

# *the* SEMINOLE

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## END *of an* ERA

Fresh out of college, Dr. Collins struggled to discover the career she wanted to pursue. Now, after six years as principal, she can confidently say that she found her passion.

# THE SEMINOLE M A G A Z I N E

## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



In many ways, this issue marks the End of an Era

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It's the end of our print newspaper, and the start of our magazine: a transition which we hope will better reflects our staff's creativity. It's our last year under the guidance of Dr. Connie Collins, who has served as Seminole's principal since 2008. It's also my final issue as editor-in-chief of *The Seminole*.

When I joined *The Seminole* four years ago, I didn't know that I was about to fall in love with writing: with finding shared meaning through storytelling. My first-ever piece was an op-ed demanding the end of our stereotypical school mascot. The Editor ended up vetoing it as 'too controversial,' but I was already hooked. Because while we live in a world filled with conflict, storytelling helps us find places where our edges meet. Our newspapers mark the point of tangency between the world we have and the one we hope to build.

As Editor-in-Chief of *The Seminole*, I've been afforded the chance to witness the formation of a passionate community: a space where people didn't arrive fully formed, but were shaped and challenged by those around them. I found the level of thought that went into every decision, and the evocative, meaningful dialogue that resulted, to be utterly fascinating. (If you're ever worried about our country's future, just step into one of our student newsrooms. I guarantee you'll feel better.)

And certainly, our job isn't easy. Our stories have angered people, gotten us interrupted and shut down. But still, this issue is full of the diverse, passionate, authentic stories that define Seminole High School. Raw, candid inspiration from Dr. Connie Collins, as interviewed by Zyva Sheikh. Long-form investigations of racialized discipline. Gleeful romps through teenage embarrassment. Thoughtful conversations about what it means to be connected and disconnected in our online world; what it takes to plan our futures. We hope you enjoy them.

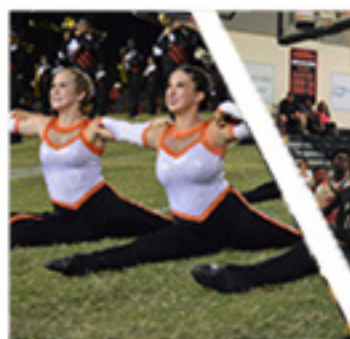
Because the truth is, we've come a really long way. When *The Seminole* was founded in 1922, we were called The Celery Fed, and our staff consisted of seven men in suits and hats. Thankfully, we've lost the sexism *and* the straw hats--today's staff consists of 25 men and women from diverse backgrounds. Even so, we've been bringing on a new scoop since our founding year. We've driven the changes from typewriters and film to Twitter and magazines. This might be the end of an era, but our work is just beginning.

You aren't ready for us.

Malavika Kannan  
Editor-in-Chief, 2018-2019



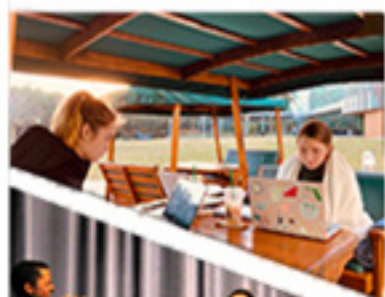
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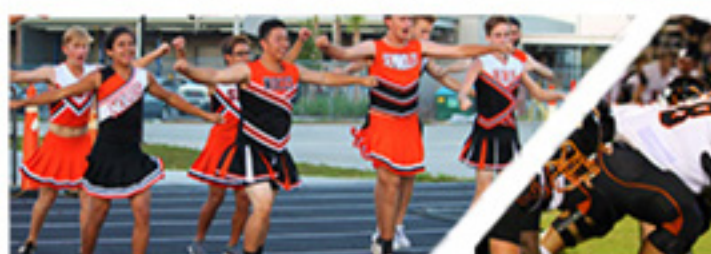
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Dr. Collins' mother, a teacher and role model.



Dr. Collins (left) with her twin sister (right) and her father.

# THE END OF AN ERA SAYING FAREWELL TO DR. COLLINS

by: Zyva Sheikh

Jr. Editor-in-Chief

Rocking back and forth in her shoes, seven-year-old Connie Woods waited in line to take a sip from the school water fountain. When it was finally her turn, she glanced above the fountain and saw her brown eyes reflecting back at her in a plaque that read: COLORED. For Connie, nothing seemed off about this sign—if anything, the absence of it would have seemed odd.

**“That’s just the way things were,” recalled Connie Collins,** now SHS principal, counting down the days until her retirement.

There were many things Dr. Collins didn’t know as a child: where babies came from, what her future held, and what schools would look like without segregation. But what she did know from an early age was the importance of attaining the best education possible—a responsibility her mother took on by sending her to the best schools. By the time Dr. Collins was in the sixth grade, schools had become integrated, and she spent much of her childhood bouncing from school to school—private to public, segregated to integrated. After experiencing racist violence and “pushback” at her integrated school, Dr. Collins returned to an all-black

private school.

“[The segregated schools] had older books; you’ve heard those stories,” she said. “But, you know, I still read books. I still have my ninth grade English book. And in fact, in the back of it, they had the cost of the book. It was \$4.”

This emphasis on education was part of Dr. Collins’ heritage: her parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and twin sisters were all educators.

“That whole idea of seeking after the best possible education because it was going to impact my future was something that I was just raised with, and I’m sure it is what likely led to my ultimate decision to come into education,” explained Dr. Collins.

However, this abundance of teachers in her family initially drove Dr. Collins away from pursuing a career in education.

“I thought, ‘My gosh, everybody I know is a teacher, surely we can do something else,’” she mused.

After graduating from college at the age of 20, Dr. Collins struggled to discover the career she wanted to pursue. She was interested in psychology, but chose to



major in sociology. Then, after she graduated, she completely changed paths and went into banking; that was the best job she could find because of the recession. She moved up the ranks and became a bank officer and assistant manager. While Dr. Collins enjoyed this job, she felt like “something was missing” and went back to the drawing board.

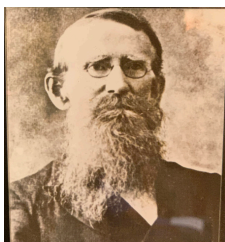
“I realized that I had been reared on an education calendar. There was a certain way that things happened.

Being out two weeks for Christmas or for [one week for] spring break just seemed like it was normal life, so [not having that] kind of felt odd to me,” said Dr. Collins, explaining one aspect that made her step back and reconsider a career in education.

