

# The Eagle Times

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## Lunar New Year at Obama

Lucy Caroff (Junior)

To celebrate the Lunar New Year at Obama Ms. Yan, Obama's Chinese teacher, invited a professional group of dancers to perform a traditional lion dance. There were people on drums, someone with cymbals and two men in a lion costume. One manning the head and the other the back. Most of the dance was centered around an assortment of fresh lettuce, oranges, and a whole pineapple in the center of the gym. Watching from the bleachers, you may have missed the intricate formation of the fruit, however a closer look reveals the shape of a dragon. According to Chinese horoscopes, 2024 is the year of the Wood Dragon, predicted to bring growth, prosperity and success.

Lion dance is an honored Chinese tradition thought to chase away evil spirits and bring good luck. It is practiced most commonly during the New Year but can also be performed during typical celebrations like weddings, festivals and business or store openings. The dance tells a story of the lion overcoming a hardship or obstacle to obtain something; in this case, the lettuce on the gym floor.

The thirty minute performance included interactive moments where the lion



The lion dance in the Gym

threw oranges into the crowd and allowed students to take fruit from its mouth. According to Ms. Yan, lettuce is

“not a good food for lions, it’s considered to be bad luck and evil spirits.” The lion tore up the lettuce and threw it over the floor,

symbolizing getting rid of bad things. “All of the fruits have good meaning for a... plentiful harvest” she says. Throwing fruit into the crowd symbolizes the lion blessing the audience with wealth and prosperity for the coming year.

The dragon dance was not the only Chinese New Year Celebration at Obama. Ava Miller, one of the Chinese students that helped organize the dragon dance says “the Chinese students also celebrated the Chinese new year in the classroom with a food day.” This event included seasonal food, lantern making, and learning about the holiday. “In the corner of Ms. Yans room there is a big dragon’s head for this year’s lunar animal,” she adds.

At the end of the performance, the dancer acting as the head of the lion stood on the second lion dancer, bringing the lion into a standing position. The stunning performance concluded as the lion opened its mouth to reveal a red scroll that said “Happy New Year.”

In the chaos of exiting the gym, some students managed to get photos with the performers while others succeeded in snagging the pineapple on the way out.

## Should You Study for the SATs?

Orli Trumbull (Sophomore)

It is becoming increasingly unclear as to how much time students should spend studying for the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT). For the past few years many schools have remained test optional, resulting in less emphasis on standardized testing. However, as we leave COVID years behind us, it is possible that colleges will revert back to standardized testing.

During Covid, some colleges, like California state universities (CSU), totally rejected the SAT and instead relied on essays and grades to shrink their pool of applicants. “Test blind” schools account for 8.5% of the top 200 colleges. Others, like MIT and the University of Florida, have reverted back to their pre-COVID SAT requirements. These schools have decided that SAT scores are extremely important when choosing from their pool of applicants. They account for 5.5% of colleges. The schools mentioned above are in the minority. More than 80% of schools remain test optional, however more schools have been reverting back to their pre-COVID testing requirements.

Recently, Yale made headlines by announcing that applicants are required to submit an SAT or ACT score, expressing that they need the metric. The school is receiving backlash for their decision after saying that the change will increase admission

chances for underprivileged applicants. Research has found that families who have a higher yearly income have a higher SAT score, while lower yearly income families have lower testing scores. Wealthier families can provide resources, time and support for their children. It is also easier for wealthier families to cover the 60+ dollar fee to retake the test. This research shows that requiring the SAT will actually decrease admission chances for underprivileged applicants.

SAT scores do not only have an influence in test mandatory schools. The scores also play a factor in test optional colleges, where a high score may qualify you for scholarships or an honors college.

At Obama Academy the SAT is a mandatory event. While scoring high is the goal, the amount of time spent studying for the SAT may depend on what college you plan to attend. If you are considering a CSU or many of the test optional colleges, studying might not be your top priority. Mr. Ehman, the IB director, says he loves test optional because “you can take the time you are studying for the SAT and put it towards your school work and extracurriculars.”

As schools continue to announce if they will remain test optional for another application period, it is important for students to responsibly delegate time to studying for the SAT.



