In fact, with her background in environmental studies, Hernandez said she often observes a correlation between climate change and natural disasters.

"I don't want to have a climate doom narrative," she said. "These climate shocks aren't going to end — it doesn't matter where you are, but we're still going to experience the effects of climate change one way or another."

## **NATURAL DISASTERS**

Likewise, Jun Wu, an environmental health scientist at University of California, Irvine, said she's wary about the amplifying intensity of climate change. For Wu, who specializes in wildfires and their effect on public health, the increasing frequency of flames is a concern she attributes to the effects of greenhouse gases.

"[Wildfires] are related to carbon footprint and the extreme temperature resulting from it," Wu said. "The warm sea surface temperatures caused a stronger wind, and they happen more frequently in [dry] regions."

The scientist said the ongoing drought

crisis is revealing how hazardous wildfires are becoming. In addition to the apparent destruction that follows after wildfires, she said the disaster poses less obvious risks.

"The smoke from the fires can generate air pollution mixtures including fine particulate matter, which cause respiratory and cardiovascular problems and other associated effects related to air pollution," she said.

Wu said the government can help alleviate the harmful effects of post-wildfires.

"The government has to make sure it is prepared for people who have respiratory or cardiovascular problems," the scientist said. "Our study showed that in higher risk wildfire areas, people have a lower rate of access to the internet and are elderly. The government needs to take their needs into consideration by setting up alarms and messages for them."

Another notable climate-related event that impacted Southern California was heavy rain and flooding in August, prompting some to draw a connection between the storms and climate change.

"As climate change is happening, hurricanes are getting worse, and they're lasting longer," Hernandez said.

In fact, the influencer attributes the intensity of the atmospheric rivers to the factors of global warming.

"[Greenhouse gas effect] is the reason why hurricanes are becoming more violent, and they're lasting longer than they should be because of the increase in temperature," Hernandez said.

Despite Hurricane Hilary having the same effects as a tropical storm when it hit California, like excessive rainfall, it was confirmed to not have been one by federal officials on Feb. 22 according to a Los Angeles Times article.

## **MOVING FORWARD**

Associate professor of environmental science at California State University, Fullerton, David Adams believes adapting to climate change is a more achievable goal.

"I was pretty hopeful a decade ago or so that we would be able to mitigate and forestall some of the effects," Adams said. "We need to make sure we don't continue to propel the climate to change anymore."

In light of the floods and atmospheric rains, Hernandez said people should make

efforts to brace for the increased frequency of natural disasters instead of addressing the problem itself.

Adams said possible regulations involve enforcing recycling and green energy laws to lessen carbon emissions, the leading cause of climate change according to the United Nations.

"The way that the government can reduce climate change or carbon emissions is things like stricter emission standards for automobiles, yard and lawn equipment and reduced feedlots for agriculture," he said.

In addition to the government, corporations also have a vital task in helping reduce carbon emissions and other aspects of climate change.

"The way to address corporate [waste] is through public policies that encourage carbon trading, which allows corporations to buy credit to emit a certain amount of carbon dioxide," Adams said.

Hernandez further asserts that people will learn to adapt to climate change in the future. This urgency is rooted in rising temperatures from carbon emissions and increased frequency of natural disasters.

## **GOING GREEN AT SUNNY HILLS**

Efforts to be part of environmental justice extends to Sunny Hills, particularly with the Eco Club. Ranging from a recycling project to monthly park cleanups, its members aspire to chip away at the issue of climate change.

"We hope to encourage people to have better awareness and take a step forward into a better future," co-president junior Joshua Yun said.

By placing recycling bins around school, Yun said he hopes to alleviate the effects of climate change on a local level.

Inspired by English teacher and Eco Club adviser Christina Zubko's goal to preserve the native butterfly species in Southern California, Yun said the club is aiming to set up a butterfly garden behind the 100s building on campus by the end of March.

"It's a conservation of native Californian wildlife by growing milkweed in the garden, which attracts butterflies because it's a good food source," Eco Club vice president junior Sean Lee said. "We hope when students walk by, they feel an obligation to safeguard other species too."

