The York Oracle

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BOYS BASKETBALL TEAM CLINCHES FIRST SANTA LUCIA DIVISION TITLE IN YORK HISTORY

by Bryan Kim

Following up a breakout season last year where the York Varsity basketball team finished 6-5 and found themselves in their first playoff game in years, the team has once again worked their way to the top. Led by coach Adisa Vaughn and new up-and-coming talent, York Varsity has found themselves among the cream of the crop, rising to a 10-0 record in the league and sweeping teams by an average margin of 33.7 points a game. The team found their groove early in the regular season due to their strong preparation by playing elite teams in the preseason.

Outside of the league, they competed with ambition, having an overall team record of 13-7, and participating in tournaments like the Solis Miles Solis tournament, beating Cristo Rey, and competing against both Alisal and North Salinas High. After an invincible in-league season, York eventually fell to Kipp San Jose Collegiate in the CSS Division 5 challenge.

With key returning players Miles Fadem and Bryan Kim anchoring the defense and leading the team as veterans, along with sustained dominance from eventual league MVP Gianni Zeljo, the year already looked promising. However, with a rising wave of the new rookies Andrew Boyce, Jerry Zhao, Jude Epega, and Dedome Demagbo, the team was able to propel even further. Dedome Demagbo had an absolute earth-shattering debut, winning defensive player of the year and becoming a steady scoring option with 4 games of 18 or more points. Kai Tsuchitani also broke out in his second season, being a fireball with threes and having multiple games cashing in more than 5 threes. Jude Epega was crucial in helping York stay afloat during rotation minutes when Gianni, Miles, and Bryan would rest. With this combined effort, York School dominated the League and won their first Santa Lucia title in York Boys Basketball History.

JAZZ BAND REBRANDS

by Yehuda Cruz

Ever since the COVID pandemic, the York School Jazz Band has been lying low, without any major performances. With only three in 2022, there was a much-needed change in direction for the band. Recently, Mr. Lopez, the current Jazz and Rock Band instructor, has made drastic changes to the Jazz program, both by expanding the group and by creating opportunities to perform outside the school campus.

At the beginning of Mr. Lopez's first year, the band started strong with sixteen members, but was later reduced to eight. This was a positive change for the band, as the students now have more space for themselves in the small room and are better able to focus on their individual growth.

Compared to other classes Mr. Lopez taught, he had a better opportunity to get to know everyone and help them improve in their areas of weakness. Mr. Lopez said in an interview, "It was nice to meet

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THE 8TH GRADE EXPERIENCE

by Ryleigh Bacasan, Stephen Koo, and Lauren Mosebach

York School offers a unique opportunity for students to enroll in 8th grade, ideal for students who want a head start for high school and a bit more challenge than they might get elsewhere. In the past, York has accepted enrollment for 7th grade, stating that middle school grades in a high school setting are just part of who York is. Students who join in 8th grade rather than 9th have proven to be more comfortable when starting freshman year since they already know what to expect.

Eighth graders in this school year have said that their experience at York has been enjoyable, some even saying York is the best experience they've had. They claim York is welcoming and connected, and that the older grades are setting an example that they hadn't experienced at their previous schools. York is academically challenging and that the teachers are excellent at their jobs. Overall, 8th grade at York is a great chance to get a leg up on high school.

SENIORITIS HITS EARLY FOR SOME

by Trevor Bernardino

York students have always joked about the lack of motivation from the upperclassmen, also known as “senioritis.” Now, how do we combat this pandemic? The seniors were asked to give advice to underclassmen as they begin their York journey. “Be yourself,” “be ready for more responsibility,” “get good grades,” and “your freshman GPA really matters.” But where is their own motivation?

Student Oisin Burke ‘25 stated that he has had senioritis since junior year, while Alessia Torente ‘25 states she and her friends have had senioritis since freshman year. Now the question that bubbles up is: why are these students becoming unmotivated so early in their academic careers?

When a quarter of the senior class was asked to rate their overall experience at York on a scale of 1-10, responses ranged from 5 to 8.5, with the average closer to a 6.5. Many students emphasized the fact that they made “lifelong friends,” (Alexa ‘25), but others commented on how York was slow to “accommodate their needs” (Anderson ‘25). This feedback provides valuable information for York to consider as it enrolls future students.