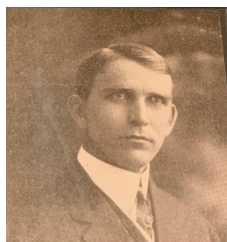
However, there was more to her decision to switch careers than a better schedule. Once she had her daughter, Dr. Collins wanted to be more involved

# PRINCIPALS PAST

## 1903 - 2019



W.B. Lynch  
1903-1905



N.J. Perkins  
1906-1915



Hazel Stevenson  
1916-1917



Anges Edwards  
1918-1919



C.S. Ogilvie  
1920-1921



G.E. McKay  
1922-1943



H.E. Morris  
1944-1956



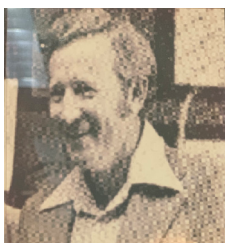
Andrew Bracken  
1957-1969



Richard Barnett  
1970-1971



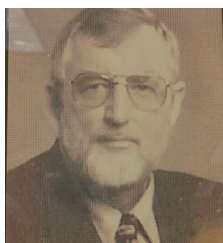
Jack Redding  
1972-1973



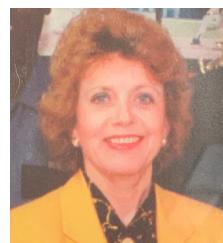
Don Reynolds  
1974-1981



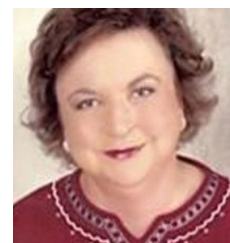
Bud Layer  
1981



Wayne Epps  
1982-1990



Gretchen Schapker  
1991-1999



Karen Coleman  
2000-2004



Walt Griffen  
2004-2007



Mike Gaudreau  
2007



Connie Collins  
2008-2019

in the educational system that would eventually play a large role in shaping her child's life. So she did just that; she took Education courses and began teaching once her daughter entered first grade.

Similar to her childhood Dr. Collins moved from school to school. She taught the middle and high school level for 10 years in Orange County, which is where she realized that she wanted to have more of a voice regarding curriculum and instruction. After getting a Masters degree in Education, Dr. Collins became the principal at Crooms Academy for 13 years.

Now, after six years as principal of SHS, Dr. Collins has spearheaded many projects that she can look back on with pride. Here's a quick—and extremely

that any disadvantage associated with her race didn't dictate who she was and owes that to her community and the role models she grew up around. She recognized her blessings and "didn't grow up with an idea of what [she didn't] have because [she] had so many things that people regardless of their color didn't have."

Although Dr. Collins grew up in an era of segregation and extreme racism, there were certain issues she never had to worry about—one of those being school shootings. While she was in school during the time of the Cold War, her Code Red drill consisted of hiding under desks and sliding curtains over windows to hide from the Russians. Thankfully, this never actually happened, but it was their greatest fear at the time.



shortened—rundown: she instituted a full slate of computer science and mass media courses, established an aviation program, successfully introduced the Ninth Grade Center and PSI High, and experienced hitting the 90 percent graduation rate two years ago for the first time in SHS history.

Dr. Collins has catalyzed many 'firsts' over the last six years, but she herself is the first black female principal at SHS. Dr. Collins hopes that by being principal, she sparked confidence in those who were hesitant in imagining themselves in an unprecedented role. Although this is a great achievement, these two aspects do not define her; she doesn't allow it.

**"I don't see myself as a black principal or a female principal. I see myself as a principal first and foremost. Being black and being female is a part of who I am. I am American. I am short. But that's not the totality of who I am. It's a part of me, but it's not all of me."**

Ever since her childhood, Dr. Collins has ensured



Dr. Collins explains her opinion regarding the all-too-familiar fear many students have in the 21st century. "[This fear] will plague all of us until we, as a society, are more respectful of each other and attend to people with mental health issues. We have to be our brother's keeper."

All of these experiences and moments have led her to her final months at SHS. Here's what Dr. Collins does know now: how to maintain balance during overwhelming situations, to tackle issues one step at a time, and that growth is a lifelong process. While she is looking forward to no longer waking up at the crack of dawn, she will still miss Seminole's quirks. The band playing the gigolo on Friday nights. The mesmerizing talent of the Dazzlers. The diverse "quilt of personalities" on campus—what Dr. Collins claims gives our school "flavor."

Times change, people come and go, but there's one thing that remains constant:

*Once a Seminole, always a Seminole.*



### QUESTION #1

As a junior I never really thought that "senioritis" would affect me, but now I'm freaking out! The thought of going into the real world in a year is horrifying! How can I make this anxiety go away?

### ANSWER #1

Well... I'm not going to lie, your fear of senioritis is not going to disappear. In fact, the closer you get to graduation, the more anxious you'll become. But don't feel alone; a lot of people have the same fear as you. My advice would be to enjoy the rest of your high school experience and participate in all the sports, clubs, and extracurriculars you want to do. Study hard, go to football games, and spend time with your family and friends. Take one step at a time.

# LET'S GET REAL

By: Leyton Dudley

### ANSWER #2

Every AP class is different. I would consult with your teachers in choosing a review book or another preparation tool for the exam. After all, their job is to help you pass. Listen to their advice, stay after school a few days a week for review, and invest in quality review books. Personally, some of the review brands I recommend for AP exams include *Barron's*, *The Princeton Review*, and *5 Steps to a 5*. All of their review books are relatively affordable and cover the exam content well. They even provide sample questions from previous exams to strengthen your test-taking ability before the exam. Put in the work and you'll do great!



### QUESTION #2

AP exams are coming up and I have to take four different exams, all within two weeks. What do you recommend to use for review and prep for the exam?

### QUESTION #3

I really want to go to an out-of-state university but my parents don't have the money to pay for it. What should I do?

### ANSWER #3

Just like you, many students are stuck between practicality and ambition. While it is a very tough position to be in, there are some ways to get around this. A variety of scholarships are available and there are also foundations nationwide that are willing to help with student's financial situations. Earning money from these scholarships can help pay for your tuition, and enough of these can even pay it in full. You can go to [CollegeBoard.com](http://CollegeBoard.com) and research more about these scholarships or talk with your counselor. You can even apply and see if your family qualifies for financial aid as well.

## P O W

## Gap

by Kruthi Munugeti  
Reporter

After thousands of gruesome days of school, graduating seniors are ready for their long-awaited break, but is two months of summer enough? Taking a year off between high school and college is beneficial for students who seek self discovery and development, or for those who need time to make life-changing decisions that could permanently affect their future.

A gap year allows for students to regain the mental balance that is necessary for a more fulfilling college experience. According to recent studies, 30 percent of students who seek medical counseling in college are suffering from depression due to an intense workload. By taking this time off, not only can students mentally recuperate, but they can also achieve personal goals, such as traveling to a dream destination or pursuing a hobby. Although there is a looming pressure from society to conform to a typical path, students who take this gap year are given an opportunity to enrich their learning experience as a whole.

“When looking into college options, I feel overwhelmed. I think for me, personally, a gap year would help me really think through my options and explore different experiences. I understand that it might not be for everyone, but I really feel like it is for me,” said sophomore **Neal Chauhan**.

Furthermore, many students need an extra year for them to successfully choose which college or major is best for them. According to a study done by Karl Heiger and Rae Nelson, 60 percent of students who took a gap year felt as though it influenced them to choose the career path they are on today.

“As a hospitality major, it definitely helps me connect what I learn in school to the real work environment and how theories don’t always workout in reality. Also, [as an employee], I feel it by heart when we learn about the importance of treating the employees well in order for a company to prosper,” said SHS alumni, **Ahyeon Cho**.

While gap years have a negative stigma surrounding them, many use this year as a necessary period to ensure their financial stability. College tuition is a heavy burden for many, and the outcome of this 365 day break is a healthier mind and better decision making skills, leaving a positive impact on one’s ongoing future.





# W O W

## Year

CONS

by Shea Brandau  
Designer and Reporter

By the time high school comes to a close, waking up at the crack of dawn and going to school is a significant part of their everyday routines. Interrupting the flow of a study-based life with a gap year can damage a student's school experience. Pausing the already established cycle of studying or working can have long lasting effects on one's college education. A study from the National Center for Education states, "Students who choose to delay are at considerable risk of not completing a postsecondary credential when compared with their peers who enroll immediately after high school graduation."