STAFF EDITORIAL

# TELL US WHY

*The Accolade Editorial Board unanimously agrees school officials need to clearly explain to students the reasons for new safety procedures in light of recent drill.*



PHOTO BY JAIMIE CHUN

**HANGING AROUND:** Seniors wait in their grade level area on the basketball courts as part of an additional protocol school officials implemented during the Feb. 15 evacuation drill. No reason was given to students for the change.

**I**ncreased awareness of mental health illnesses, suicide rates and deaths by active school shooters have made safety a keyword on officials' agendas in recent years. Such events have sparked deeper looks into inconsistent campus safety measures and their coordination — the Fullerton Joint Union High School District has been no different.

Sunny Hills underwent a part of the change in last month's evacuation drill when students separated into grade levels to facilitate more efficient evacuations. According to an *Accolade* poll of 121 respondents administered from Jan. 23-Feb. 29, 53.7% of people like the change, while 28.1% think it's confusing; 18.2% didn't have an opinion.

Despite the mostly positive reaction to the new protocol, we want more communication from those in charge of administering this new format. Many of our teachers could not tell us why this step was added to our traditional routine of meeting our second period instructors either on the tennis or basketball courts. We could only infer that perhaps they didn't know, either.

If students do not understand how such a new procedure affects their safety, officials cannot expect them to properly obey instructions.

During these trying times, what we need most is assurance that safety on school grounds is a main concern. This can be accomplished when administrators actively converse with students to let them know how they are taking action. Perhaps during morning announcements in second period, an administrator can explain the rationale for the grade level grouping — it's still not too late — or any future updates to safety measures on campus.

Or add a personal touch and visit each second period classroom and talk to us. Even though we're already in the second semester, and teachers value their educational minutes with us, we doubt that anyone would be upset if the

How do you feel about the change in where we go for future safety drills, such as moving to an area based on our grade levels after we check in with our Period 2 teacher?

54%

I like it! I feel safer being near my friends and students in my grade.

28%

It's too confusing since I've been going to my Period 2 teacher all the time.

18%

I'm not sure what that means.

From 121 responses collected from Jan. 23-Feb. 29 on [shhsaccolade.com](http://shhsaccolade.com)

Finally, we urge those in charge of making updates to our safety procedures to consider engaging student voices in the decision-making process. Perhaps school or district officials can utilize the Associated Student Body [ASB] and ask someone from that organization to serve as a student representative in our campus' safety committee that's headed up by assistant principal Heather Bradley. Upon speaking to Bradley, she has agreed to consider finding a way to obtain student feedback on how drills go, and that's a positive first step we applaud.

Furthermore, we don't even mind someone from the district or an administrator here to come and meet with our editorial board during fourth period and share with us what new ideas they are considering when it comes to the well-being of all.

Last January, for example, the district's mental wellness coordinator organized an after school media opportunity via Zoom for student reporters to learn about and ask questions regarding the "You Matter" sticker campaign in all campus' restrooms. We respected such an outreach and would like to see more.

When the district enacts new policies, it's important for administrators to inform the rest of the community and be open to diverse opinions, especially during times when safety is an increasingly important theme on school sites. More importantly, transparency builds trust.

Having these conversations that allow for student feedback and an explanation of the reasoning behind decisions would serve as an outlet to let students know the administration cares about their welfare. Don't we matter?

The *Accolade Editorial Board* is made up of the top editors and section editors on the new 2023-2024 staff with the guidance of adviser Tommy Li. If you have a question about the board's decision or an issue for the board to discuss and write about, please send an email to [theaccoladeshhs@gmail.com](mailto:theaccoladeshhs@gmail.com).



**TO YOUR PLACES:** A color-coded map is taped onto the tennis court fence as a reference in case students did not know where to go to gather by grade level during the second half of the Feb. 15 evacuation drill.

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## Reader response to the Dec. 1 "The Sunny Spot" photo essay:

I thought the photos were a fantastic introduction to how the school is addressing mental health issues. For me personally, I find school more favorable when it reminds me of home.