With such varying feelings of readiness, how will this affect seniors transitioning into a more rigorous schedule at a 4-year college? Another interesting reflection on how bad senioritis hits is that less than 25% of the class filled out my questionnaire to formulate the data for this article. Indeed, the lack of motivation is the fault of the students, but with more targeted supports along the way, senioritis might not hit so early.

JAZZ BAND, cont.

…people from a wider selection of development." From his observations, he gained a better sense of direction for the band and how to approach possible challenges in the future.

The 2024-25 school year has already been big for the band, with performances at the Fall Fair, Grandparents Day, and during lunch on a school day. Most notably, for the first time in over five years, the jazz band performed at a popular restaurant and club, Deja Blue, where they played jazz tunes as well as a few Christmas songs. It was not only a great performance from the band but also a source of motivation to continue to even bigger performances. As Mr. Lopez stated, "We can do this; we can do bigger things than we thought we could." There have even been conversations between Mr. Lopez and the Deja Blue owner to bring the band back for another performance.

One of the many goals is to establish a space where the band feels proud of its legacy. One way he mentioned was giving the band a proper title. Currently, the band is known as the York School Jazz Band, but he feels the title is plain and simple. He believes that a more distinctive name would honor the band's history rather than just relating it to the school.

The York School Jazz Band has been hard at work improving the program, adding multiple performances. Each performance was a success and served as a motivation for the band to take on more ambitious challenges. The band continues to rehearse with focus and energy to see how their hard work contributes to the legacy they’ll leave behind.

THE SPORTS REPORT

by Jenna Alaniz (Girls Basketball), Samara Albitar (Volleyball), Rinad Jolan (Swim), Bryan Kim (Tennis), Ryan Kinney (Swim), and Diego Ortiz-Oranjo (Volleyball)

Boys Volleyball

The York boys volleyball team is in store for a fierce and exhilarating season. All of our players have been eagerly looking forward to playing competitive matches, strengthening bonds, and making their mark. With coaches Anna Russell and Nathan Maxwell, the boys are prepared to bring their best to the court. Seniors Trevor Bernardino, Jayden Isabella, Garrett Webster, and Miles Fadem will play a crucial role in leading the team with experience and good sportsmanship. Whether it's on defense or offense, York's athletes are always sure to show their dedication throughout the season. On or off the court, our players aim to uphold teamwork, kindness, and respect. As the season unfolds, be ready for thrilling matches against numerous schools, and be sure to show your York support at home games!

Girls Lacrosse

Lacrosse has always been a sport full of spirited and hard-working athletes. One team member emphasized her love for the sport: "It's one of my favorite sports!" Due to the shortage of players, the team got moved down to JV, but their spirits are still high. When asked why she loved the team, senior Kiyari Gomez said, "I love my coach and my team, the people, the culture." Though the York Lacrosse team is small, their sportsmanship never falters. After a difficult game, the team celebrated their first goal of the season, made by Lily Kragelund. With only one game left this season, the team is ready to give it their all and can't wait until next season!

Girls Basketball

The Girls Basketball team has had an enjoyable season! In his second season coaching, Chris Gastens has helped shape a team that not only focuses on improving in the sport but also on creating a sense of family among the players. With the record of 6 wins and 8 losses this season, the team has overcome challenges including low numbers on the roster and difficult games. They never fail to overcome these obstacles by staying committed, showing up to practices and games, and "fighting like true underdogs on the court." The season took a positive turn when the team had a victory against Chartwell and Catalina! What stands out most to Coach Chris is the team's dedication and willingness to learn. Each player contributes something unique to the team, from Julia's great hustle and Esther's motivation to Evera's uplifting spirit. Captains Asya and Ava are seen as "role models." They always show great leadership and enthusiasm. Off the court, the team has made unforgettable memories, including attending a Santa Cruz Warriors basketball game. There they bonded and shared a special experience together. As the season came to an end, Coach Gastens expressed how proud he is of the team's growth and achievements. He is excited for next season!

THE SPORTS REPORT, cont.

