Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all Syosset High School students enrolled in Advanced Placement (AP) courses will remain at home to take the exams online on their school-issued Chromebooks. The decision has been met with mixed responses across the Syosset community, with many wondering why the school has chosen a fully virtual model of AP testing.

The school administration and department heads began meeting months ago in November before the College Board had announced the three separate testing dates. Under the 2021 testing structure, there are three administrations: Administration 1, which consists of paper tests in
school takes place from May 3-17; Administration 2, which is a combination of in-school paper tests and at-home digital tests, takes place from May 18-28; and Administration 3, which is almost completely digital and takes place from June 1-11. The only exception is for the foreign language and Music Theory exams, which have to be taken in-person regardless of which administration is chosen, as per the College Board.

Mr. Ruffini, the assistant principal who oversees the AP program at SHS, stated that while the situation is not ideal, it is integral to prioritize “uniformity...and what that means is for everything to be as consistent as can be.” This year, the school has approximately 2900 exams scheduled for 1185 students across all four grades, and a top priority is ensuring that “all exams would be in the two-week period.” The emphasis on uniformity, safety, and additional instruction time were the key factors the administration considered before deciding on Administration 3.

Neighboring districts like Jericho have chosen to mix-and-match, with their math, science foreign language, and music theory exams taking place in-person while all others are online. Their tests will span Administration 1 and 2. At Plainview-Old Bethpage John F. Kennedy High School, there is also a mix of digital and in-person tests, with the same emphasis on having paper math tests. However, both schools have a significantly smaller student body than Syosset High School, which has around 2200 students in total.

“A lot of other schools have come up with different plans, and some have allowed students to choose which administration...those districts have faced tremendous pushback from parents over equity and it causes chaos for teachers, who end up with students all over the place in terms of curriculum.” Mr. Ruffini continued, “Schools that are able to give fully in-person exams might have just 600 exams to administer...but for us, just AP Physics and APUSH make up that number. It really was just about the numbers and the risks of bringing hundreds of students into the building together that led to this decision.” In addition, offering tests across different administrations would not be uniform, and the goal is to have all students complete all tests in the same span of time.

In past years, the APs have been given in the gym, but the pandemic has made that unfeasible. When asked about the prospect of administering the test in several different classrooms instead, with students all spaced apart, Mr. Ruffini explained that “If possible, I would love to just take a hall for each AP test but logistically, we would have to shut the whole school down that day and we have to have a certain number of school days to be accredited by the State.”

SHS has mandated all students use their school-issued Chromebooks to take the exams. Ms. Kelly, an AP Physics 1 teacher, shared her doubts, saying that the digital test “definitely will negatively impact grades, as it is much more challenging for students to take exams under those conditions.” Mark Kimoto, a junior, echoed those concerns: “I feel that the chromebook will not allow for a sufficiently normal testing experience. Even when doing regular class assignments on my
chromebook, things take longer time to load than on a standard computer, and it frequently freezes. I’m afraid that I’ll do worse than I would on paper because of the technological issues with the chromebooks."

For this year’s exam, the College Board has created an AP Exam app that must be downloaded prior to the exam. 'The main priority is to ensure that the software gets downloaded correctly and on the Chromebooks. Our IT department has control in updating and putting the app on your Chromebooks in a manageable way. They can also make sure that every student has enough space on their Chromebook to take the test without major glitches,” Mr. Ruffini said.

He reassured students that ‘The choice to use Chromebooks is part of uniformity, but it was done in the students’ best interests to avoid problems that may arise on a personal laptop, which IT may not be able to resolve.” Mr. Ruffini also added that there will be plenty of opportunities to get used to the software, which will be more advanced than last year’s, through practice tests on the app. Mr. Klopp, an APUSH and AP US Government and Politics teacher, shared that it is “hard to say with the Chromebooks” because while he thought it “generally worked last year with the shortened test, things may happen under the longer full-length format. There’s more time for students to lose internet connections, get distracted, or become tempted to waste time looking things up.”

The online adaptation of the AP exams has brought a plethora of changes, with one of the most criticized and talked-about changes being that the test will “Not allow students to return to answered questions or move back-and-forth between unanswered questions” (AP Central, College Board website). In response to the limitation, Mr. Ruffini said, “I called the College Board and unfortunately, it’s just part of their criteria to avoid cheating. If it were a test given by the high school, there’s no way that would be in place.” Nevertheless, he is hopeful that the extra weeks afforded by testing in June will give students adequate time to adjust their testing strategies and solidify their grasp on the material.