As someone who also struggles with social anxiety, I found the Conversation Cubes to be perfect for me in a situation where it's hard to start a conversation. For students who may struggle with communicative disorders, the Conversation Cubes may be able to help them communicate. I believe that the creation of The Sunny Spot is a phenomenal achievement for mental health.

— Trinity Armelin, sophomore

## Reader responses to the Dec. 1 "Legal & Appropriate" impact article:

I found this story very eye-opening to the impact mental health can have on teens and schools. Usually, the mental wellness resource posters and the mental health education aren't sought out by students because we all think it is normal.

However, finding out that these little steps can improve the severity of mental health issues in California really puts it into retrospect. I feel that it is so important to be more aware of these issues at school

and acknowledge them without stigmatizing them.

Several peers may be suffering with mental health issues, but it might not be noticeable, making it crucial for us to emphasize this topic.

— Caroline Shin, freshman

I had no idea high school students have the opportunity to have a voice in the government. Knowing how much mental health has been highlighted in recent years, it's nice to know that students are advocating for others.

It's inspiring to see other students fighting for something they believe in, while making a positive impact.

— Lauren Kang, sophomore

## Reader responses to the Dec. 1 "Teen Talk" impact article:

While I was aware of Sunny Hills' decision to create wellness groups this school year, I was never fully aware of how these sessions were organized or what topics they covered. Reading this article helped me better understand and recognize the measures our school has taken to improve student wellness.

The wellness groups are a program I am quite interested in and am looking forward to learning more about. I am glad that topics regarding mental health are being discussed and that students are able to get the guidance they need.

— Ashley Kang, freshman



## Road to Recovery

Students react to stories from the December 'Recovery' issue that focused on new practices Sunny Hills is implementing to improve student mental health and underrecognized factors that impact emotional well-being.

### Reader responses to the Dec. 1 "Open since May 2023, wellness center hits the spot" Op-Ed article:

When I came across the staff editorial about the Sunny Spot, I became very interested. I was able to learn more about the new wellness center, and I shared this information with my friends. I think this article is very beneficial for students on campus who are mentally struggling. By creating this place on campus, students have the opportunity to improve their mental health.

— Jiseong Yoo, sophomore

### Reader responses to the Dec. 1 "Digital Interactions" Outlook article:

I enjoyed reading this article because of how it resonated with me on a personal level. This is because I also found mental comfort from seeing more realistic and relatable posts on social media.

I think that it's refreshing to see a narrative that doesn't focus on the negative aspects of social media but instead centers its potential to bring people together and provide support.

— Evina Lee, freshman



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EDITORIAL

Monitoring student social media promotes mental health on increasingly insecure platforms

# ONLINE WATCHTOWER

STORY BY **KAYDEN KIM**

More than a decade ago in 2013, the Glendale Unified School District [GUSD] in Los Angeles County got national media attention when it decided to implement an online surveillance system after a student's suicide to monitor pupils' content district-wide through a company called Geo Listening. It reportedly became the first public school to jump into such uncharted cyber waters.

Naysayers quickly attacked the choice to hire the firm — cybersecurity expert Robert Fitzgerald saying in a September 2013 *Christian Science Monitor* article that the schools “run the risk of policing” their students.

Although it has been more than a decade, the Fullerton Joint Union High School District [FJUHS] — Sunny Hills being among the other seven traditional high school campuses — needs to implement a form of online protection like Geo Listening for students' mental and emotional safety.

Previously, troubled teens expressed their sadness, cyberbullied peers or experienced bullying on the internet, pushing them to depression or thinking suicidal thoughts. Suicide is the second leading cause of death from ages 10-14, and the third from ages 15-19, according to research published by the National Institutes of Health. Therefore, online activity can be used to accurately track patterns of declining mental health and protect students from harming themselves or their peers.

Like with what happened in the GUSD, an SH senior committed suicide in the fall semester of the 2021-2022 school year. Peers mourned in their own ways with the Hallelujah Club notably gathering over 200 students to have a group prayer to honor the deceased. Counselors visited each of his classes, offering emotional support to his classmates.