Tennis

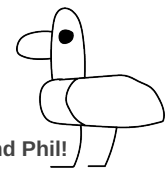
For years, York Tennis has sustained high-level competition, being promoted to the Gabilan last year and successfully hanging out with the powerhouses of Monterey County. They've played teams the likes of Stevenson, Carmel High, and PG High. York's tennis team has added talent this year, adding James Brunicardi at Singles 2, Peter Stratton at Singles 4/Doubles 1, and Jerry Zhao at Singles 4 and Doubles 1. Along with sustained excellence from Captain Bryan Kim going on to his 4th year at Singles 1, continued growth from Andre Sukyas rising the ranks, Eli Tripp's resilient competition at Singles 3, and Alvin Liu's consistent performances as senior-co captain, it is no wonder they have won two games in a row, toppling MVCs through a singles sweep and dominating Salinas High by winning all matches. With much more competition coming, the York's Boys tennis team will have to stand the test against bigger teams. However, the future looks bright with lineup depth that is looking to establish in Gabilan this year.

Track

Swim

Meet the coach, Mr. Andy Clarke:
Q: What motivates you as a swim coach?
A: An athlete's effort and successes motivates me as a coach. Each year we get a new batch of athletes and a number of returning athletes. We all put in a lot of effort to achieve our goals. The journey to conquering our goals is what motivates me to come everyday to make the athletes be the best that they can be.
Q: What is your biggest challenge when coaching?
A: There are a lot of challenges at each practice. My job as a coach is to overcome those challenges and guide the athletes to succeed. Probably the biggest challenge in every practice is to keep it fun and the athletes engaged. Most athletes are participating in a sport because it is fun. I want to make sure that all my athletes work hard and have fun.
Q: What are you and your team's biggest accomplishments?
A: My greatest accomplishment while coaching the York swim team is when my athletes reach their goals and have an enjoyable journey on the road to accomplishing their goals. Our team's greatest accomplishment is the amount of effort they all put in everyday. We have a great group of athletes this year (as we have had during my tenure as the York Swim coach) and I look forward to seeing each one of them grow as a person and a student athlete this year.
Q: How long have you been coaching for?
A: This is my third year coaching the York swim team. I also coached an age groups swim team for a couple of years and was a graduate assistant coach at Cal Poly SLO after I completed my collegiate eligibility.

The York School Swim Team is a challenging and exciting opportunity to show your aquatic capabilities independently. It provides a strong foundation for future careers or just an entertaining way to learn a new sport with new friends. There's so many people you can meet and connect with through swimming, it's refreshing, creative, and inspirational.



You found Phil!

TOP TEN DOUG KEY MOMENTS

by York Oracle Staff

10 - Giving us a friendly wave after we accidentally use his office window as a mirror
9 - Pulling up to York in his red Bronco
8 - Fangirling Abraham Lincoln
7 - Announcing Red and Black scores
6 - Wearing immaculate fits, including sunglasses
5 - Exuding peregrine falcon pride in his walk
4 - Delivering his yearly Martin Luther King speech
3 - Congratulating the girls basketball team even after their loss of 40-2
2 - Remembering every single student's name
1 - His patented shoulder pat

EDITORIAL

'MURICAN EDUCATION: IS IT REALLY AMERICAN?

by Esther Spaulding

In January 2025, President Donald Trump issued an executive order titled *"Ending Radical Indoctrination in K-12 Schooling,"* reinstating the 1776 Commission. This commission aimed to promote a "patriotic education" by emphasizing America's founding principles and achievements in the school curricula. The executive order claims that certain educational practices are imprinting "anti-American, subversive, harmful, and false ideologies" on students, violating civil rights laws and undermining parental authority.

At its core, patriotic education promotes a curriculum highlighting America's strengths, founding ideals, democratic institutions, and progress over time. Supporters believe this focus can foster unity and civic responsibility in students. However, this approach too often glosses over the more painful, complicated parts of our national story. A version of history that avoids our failures is not just incomplete, it's misleading.

The truth is, America's history is both inspiring and troubling. We are the story of Martin Luther King Jr. and the people who stood against him. We are the stories of Native Americans and of Andrew Jackson. Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Burr. Teaching only one side—only the triumphs or, contrarily, only the failures—creates a shallow sense of pride that can't withstand real scrutiny. And when students eventually uncover the parts that were left out, that pride collapses into distrust. Our country has the privilege of having a history that is able to be told from multiple perspectives, and it is crucial to take advantage of that fact and listen to all our stories.