A major consequence of taking a gap year to travel or relax is falling a year behind your peers. Not only will the student be one year older than all of their new classmates, they may have friends that are not taking a gap year who would essentially leave them behind. Because of this, the student taking a break would have to restart their social life. This can add a lot of unnecessary stress to an already demanding freshman year. Making friends in college is extremely stressful, and that struggle is recognized by so many colleges and even major news outlets, including Teen Vogue, The Huffington Post, and The New York Times.

While in school, students practice good study habits and homework methods every day. Over the course of a gap year, many of those strategies can be lost or forgotten because of inactivity. According to the Options Solutions Educational Consultants, this is one of the most common and major drawbacks. It can be difficult to get back into a rigorous school schedule after such a long and unchallenging break. One of these lost strategies can include time management, which so many students struggle with even when school has been in session for months. This may reduce the desire for an advanced education. In a study done by the National Center for Education, it is stated that, "Aspirations for advanced degrees...declined with the length of time between high school graduation and postsecondary enrollment." Ultimately, educational drive has been shown to decrease over longer breaks.

A gap year can also be very expensive. The average gap year costs between \$3,888 to \$5,184, according to a recent study done by the Year Out Group. This can be an issue for students who are already seeking financial aid, or for those who must be able to fund their own gap year. In the same study, only 10 percent of those surveyed supported themselves independently on their gap year.

Although a gap year may be tempting, it can also add stress and cause students to fall behind later on. Many studies show that it is not completely beneficial to a student's educational experience, and the choice is definitely not right for everyone.



# SLIPPING THROUGH THE CRACKS

Seminole grapples with the unintended consequences of racialized discipline

By: Malavika Kannan  
Editor-in-Chief

*Note: Slipping Through The Cracks is an Editorial based on research conducted by The Seminole. The views expressed are those of the writer, and should not be taken to represent the student body or staff of Seminole High School or Seminole County Public Schools. All student names have been changed.*

For Seminole junior **Isaac**, it often feels like the odds are stacked against him.

A three-time veteran of In-School Suspension (ISS), Isaac has learned two things so far. First: to always bring a sweater, because it gets chilly in ISS. Second: that almost everyone in ISS, including himself, is Black or Latino.

“There’s no race that [commits] crimes more than other—it’s one race that gets caught more than the other,” Isaac said. “It’s the same exact kids here every time.”

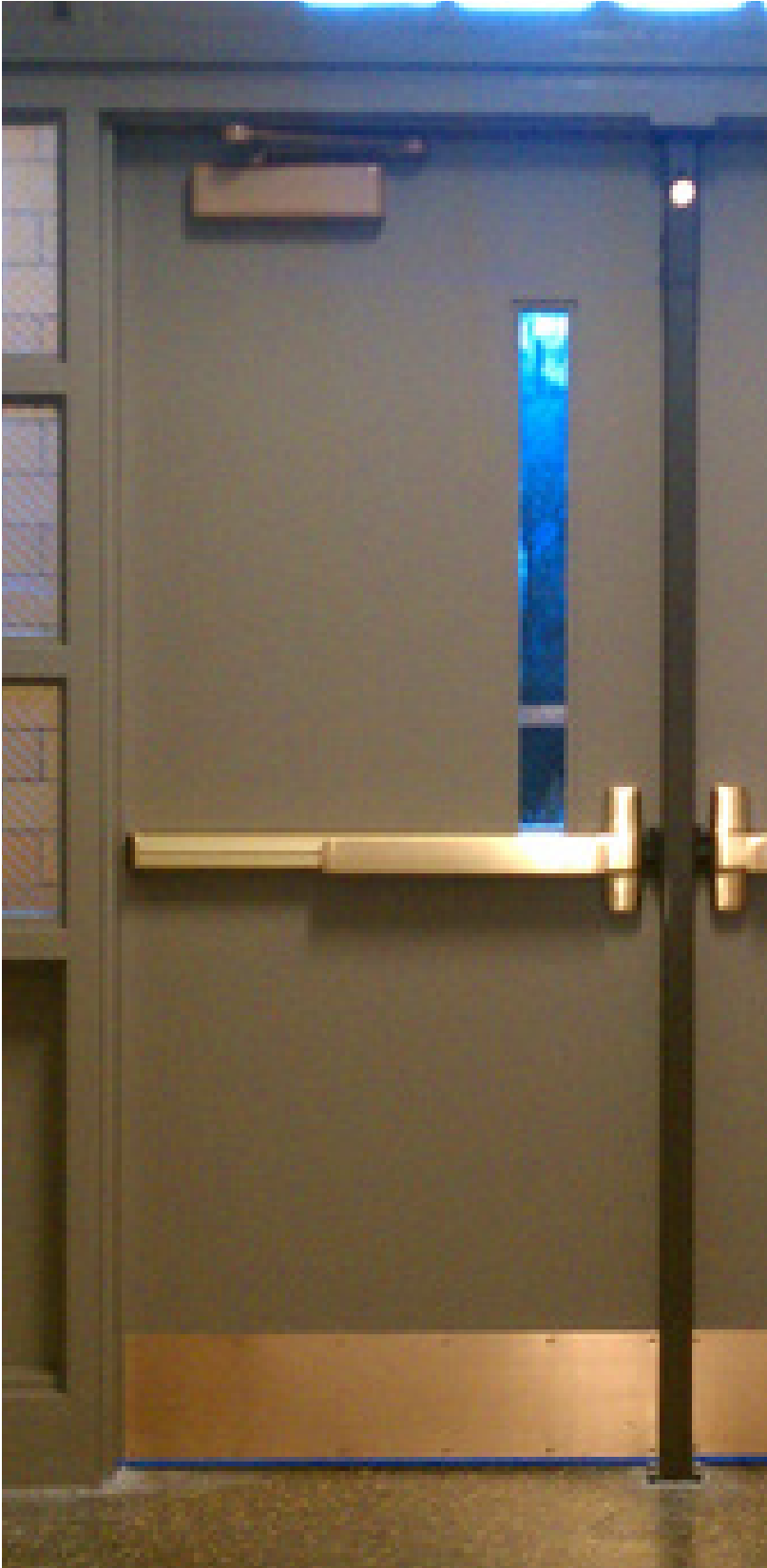
Nothing about this scenario surprises Isaac, because this is a story that he has heard many times before.

Growing up in a country where people of color—particularly Black men like himself—are overrepresented as perpetrators of crime in the media, Isaac is used to being punished and isolated. American society is shadowed by mass incarceration and police brutality, reflecting its long history of associating blackness with criminality.