Picture from a drama club meeting

## Returning Drama to Obama

Viola Aderholt (Sophomore)

The Obama drama club has announced the performance of their first play: *Murder at Rundown Abbey*. The performance will take place on April 6th and 7th in the Obama auditorium.

The arts at Obama have been hit hard with lack of teachers, money, and support from the district. The theater program—one of the strongest in the city—was shut down for various reasons years ago and hasn’t been active since. This changed last year when students created a drama club. Founder Sydney Pellegrino says, “we met once a week and practiced a variety of things.” As the year progressed, the club gradually moved on to bigger projects.

Last year students decided to restart drama at Obama. Co-founder Raini Giles says “Me and Sydney are working to get the arts back at Obama.” Sydney Pellegrino said “We started last year with Ms. Durling as our teacher sponsor; she really

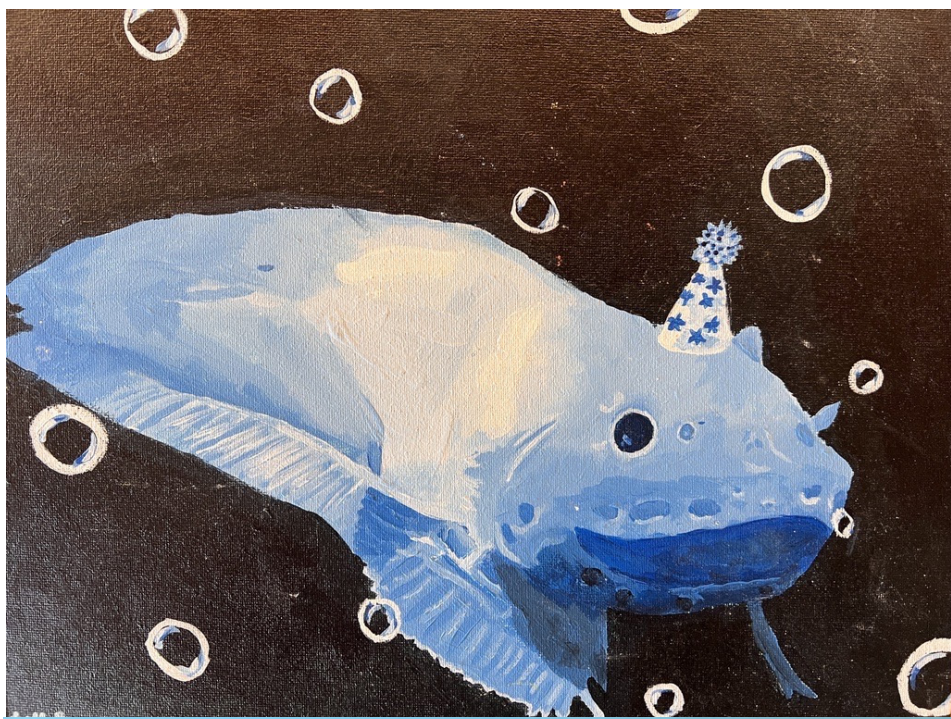
helped us get a feel for what we wanted to do with the club.” Pellegrino said last year they were mostly focused on practicing individual skills and building a group of people for the years to come.. This year, due to the hard work of Sydney and Raini, the drama club is back in business and is busy rehearsing for their upcoming play.

*Murder at Rundown Abbey* is about an American private eye in London who finds himself undercover as a butler in the old home of the Crumbledown family. He finds himself in the middle of a twisted murder scene. “I think it’s going to be a really fun show and I encourage everyone to come see,” says Pelligrino. The tickets cost \$5 which includes an intermission with snacks. Showing up for the first performance is a great way to show your support for the arts at Obama and to enjoy a performance by peers.



the lion dance being performed





**Student Artwork**  
(listed top to bottom)

Quill Boyle.  
"Birthday Tomorrow."  
Acrylic on Canvas Board.

Matt Presley-Henley.  
"Road Kill."  
Plaster sculpture.

Gi'Onna Simmons.  
"Visioner."  
Mixed media on illustration board.