President Trump has argued that current curricula push students to identify as victims or oppressors based solely on race or other traits they have no control over (such as skin color). But shielding students from uncomfortable truths does not make them more patriotic. It makes them less prepared. True patriotism isn't built on fairy tales, but on understanding, on critical thinking, and on an honest reckoning with who we've been and who we still want to become.

The real question isn't whether students should learn to love their country, but whether they can be trusted to love it fully, with eyes open and minds aware of our true history. The answer should be yes. History should challenge us as much as it inspires us. That's how we grow into citizens who are not only proud, but principled. Those who understand that our future depends on our willingness to face the full truth of our past. And as the saying goes, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

ON YORK AND LIFE: TWO ALUMS SHARE ADVICE

by Chloe Weil and Sage Martin

This past semester, we had the opportunity to interview two exceptional graduates, Hussein Elbakri, York School class of 2011, and Danica Tang, class of 2021.

Mr. Elbakri is working as a senior associate at Freshfields, a leading global law firm with over 280 years of practice in New York City, DC, and Silicon Valley. This former York student shared how his time at our school has shaped his career and personal development.

Currently specializing in security and shareholder litigation, our alum describes his job as "competitive storytelling." He believes that York played a key role in preparing him for his career path. "I learned how to think and write clearly in humanities classes, developed leadership and interpersonal skills through student government, and honed my public speaking abilities in speech and JSA," he explained.

Next, we asked him if York School prepared him for his university education at the Ivy League schools of Columbia and Harvard, and he responded positively, saying that "the best preparation was having supportive but critical teachers and classmates who challenged my ideas." he went on to say that although he did not go into STEM fields, his York "math and science classes gave [him] a very solid understanding of the scientific method and a familiarity with the jargon, which has been invaluable in working with tech/life sciences/finance clients."

We asked him, finally, what advice he would have given his high school self. He sent us the following list:

- Do theater; it will make you a more confident presenter.
- Do homework at home, not during lunch.
- Take the work seriously, but not yourself.
- Keep in touch with people from your class; you never know when someone will cross your path again.
- Go to every dance/game/party/event you can; you will never have this much free time again, and those are what you will remember most.

Additionally, we interviewed Danica Tang, who is making waves in the fields of artificial intelligence and venture capital as well. She currently leads AI research at Soma Capital and manages SCET Innovators in Residence program at UC Berkeley. When asked about the impact of York on her career path, she emphasized the importance of discussion-based learning in developing strong communication and critical thinking skills. "York definitely shaped the way I think," she said, noting that these skills have been essential in everything she does today, from pitching ideas to conducting research. When reflecting on her high school experience, Ms. Tang shared her love for all her classes, appreciating how each one contributed to her learning and curiosity. One of her proudest achievements at York was starting Project Light, a club focused on philanthropy and community service.

Furthermore, if she could advise her high school self, it would be to explore more and embrace new experiences. "Try different things, step outside of your comfort zone, take advantage of every opportunity, and actively look for opportunities. You would not know what you're interested in or passionate about until you try it!" This is so true, and both alumni we spoke to said to explore new experiences no matter what, so if you can have one takeaway from this article, let it be that.

HEAVENLY HOROSCOPES

by Angelic Ava

Hello, Plebeians!! It's me, the ethereal goddess of the heavens. I have finally graduated with my doctorate in astrology from the University of Nun-Ya Business. So between that and my 2 years of Chinese tutoring in elementary school, I am finally qualified to cast off the shackles of Western oppression and start reading everybody's Chinese zodiac fortunes!

Dog: 1922, 1934, 1946, 1958, 1970, 1982, 1994, 2006, 2018
Honest, loyal and responsible. Anybody who knows me knows I'm deathly afraid of dogs but imma be nice with this fortune, I swear. So in your future I see you being dull, like a vanilla ice cream person. That's all, move along!