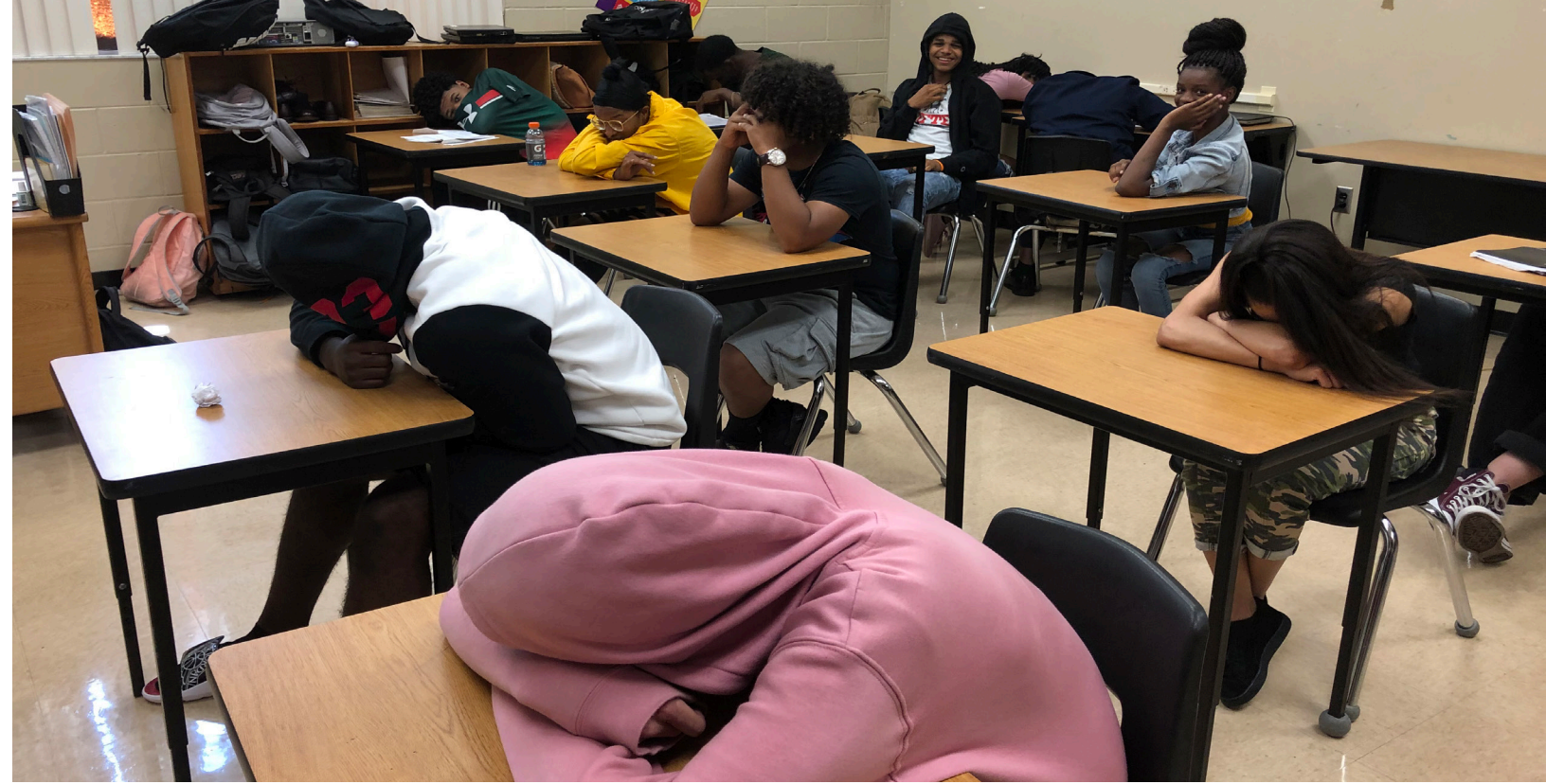
For some minorities, this cycle starts as early as high school, where they are statistically more likely to be disciplined.

“A lot of times, kids are reaching out for help. Some kids act out to reach out: they yell out in class and do something to grab the teacher’s attention, not knowing that isn’t the right way to do it,” said Dean **Sylvester Wynn**, who oversees discipline. “I think it’s a setback because students [feel] they are being punished for trying to reach out. And a lot of the times they give up.”

Seminole High School is not immune to the problem of racialized discipline. The school’s 2018-19 Discipline Profile, obtained by *The Seminole*, demonstrates the extent to which discipline disproportionately affects marginalized groups at SHS.







*Students lay their heads down in ISS*

*Photo by Gwyneth Katker*

The data, which can be seen on the following page, demonstrates the breakdown by race in discipline referrals from the previous semester. Black students made up 30 percent of students, but 61.5 percent of all referrals. The statistics are almost reversed when it comes to white students: they account for 55 percent of students, but only 33.8 percent of suspensions.

The disparity is also evident in the breakdown by “subgroup,” a label used to designate students with special accommodations at school. For example, students needing Free/Reduced Lunch (FRL) make up 84 percent of disciplined students—a clear majority—although they only comprise 59 percent of students. The second most-disciplined subgroup is Students With Disabilities (SWD), comprising 18 percent of the population but 28.7 percent of disciplined students.

There is no escaping the fact that students from disadvantaged backgrounds are disproportionately affected by school discipline. More simply, there is a hidden racial and socioeconomic cost to discipline—and vulnerable students are paying for it.

Recent news stories, such as the

viral “Clock Boy” and “PopTart kid,” have forced educators and lawmakers alike to take note of flagrant racism at school. But few have addressed the underlying problem: a discipline system that primes minority youth for a lifetime of criminality. The sense of criminality deepens with each new punishment, leading to a dangerous phenomenon known as the school-to-prison pipeline.

The pipeline particularly affects vulnerable students—particularly students with learning disabilities, histories of poverty, or racial minorities. Suspended students often lack constructive activities and fall behind in coursework, making them more likely to lose interest in school and drop out. Not graduating high school puts them at higher risk of future incarceration.

“[Students will] feel they’re getting mistreated for doing what they think is right, like [they] might as well keep on doing what [they’re] doing, and then that goes on with breaking the law,” said Wynn. “And that’s how it begins.”

**"THEY'RE  
GETTING  
MISTREATED FOR  
DOING WHAT  
THEY THINK IS  
RIGHT"**

## SMASHING THE STIGMAS

Some suspect that the over-punishment of minority students is due to racial profiling, even if the discrimination is inadvertent. They claim that although students of all backgrounds commit offenses at equal rates, black and poor students are simply more likely to be punished. The question remains whether SHS’ disparity is caused by active discrimination or cultural stigmas.

**"SUSPENDED  
STUDENTS  
[ARE] ...MORE  
LIKELY TO LOSE  
INTEREST AND  
DROP OUT"**

“I think everybody gets in trouble. It’s not just black kids, it’s all other races,” said **Tracy**, a sophomore who was interviewed in ISS. “[However,] there could be a white person skipping class, and they wouldn’t get stopped, but if a black person was walking to class, they would. I’ve seen it before.”

The idea of institutional racism within the justice system is not without precedent; America has a long history of criminalizing its citizens of color.

“It goes all the way back to the Trayvon Martin story. He got shot for going to the store because he had a hood on, so now everyone with a hood on [is seen as] a vandal, but this is not true,” said Wynn.

While Wynn does not believe the school is actively discriminating against black students, he thinks that some teachers may demonstrate an unconscious bias in their classroom management policies.

“People [have] different cultures,” he said. “First, you should understand the culture and learn how to deal with the students, instead of suspending. Some students are deprived economically. I’ve seen students doing their best to get to school and [arriving] late, but teachers don’t understand that their parents need to be at work at 6 am, so the kids are getting up on their own.”

Without proper cultural literacy among educators, disparities will remain as symptoms of inadequate support for students of color. When it



*Students lay their heads down in ISS*

*Photo by: Gwyneth Katker*

comes to discipline, students who feel like they are constantly being punished become marginalized and alienated. Their sense of criminality deepens with each new punishment.