**Navigating Free Periods:  
Student Perspectives on Teacher  
Absences at Obama Academy**

Reece Williams (Sophomore)

It seems that nearly all students at Obama Academy, in middle school math classes and high school steel drums classes, have by now noticed the increasing number of free periods resulting from teachers taking sick leave or retiring. These periods are either replaced with other classes or labeled as study halls. For the students who haven't had their class replaced, it seems they all have different thoughts on the time they have, and the way they use it.

When interviewing Sophomore Iragi Devine who is in the steel drums class, it was clear she favored the free period. "Honestly I enjoy the teacher not being here because it's a study hall for me. Mostly I study if I have work in a different class, if I don't I just chill and relax." Similar to several other students, Iragi checks into her coverage class before heading to

the library for a more conducive work environment. The only complaint she had about the free period was, "you have to find out where the coverage is, which can be difficult."

Although some students are happy about the empty periods, though not every student is enthusiastic about the extra time they have. "I feel like it's a waste of a class period," sophomore Isaac Werner expressed. "A lot of the time I take a nap or I will procrastinate doing my work," he added. Isaac is among the many sophomores enrolled in the steel drums class. Isaac and many other students' experience highlights the challenge of staying productive during these unanticipated free periods.

The presence of increasing free periods at Obama Academy due to teacher absences has become a noticeable aspect of students' experiences across various classes. While some, like Iragi Devine, view these breaks as valuable opportunities for study and relaxation, others, such as Isaac Werner, perceive them as unproductive.

**How IB Students Are Preparing for IB Tests**

Isaiah Trumbull (Senior)

Seniors and some juniors are preparing for IB exams this spring. There has been a marked rise in registration for the tests. Thirty students are sitting for High Level (HL) English and 19 are sitting for HL History. The electives have varying enrollment. Twenty two students are sitting for Film while three are sitting for visual arts and three are sitting for psychology. A total of ten students—four seniors and six juniors—are sitting for the various math exams. For the languages, 10 students are sitting for Spanish, one student is sitting for French, and one student is sitting for Japanese. In the sciences nine students are sitting for Chemistry and one student is sitting for Sports Science.

This has been a remarkable increase in participation compared to last year's seniors. Last year, 13 students sat for a total of 74

tests, with only one student attempting the full diploma. This year, the number of tests has nearly doubled, with 141 exams scheduled. The number of diploma candidates has risen to eight. These numbers reflect an increased interest in the international baccalaureate program, and mean that many of this year's seniors will be receiving valuable credit in college.

Seniors interested in a higher education are encouraged to take the Higher Level exams offered, as they give credits for most colleges. As the testing period approaches, students seem excited by the exams. An Obama senior says, "It's a lot of work and difficult to juggle, but it is very rewarding. And with the college credit, it is basically free money."

Although Obama Academy has yet to return to its pre pandemic high of IB engagement, when the majority of seniors sat for exams, it is clear that testing levels are on the rise.



Obama's middle school book club participated in a book talk with author A.S. King.

**CELESTIAL GIVEAWAY**  
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Imagine gazing up at the celestial spectacle of a lifetime, witnessing the breathtaking April 8, 2024, total solar eclipse from the location of your choice. Your chance to experience this once-in-a-lifetime phenomenon is here! All donors who give blood March 3-31, 2024, are automatically entered for a chance to win one of four \$5,000 gift cards.\* Join us for this cosmic event and make a difference with your blood donation while reaching for the stars.

Details at [vitalant.org/celestialgiveaway](https://vitalant.org/celestialgiveaway) | Schedule at [vitalant.org](https://vitalant.org)

**Pittsburgh Obama International Studies Academy Blood Drive**

**Thursday, March 21**  
**8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.**  
**Gym Lobby**

Scan the QR Code to register to donate!



PROMO DISCLAIMER  
\*Terms and conditions apply; visit [vitalant.org/celestialgiveaway](https://vitalant.org/celestialgiveaway)

APPOINTMENTS RECOMMENDED

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**Reminders**

10th grade personal project **DUE** → Wednesday, March 20th

Blood Drive → Thursday, March 21st

Eid (NO SCHOOL) → Wednesday, April 10th

🌍 Earth Day Trash Clean Up → Monday, April 22nd  
\*stay tuned for more details!