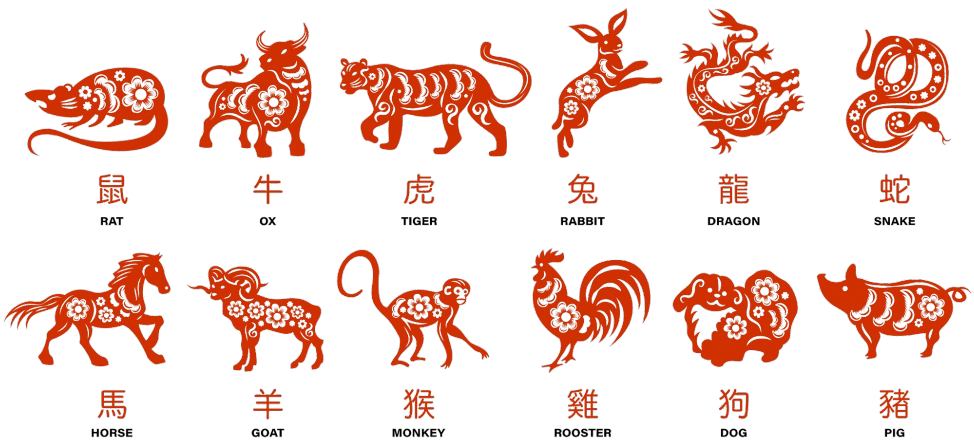
Pig: 1923, 1935, 1947, 1959, 1971, 1983, 1995, 2007, 2019, and 2031
Friendly and generous. That's literally me unless you're an eighth grader–KIDDING! (Seriously tho, why are y'all so afraid of me?) You guys are apparently great with money and I definitely need some. So if you want your actual fortune, meet me outside the Student Center with 50 bucks each.

Rat: 1924, 1936, 1948, 1960, 1972, 1984, 1996, 2008, and 2020
I must make a confession, dear readers. When I heard that this was my sign at the ripe age of 8 during the aforementioned Chinese tutoring, I almost collapsed in shock. *Moi,* a rat??? Unfathomable. But after several breakdowns, I realized that unlike what those commies in New York City claim, rats were and always will be the baddest girlies in the game. So in our future, I see us winning the lottery, getting a private island, and then spreading the plague again.

Ox: 1925, 1937, 1949, 1961, 1973, 1985, 1997, 2009, 2021, and 2033.
Honest and Patient. You guys are really good friends and I actually have no beef with this animal–*ba dum tss*! Although a medium rare steak did once try to upstage me at an Outback restaurant. Still, I was gonna let you guys have good fortune until I figured out that not only was the King of Pop killed during one of y'all's years but my man BILLY MAYS???? Yeah, so, your future is full of wet socks and misspelled tattoos. Do better.

Tiger: 1926, 1938, 1950, 1962, 1974, 1986, 1998, 2010, and 2022
Adventurous, enthusiastic, and unconventional. Oooh, how vague and mysterious! Ugh, this description sounds like the base character traits for every female protagonist in every single boring romance book. (And yes, I'm including Colleen Hoover books.) Anyway, your future will include getting lost in the Alaskan wilderness and mauled by a polar bear. Because y'all need to learn that being adventurous is NOT always a good thing.

Rabbit: 1927, 1939, 1951, 1963, 1975, 1987, 1999, 2011, and 2023
Quick, quiet, and skillful. Y'all dislike confrontation so I'm gonna stop being the nice, modest, and soft-spoken woman I am and say my true feelings. So listen up you @#!*@!! And another thing!--I'm so tired of you guys &$#@ ! ...Sorry about that redacted section, I just found out that my editors have decided that my true opinions are apparently "offensive" and "break the Geneva Convention." Whatever. Anyway, in your future I see you snapping faster than a musical theatre major hopped up on 3 Red Bulls.



If you're not Mr. Key, don't read further. I'm about to get emotional and I still want all the underclassmen to fear me, so leave. Mr. Key, your past has been full of generosity towards the community and being a beacon of York excellence. You've even helped a certain horoscope writer either very vocally or silently in the background (even when she was an annoying, self-centered freshman). I predict your future will be full of amazing success and exciting new adventures. We just all hope you don't forget about our little school on the sunny hilltop.

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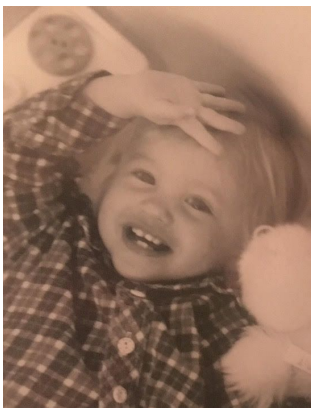
York Soccer Field Naturally Transformed into Swimming Pool After Extended Rainy Season

Outrage at York School: Birkenstocks Banned for Loud Squeaking

FACULTY BABIES

Match the teacher with their baby picture <3