This sentiment is echoed by **Tarvis Knight**, who works for

“THESE KIDS  
GROW UP  
BEING TOLD  
THAT THEY  
WILL NEVER  
BE ANYTHING”

the Boys & Girls Club of Central Florida. The Boys & Girls Club has a mission to aid all young people, especially those from disadvantaged circumstances, in terms of educational and emotional development. Knight

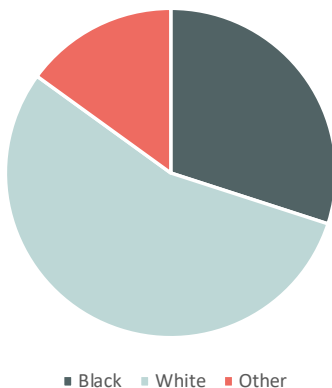
often works with at-risk students who have struggled with financial disadvantage, poverty, and constant school discipline.

“A lot of [what] we teach the kids here could get through to them, but as soon as they go home, that’s when they have to keep everything we taught them in the back of their mind,” Knight said. “But if these kids grow up being told that they will never be anything, all that does is push them to the street life or prison.”

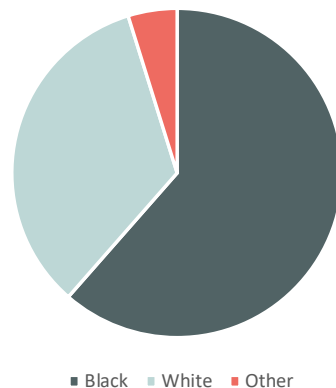
## REDEFINING DISCIPLINE

**Jared**, a sophomore, has reached a point in his life where he simply doesn’t care anymore, choosing to keep his personal expectations as low as possible. He has spent more days

Students at SHS



Students in ISS





suspended than he can count, and he falls more behind in class each time.

“School isn’t really doing it for me,” he said. “I guess I keep getting in ISS [because] I don’t show respectful behavior, but it probably makes me not want to come here. Not a lot of people I know really went to school or education either.”

Jared’s story, like many in ISS, started with repeated tardiness.

This raises the question of whether discipline—especially for nonviolent offenses—has a hidden psychological cost on students’ sense of self-worth. Instead, combined with the many challenges these students already face, such as socioeconomic disadvantages and racism, discipline may serve to dissuade at-risk students. This vicious cycle will continue to affect future generations, inadvertently perpetrating social mechanisms that were historically designed to oppress minorities.

At Seminole High School, one in ten students will not graduate. But for vulnerable students, high school is one of

High School’s Ninth Grade Center.

According to a May 2018 school board work session, Restorative Practice is a “proactive approach to address issues before discipline is needed.”

“They’re supposed to be coming up with new ways of teaching the teachers how to deal with minority students,”

"THE NINTH  
GRADE CENTER IS  
GOING TO BE  
ONE OF THE  
FIRST TO USE  
[RESTORATIVE  
PRACTICE]"

*Coach Wiggins, the supervisor for  
In School Suspension and Lunch  
Detentions, looks over the sign-in list to  
see what students attended.*

*Photo by: Gwyneth Katker*



the last opportunities they’ll get to defeat this generations-old cycle while there are still resources and support systems in place for them. The problem is, those systems are failing the students that need them most. Racialized school discipline is allowing too many students to slip through the cracks.

"A NEW  
APPROACH  
MUST BE  
TAKEN TO  
DISCIPLINE"

Dean Wynn believes that a new approach must be taken to discipline, which is why he is supporting a new system of Restorative Practice. In fact, Seminole County has recently entered into an agreement with Stetson University to provide training and implementation of Restorative Practice at three local middle schools, as well as Seminole

said Wynn.

“In fact, the Ninth Grade Center is going to be one of the first to practice this new trend, so hopefully it comes through and discipline becomes less popular than it is now.”

Restorative Practice seeks to change the cultures on campus and address students’ social-emotional and educational needs.

Programs like Restorative Practice mark a step in the right direction, but change must be sustained long-term, making a legitimate effort to include the viewpoints of those who are most affected by discipline. Unless the school system implements nuanced, empathetic reform, discipline will remain counterproductive, and the school-to-prison pipeline will continue to claim students. Ultimately, the cracks will widen, allowing more students to slip through.

# SANJAY NAIR

by Kruthi Munugeti  
Reporter



Junior **Sanjay Nair** is a nationally-acclaimed squash player who balances his academic aspirations with practices and tournaments for squash. Squash is a sport similar to tennis, except that the court is surrounded by four walls. Although Nair misses quite a bit of school, due to national competitions and workshops, he has already been scouted by many Ivy League colleges, including Brown, Cornell, and University of Pennsylvania.

“I didn’t really like the sport to begin with because it is extremely intense, but sometime [during] the summer of 2017, I just worked on my fitness and fell in love with the gym and sports. Once I got good at Squash, I never stop[ped] thinking about it,” Nair said.



Sanjay values his education as much as he values the sport. He is currently in the IB program and is taking other AP classes. In order to maintain a social life, place in competitions, and do well in school, he has to manage his time very carefully.

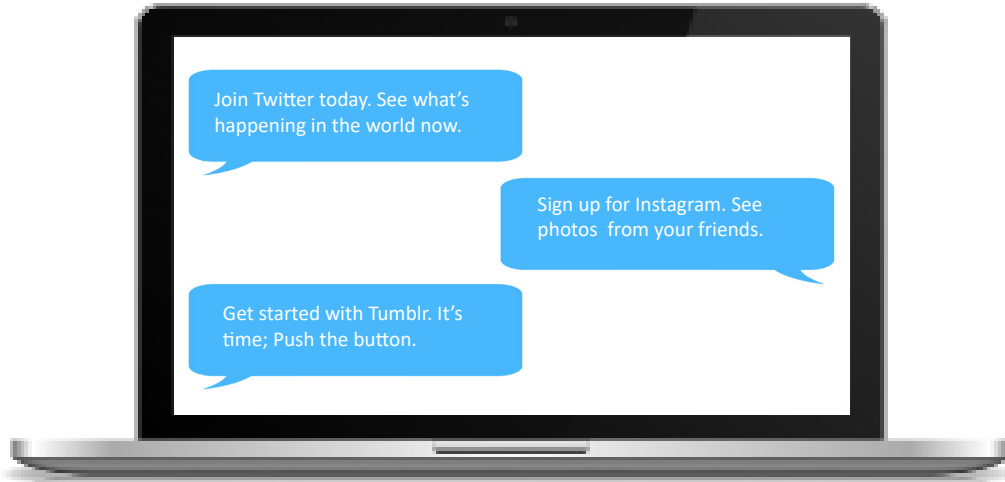
“Due to training three hours everyday, [being in] IB and extracurriculars, and having a social life, I literally have to plan everything by the hour. When homework is assigned, I start it the day it is assigned, even if it is due the next week or the week after, just so I can focus on things I want to [actually] do.”



When Sanjay feels the stress catching up to him, he relaxes by working out and listening to music. He is ranked No.11 in America for Boys under 17. He is currently a winner of three gold medal tournaments, finalist at the Hunter Lott Junior Gold, and quarter finalist at the 2019 Boston Junior Champion Tour. Sanjay’s passion and dedication is an inspiration to fellow athletes.