But unlike the Glendale district, the superintendent at the time didn't hire any company to do social media surveillance. No information was given to the media as to whether the senior posted anything online that hinted at his decision to end his life, and no further action was taken in place to completely ensure student well-being beyond school grounds. Although Lancers moved onto the next semester with the support of the school counselors, the incident could have been dealt with in a more modern approach. If Sunny Hills had followed in the footsteps of the GUSD and hired companies like Geo Listening, school officials could have tracked student stress digitally, supporting students in the time of grievance.

If monitoring online activity can help students, it is worth working toward implementing effective strategies for early intervention for mental health.

However, critics from college professors to cybersecurity experts, have reasonably criticized schools for overseeing social media, mentioning several potential privacy and moral violations. Students may understandably hesitate to express their opinions online, and putting educators in charge of reporting teen affairs may cause schools legal trouble if they fail to catch warning signs.

These concerns are reasonably put, but most if not all companies in this field make sure to avoid trespassing on private information. They simply compile suspicious activity from public comments and posts from various platforms, sending the complete report to the person in charge of reading the reports in their client school, CEO and founder of Geo Listening Chris Frydrych said. The schools are then responsible for what to do with the data, allowing counselors to reach out to struggling students. By doing so, these companies not only respect

student privacy by allowing private accounts to remain hidden from the public eye, but also respect schools to deal with student issues on their own.

Other people have further argued against the effectiveness of these safety measures, claiming that the algorithms that these firms use — collecting school-related keywords from online posts with a filter — do not have the capability to skillfully analyze student posts, as they allow for inaccurate information to pass through. For an extreme example, algorithms may struggle to find questionable content for Illinois' Downers Grove High School because of the drug-related meaning tied to the word “downer” in teen lingo.

Despite some surveillance firms using algorithms, it is important to note that many others including Geo Listening use a more careful form of monitoring to prevent intruding on student privacy. In fact, Geo Listening processes digital information through school-assigned workers to facilitate content in a series of filters, narrowing down questionable content to send to the school, Frydrych said. These data assessors can accurately pick up on hidden connotations and are able to understand online comments' undertones beyond keywords.

This system of flagging social media activity also raises several dissenting opinions about student privacy. Some say schools shouldn't get students riled up by letting them know that someone will be looking for trigger words in their public posts on their many platforms — nobody likes feeling like they're actively being monitored. Troubled students with previously flagged online activity may feel uncomfortable thinking about adults scrolling through their account more than less troublesome peers.

Luckily, Geo Listening takes pride in not using a targeted analysis system. It skillfully analyzes information related to the school in a series of posts and comments, choosing not to distinguish students by distress level, the founder said. This means that students cannot be flagged in relation to previous activity. Without such discrimination, the company can assure a student-respecting method in catching questionable information for unstable teens.



“ PUTTING A PRICE ON SOMETHING THAT WILL HELP SCHOOLS PROTECT STUDENTS' WELL-BEING IS SIMPLY NOT POSSIBLE. ”

But such time-consuming services come with a hefty price. The GUSD initially signed a \$40,500 contract, renewing it annually until 2018 after a series of leadership changes. This may sound like a lot, but the price was on the lower side because it was the first district to hire such a company for social media monitoring. Considering the district's size, it would cost the FJUHS a hefty price of around \$80,000 to hire Geo Listening, Frydrych said.

Nevertheless, investing in student mental and emotional safety is justifiable, especially considering long-term benefits. Research published last July by the National Library of Medicine shows students with a more balanced mental health are more motivated to study and participate in class. This is crucial for students' overall development and success after high school, which aligns with school district goals.

At first glance, social media surveillance can look like a waste of money or an invasion of privacy, but putting a price on something that will protect students' well-being is simply not possible. By harnessing the increasing power of social media, schools can use these safety tools to look out for mental health warning signs in students. Hiring these companies may be the one way to prevent another student suicide.

**CRACKED**