# BEING *OFFLINE* IN AN *ONLINE* WORLD



**By: Jillian Kindy**  
**Co-Content Manager**

Join, start now, sign up, get started. These words never really fazed me when social media began its inevitable cultural takeover. They still don't—at least that's what I tell myself. These phrases provoked feelings of missing out on what seemed like the hallmark of my generation: the so-called social revolution.

Growing up, I wasn't behind the curve on anything. My best friends and I spent our days underneath blue skies and golden suns. The backyard was our playground, our own Narnia. No desire to share my thoughts with thousands on the internet ever crossed my mind. Only my close friends and family had that privilege; we could laugh or cry together in person, sharing what is truly only a human experience.

As I entered middle school, a time of already awkward changes and pre-teenage angst, I noticed the growing divide between myself and others. I was hard-pressed to find someone without a social media account. Instead of asking for my name, people asked me for my social media handles. This split made it increasingly difficult to make friends, resulting in an intimidating middle school experience. No one could really understand my self-imposed exile. To me, it was simple. There never was a choice. Social media and I were like oil and water: we just couldn't mix.

Still, I felt distant. Like I missed the punchline to a joke everyone knew. Social media became a hard shadow to escape. Everywhere I looked, there it was.

At restaurants, I listened to the infectious laughter of those my age using Instagram and making up hashtags that suited their in-the-moment mood. At school, lessons became hard to learn with the distracting, constant use of Snapchat. There were times I felt like giving in, making the jump, and joining in.

As the dark gloom of middle school ended, high school became my "aha" moment. The weird feeling of not quite fitting in finally dissipated. I found friends who looked at me, not their phones. I realized that I had no hatred towards social media. My initial distaste for those platforms were through the disconnect I had inevitably put myself through. I came to look at it in a new light and realized that there was no me versus social media. I found its uses and understood that while it suited many, it could not suit all; I was included in that minority.

When most were glued to their phones, I was engaging with the people around me. For me, scenic places didn't serve the sole purpose of being a new post on my Instagram. Those who say they are "living in the moment, and taking each day as it comes" need to first put down their phones. I've found that I would've missed out on so much around me had I been a part of this cultural takeover. I really do feel like I'm taking time to smell the roses, as cheesy as it sounds. Social media may be a place to get connected, but I feel like the best connections happen when you disconnect.

# THE EMERGENCY ROOM

## Patient One:

It was the night of my fifth grade talent show. I was super nervous, and when it was my time to shine, I walked out in my striped high-heels to perform A Thousand Years by Christina Perri. The song was full emotion; once I started performing, I started losing myself within the vibe of the music. That's when I tripped over the microphone cord and fell off the stage.

Thanks to my five-inch heels, my three minutes of stardom and fame turned into one of the worst nights of my life. The audience was either trying to help me or laughing! Someone called an ambulance. The EMTs put me on a gurney and brought me outside to the ambulance. Once I got to the hospital, I learned that I actually broke my ankle. If I learned anything, it's this: do not try to act older than you are by wearing high heels in fifth grade; It will not end well.

## Patient Two:

For my best friend's birthday, we went to the dreaded Escape Room. I was terrified of the dark; the place gave me goosebumps on my arms. During dinner, I drank a lot of water to calm my nerves, anxiously gulping three full glasses.

We arrived at the Escape Room and split up into teams. Eventually, we found a key for the third room. We cautiously entered, and with no warning, my friend put the key in the slot. The lights flickered on and off, and I heard so many noises. The feeling of water rushed out of my body. "Did I pee my pants?" I asked my friend. She ignored me, too busy piecing together the remaining clues. Time was running out. I looked down to see an enormous wet spot right on my jeans. Mortified, I ran to the bathroom to get toilet paper.

The overseer of our team went into the room and emerged with his face bright red from laughing. On the way home, I had to sit on her brother's jersey to keep the car seat dry. To this day, I still believe that the best icebreaker is peeing your pants.

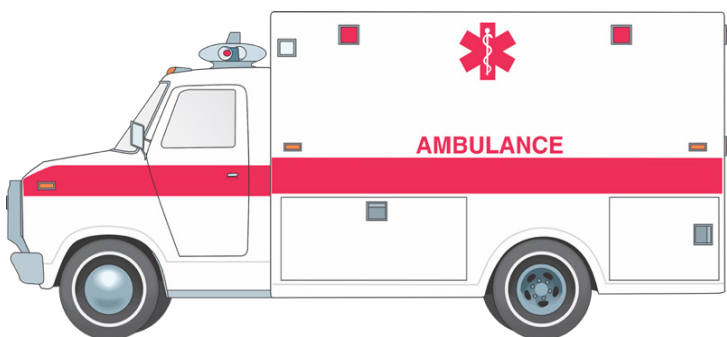
## Patient Four:

Ever since I peed my pants in front of the entire kindergarten class during show-and-tell, it seemed that I was destined to be a klutz. So on the first day of sixth grade, I was shy, nervous, and scared that I'd have to eat my lunch alone in the bathroom like Cady from Mean Girls. The problem was, I couldn't find the restroom. I must have been wearing the wrong glasses that day, because when I barged into the restroom, I didn't know where the stalls were. What were all those weird wall-sinks, and where were the stalls? Then I saw a boy, literally butt-naked, peeing in one of those sinks. It was a urinal, and I was in the boy's bathroom! I screamed. I finally ran into the correct restroom and began to cry because I was scared I was going to get in trouble. After that day, I swore to myself that I would read the signs on the wall rather than blindly walking.

## Patient Three:

As I waited in my orthodontist's office, I scrolled absently on my phone. That's when I noticed a really cute boy sitting in the seat beside me. I wanted to snap a photo of his face so that I could find his Instagram, but I didn't want to be too obvious. So I opened up my camera app, held my phone up to my ear, and pretended I was talking to my mom. I chatted about how the appointment was running late as I clicked the volume button to take the photo. Of course, the flash went off.

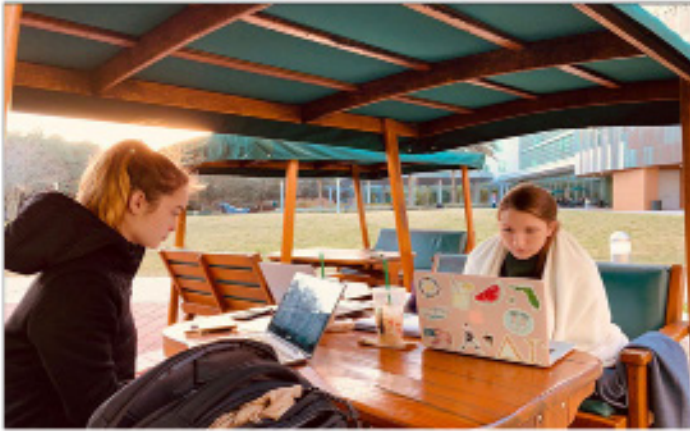
I was mortified. I quickly said, "Okay, see you", to my 'mom' and slammed my phone down. I turned my head away, but I could feel his eyes drilling holes in the back of my head. It was the most awkward, painful three minutes of my life. Thankfully, his orthodontic assistant escorted him out. I haven't seen him since.





# The First Wave

## How First Generation College Students Have to Carry The Burden of Familial Honor and Expectations



by Michelle Arshad  
Reporter

In a few months, underneath the bright May sunshine, hundreds of Seminole High School seniors will walk across a stage to collect their diploma, the manifestation of years of hard work and dedication. They will become leaders of our future society as many will seek a higher education. For the students who are the first in their families to attend college, this rite of passage is also laced with heavy pressure. These students are not only stepping forward in life, but they are carrying their families along with them.

According to the Department of Education, 30 percent of all entry level freshman are first-generation students. For these individuals, attending college is a pivotal moment in their lives since it comes with feelings of excitement and apprehension regarding their futures. The price of failure is heavier for them; their success is a necessity for not only themselves, but the previous generations of their family that could not pursue an education as well.

Higher education transforms lives, giving students and their families a chance to climb up the socioeconomic ladder. According to the State of Higher Education, students with a bachelor's degree can earn an average salary of \$70,000, compared to \$30,000 to those with a high school diploma alone.

Current high schoolers acknowledge the struggle associated with being the first in their family to attend college. They also recognize the reward that it provides.

**Vickie Nguyen** is a 1994 graduate of the University of Central Florida. Nguyen is currently a

Computer Engineer and mother to high school junior **Courtney Ha**. A college education has given Nguyen and her family a higher standard of living that a highschool education could only partially provide.

"My mother is a very successful and accomplished woman in her field. This was all possible with her college degree in computer engineering. She came here as an immigrant with her parents seeking the "American Dream" [that was] promised with moving such a long distance. A university level education is what made this dream a reality for her and her parents," said Ha.

**Salma Check** is a senior who will be graduating in this year's Seminole High School class of 2019. Check will be attending the University of South Florida in the fall. As a first generation university student, her acceptance was among her greatest accomplishments, altering her family's legacy.

**"High school was the most stressful four years of my short life. Looking back on it, the whole reason I did this was to make my parents proud and to make a better life for my family. In the end, that's what I'm doing by going to university," said Check.**

For these first generation college students, opportunities are sure to result from their hard work. They will go on to bring themselves and their families a better future: a hope that is worth the hours and hours of hard work and dedication.

"Higher education is a personal satisfaction. My parents came to America with a dream and they did get to live it to its full extent. By going to college, not only am I going to create my own American dream, I'm also bringing forth my parents legacy," said Check.



# MARCHING TOWARDS THE FUTURE

**By: Jessica Ty**  
**Photographer**

Every afternoon, they walk in sync, one foot after another, their boots shined to perfection. Crisp wind makes the American flag billow, but the cadets don't shiver or complain. Through the drills and challenges, Seminole High School's cadets visualize their aspirations of serving their country or simply inspiring others.

The Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) program teaches students discipline, responsibility, and leadership, preparing them to become officers in the United States military. For some ROTC students, this high school elective is more than just a class. With these qualities instilled in them, ROTC changed their lives forever.

**"We never have a set plan until we act upon it. Being able to travel the world [as] a leader of this nation while meeting different people will be a path. And I feel 100 percent satisfied that I will not be going through the traditional college path,"**

**said Senior Yadiel Mendez**

Their dedication to serve the nation is shown throughout their participation within each of the teams, such as Color Guard, Drill Team, and the Marksmanship team. Through their service within their desired team, the cadets are primed to become leaders of society. The Color Guard Team not only presents the national flag at football games, but they

also compete in local events. Both the Drill and Marksmanship team compete against other ROTC units and schools. Although **Colonel Kyle Forrer** is the Senior Instructor of the program, the teams and events are cadet-driven.

"The cadets are in charge of posting or planning the events. They really drive and set the plan for what is going to happen and organize all those activities. There is always something going on, and we are never standing still," said Forrer.

Throughout the program, ROTC cadets also learn life experiences that they cannot receive anywhere else. The cadets are taught to respect their peers before themselves. By gaining confidence through this program, they are enabled to step out of their comfort zone and talk to new people. While this program does test their capabilities, the struggle encourages the cadets to inspire each other to reach their true potential. "There's a lot of people there that will be there for you and support your choices. I was one of the quietest kids in school, but being out through the program I had to talk more often. I had to socialize and trust myself more," said senior **Joseph Rosado**.

Though the class requires no commitment towards the military, this program provides some students a sense of purpose, therefore inclining them to pursue this career path and enlist in the military. Some of those who continue this path will then experience something different from the traditional college path. Senior **Yadiel Mendez** plans to become a pilot for the Air Force and believes this path will benefit him more





*The ROTC is a club available for a high school students. The ROTC program encourages them to seek their true potential.*

*Through some cadets may not feel as strong of a connection as other commanders, they still attain life-changing experiences.*

*Photo by Jessica Ty*

than any other program due to the high finances and costs of college.

"For the past three years, I felt a connection towards the military, especially towards what I'm going to do in the Marines. It's a goal and dream right now, but soon it will be a marker of where my life actually starts."

states, Kenneth  
Ramos

From the experiences they gain in the program, the cadets touch and inspire the lives of others.



## CATCHING UP WITH COMMANDER RAMOS

In the eighth grade, **Kenneth Ramos** joined the ROTC simply for the "cool" looks of the camouflage uniforms. At the time, he couldn't have fathomed the impact that this decision would have on his life. The

camouflage uniforms were just the beginning.

At first, Ramos was hesitant about joining the army, because he thought it wasn't suited for him. However, after the past two years in ROTC, he realizes that the traditional college path has nothing to offer him right now. He now aspires to become the best of the best within the Marine services.

"I don't care if I'm popular or well known for anything. I'm doing it because I feel the need to do it for me and my life. That's the title I want and for certain, I'm going to make it happen," said Ramos.

His inspiration to continue this military path stems from both the Sergeant and Chief of ROTC, but most importantly, his dad.

"I got my image of life from him and made it my own. They all want me to succeed [so] seeing and hearing that feels great," said Ramos.

Dedication is the driving force for success. Ramos found a purpose greater than himself through the program, and now he devotes his energy towards honoring his goal.

"It's going to be a journey, but I will make my dream become an everyday thing for me," said Ramos. "It's to prove to everyone, and to myself, I had what it takes to do something great."

# SOCIAL MEDIA STARS AT SHS

By: Zayna Sheikh  
Reporter

Our generation has been transformed by social media: an entire virtual society ruled by so-called ‘social media influencers.’ These influencers, ranging from full-blown celebrities to home-grown creators, often amass huge, cult-like followings on platforms, such as Youtube, Instagram, and TikTok. But beyond the dizzying follower count and picture-perfect life, these influencers are everyday, normal high school kids — including students at Seminole High School.

Several SHS students have created powerful digital legacies that extend far beyond the limits of this campus. They have passions that they want to share, and the world is listening.

Some use this power to construct careers around their online presence, including **Issa Santiago**, who was discovered by modeling agency Elite Miami through her Instagram.

“Social media had a huge impact on my modeling career. [Instagram] is a great platform for the modeling industry to see if they like your look, and if they think you’ll be a good choice for what they’re looking for,” said Santiago.

Kickstarting an entire career at such a young age is an implausible feat, yet countless teens like Santiago have done so through social media. Sophomore **Jackson Felt**, a TikTok star, has accumulated 421 thousand

followers on Instagram; his videos have reached views up to 5.2 million. His compelling social media presence has earned him flights to Los Angeles and meetings with managers, which he hopes will translate into an acting or singing career.

“When people tell me it’s a waste of time, in my head, I think: I’m never going to have to work a job,” said Felt.

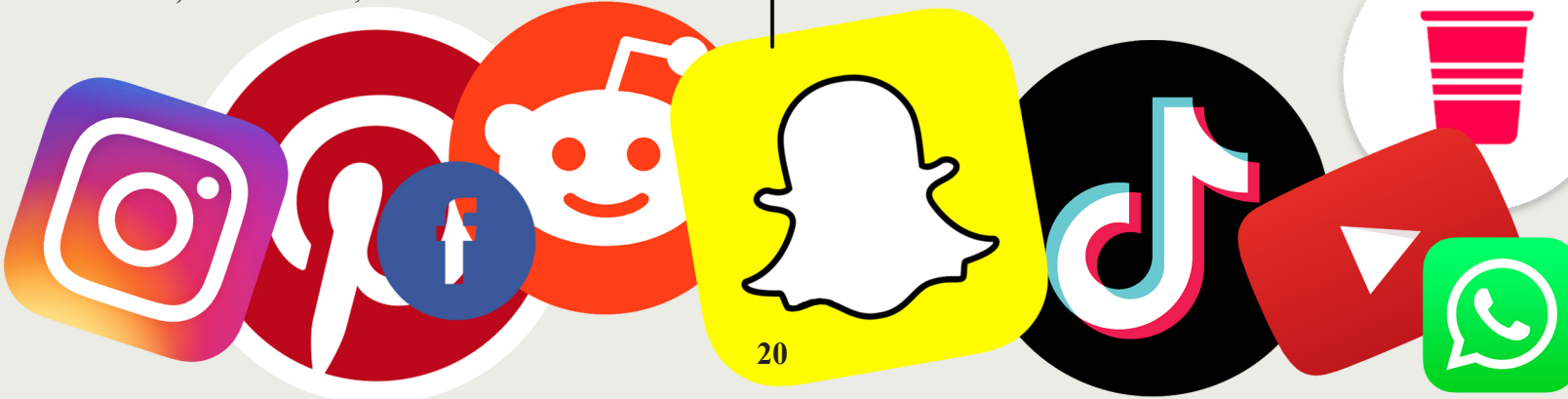
Such is the powerful allure of the Internet: it can offer a creative escape from everyday life. Junior **Henry Medina** runs “Ragers TV,” a popular YouTube channel he shares with **Christian Chang, Harona “CJ” Drammeh, Deaunte Burnett, Zahmir Henry,** and **Jesse Gordon**. Ragers TV produces authentic, colorful content featuring SHS students. Their purpose is simple: to showcase our unique and vivacious student body to the world.

“We just want to make people laugh. We want people to load up the video [and] watch it, even if they just want to skip to their part and exit out. We just want to spread our energy and hopefully inspire more people,” Medina said.

Making content on social media opens creators up to be ridiculed for what they do. Some claim that spending hours conceptualizing and executing videos is a waste of time. Medina disagrees.

“Making content online can set you up for life! It can create relationships & it could put you in a position financially that you thought you [could] never [achieve],” said Medina.

Creativity can manifest in many ways, and social media offers acclaim for whatever form it takes. It is a platform available to anyone who decides to build upon it. With the click of a mouse or a tap of the screen, a life can change. All that’s left to do is post.







# WHERE DID ALL OF THE TEACHERS GO?

Teachers are not being hired and class sizes are growing; what should we do? By: Serra Sowers  
Photography Manager

Imagine walking into a public school classroom a few years from today. It's filled with students like always. The bell rings, and you expect to see a teacher in the room, but there is no adult in sight.

This could be the reality if the teacher shortage trend across the country continues.

When the 2018-2019 school year began, there were 3,300 open teaching positions in the state of Florida. That number is expected to grow in the coming years. The teacher shortage has become a national problem, as the field of teaching becomes less popular for the younger generations.

The shortage of teachers across the country reflects fewer college students that are graduating with degrees in education. Between 2014-2015, the National Center for Education Statistics reported that only 92,000 students at the undergraduate level graduated with a degree in education. In one year, that number dropped to 87,217. The downward trend suggests that the career of teaching is valued less by younger generations; if it continues, this could cause issues for the future of education.

"Teacher retention and recruitment is a big issue. Our county has not been hit as hard yet, but it is coming," Seminole County Superintendent **Walt Griffin** told *The Seminole*.

Florida schools have been hit especially hard with a public school population of over two million K-12 students. Florida districts and schools are seeking teachers specifically in the English, Reading, Basic Mathematics, General Science specialties, as well

as Exceptional Student Education in all grade levels. Currently, there are only seven open teaching positions in Seminole County, although other counties are experiencing greater shortages.

"Right now, [Seminole County has] a need for teachers in Exceptional Student Education and the STEM areas, science and mathematics specifically. Even at the elementary level we are starting to see a shortage," said Griffin.

Mid-year openings for teaching positions cause rifts in the continuous learning of students; some end up with a long-term substitute for the remainder of the year if another teacher cannot be found. Some students who are currently enrolled in schools across Florida are finding themselves with substitutes in their classes on a daily basis. At Seminole High School, there are days where the front office cannot keep up with the amount of teachers absent on a daily basis, and classes are left without substitutes.

"One day in Acting we just didn't have a teacher or a sub. No one could give us an explanation, because there was no one in charge. We should have been working on our scenes, but instead we played Just Dance," said a sophomore who prefers to remain anonymous.

"I've been at SHS since 2001," said Nurse and Substitute Manager of Seminole High School. "On average, I have about 20 substitutes a day here on main campus. There are fewer substitutes available than ever before. Their licenses are ending and they

CONTINUE READING



are not coming back. The pay is low, they haven't gotten a raise, and neither have I, in over ten years. It's good for people who do it when they are between jobs, but not enough people stay."

The lack of teachers has negative effects not only on the students, but also on the schools as well. Broward, Dade, and Alachua county schools have the lowest ratings of schools across all levels- elementary, middle, and high school- in the state of Florida. Seminole county has only one school on the list of "low performing schools," according to the Florida Department of Education (FDOE).

This shortage of teachers may

be linked to low salaries, especially in Florida. According to Politifact, Florida teachers are paid about \$9,000 less than the national average; Florida ranks a shocking 42nd in best teacher pay across the country. The teaching position is becoming less attractive due to the pay because starting wages for other professions are well above the average teacher salary.

"The young people of today are not thinking of entering the teaching profession. Teachers now are under more pressure than they ever have been because of the accountability on them and the students to succeed," said Griffin.

In hopes of recruiting more

teachers, Florida school districts hold job fairs every few months. The fairs are open to the public and allow people with teaching backgrounds to interview with county and school officials. Seminole County works closely with the education departments of local universities to bring new educators to the county. Outside of the education major, county recruiters also look into the specific majors to recruit physics and chemistry majors who then gain Alternative Certifications to become teachers. This program teaches the new recruits classroom management and other necessary skills before they enter the workforce.

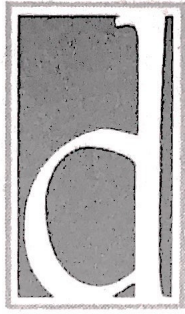
"We need to make sure that the teaching position is elevated. I think that working with our legislature will help improve the working conditions [for teachers] and hopefully give them a raise. We have a new generation of teachers coming into the field, and teaching is a wonderful job," Griffin said.



*Left: Empty classroom due to the disappearance of teachers  
Photo by: Izma Shakil*

*Above: Photography Manager Serra Sowers converses with Seminole County Superintendant Walt Griffin*





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