Because digital exams across the nation will be given at the same time, some will now stretch into the evening to accommodate test-takers on the West Coast. Mr. Ruffini shared, “You would probably be excused for the day. We’re still working on it, but I don’t want students to think they have to be at school so close to testing time.”

For AP teachers and students, the additional 3-4 weeks of class time has allowed more preparation time, to which Mr. Ruffini said, “I do feel like the extra couple weeks of review will provide success for students.” Ms. Kelly added: “I hope that the extra time will be used effectively to allow my students to better understand material. It definitely should help, given how online school takes a lot more time and there are a lot less hands-on labs.”

Mr. Klopp called teaching during the pandemic “exhausting” and shared that because of the increased setup time in multiple classrooms, technological glitches, and difficulties in simultaneously engaging students at home and in the classroom, his
classes have lost cumulatively around 7-8 days of instruction time so far. He noted that he doesn’t “intend to review for two straight weeks because it’s not about teaching to a test, but to learn about history and be inspired by it.” He hopes to do the projects he would normally do with his classes after the AP exam, even under the altered time frame.

Both Mr. Klopp and Ms. Kelly firmly stated that they preferred their students take the exams in-person, but Ms. Kelly did express that she “recognized the reason why the option was not chosen for the health and safety of everyone involved.”

The pandemic has certainly presented a unique set of obstacles for teachers. Ms. Kelly said that “Teaching hybrid has been exceptionally challenging. One of the great joys of teaching is getting to know the students, and that is much harder to do in a hybrid environment, which is not as enjoyable.” Likewise, Mr. Klopp said that “grading stuff online is an eyesore” and that there is a lack of continuity because some students come and go as they switch between virtual instruction and the hybrid model and vice versa. Nonetheless, he recognized that most of the students at SHS have rolled with the circumstances relatively well. “The fatigue is there for everyone, and it’s not the year anyone ever wanted, but we all need to get through it,” he said.

The AP situation is not optimal for students and teachers alike, but given the administration’s emphasis on uniformity and the CDC guidelines, Administration 3 was considered to be the most viable option among administrators.
CONGRATULATIONS TO THE CLASS OF 2021
VALEDICTORIAN AND SALUTATORIANS!
BY CAROLINE HSU AND LEXI LANGMAN, NEWS EDITORS

The Syosset Central School District recently announced Josh Langman as valedictorian and Maiya Raghu and Jacob Rosenberg as the salutatorians for the Class of 2021! These three students have been honored for their exemplary academic record over the last four years. It has been over ten years since two salutatorians have been named due to a tie in GPAs.

Assistant principal, Mr. Christopher Ruffini, explained that Dr. Durante and his committee meet annually to determine the valedictorian and salutatorian(s). He shared: “The group solely reviews academics for the students' high school career. We look at our students cumulative GPA, total number of AP and college courses, Regents scores, senior mid-year report, and other academic factors on the transcript.”

The students were called down to the main office during first period on Friday, February 5 to receive the news. Rosenberg recalled, “Immediately I was nervous, but some chit-chat with Mr. Gessner helped calm me down. Soon, a group of administrators called me into a room alongside Maiya and Josh, and they shared with us the great news. I was speechless (which is very unlike me) and filled with excitement. Dr. Durante shared some kind words of wisdom and that was that!”

Receiving this recognition has been a huge honor for the students. Langman said, “I feel honored to receive this recognition, especially in a class with so many talented people. I am extremely thankful for all the support I have received from students and teachers, and hope everyone in the class can take pride in the work they put in over the last 4 years.”

Aside from academics, these students have been able to enjoy high school years rich with social atmosphere and extracurricular activities. Raghu explained that the highlight of her four years in Syosset high school was “meeting a lot of great friends and some truly amazing teachers. Also, all of the clubs! Over the 4 years, I have been a part of many clubs, some that I’m still in and some not, but I enjoyed exploring so many different activities.”

Similarly, Rosenberg emphasized the importance of the experiences in high school beyond just academics. “Balance is everything! Work hard, but take some time for yourself every day. Do not overwhelm yourself with unnecessary stress, because—before you know it—every unbearable night of cramming for a test will be a blip in the past. Maintain perspective, and never forget to appreciate and enjoy your life. Even during bad days, seek out opportunities to expand your horizons, engage with your classmates, and smile.”

Despite the obstacles that have arisen from virtual learning, these students have found ways to adapt and make the best of the current situation. Langman advised underclassmen to “Make sure to take advantage of all of the resources your teachers and the school have to offer. Everyone here is rooting for you to succeed and sometimes the biggest obstacle between you and your goals is yourself. If you can roll with the punches and accept help wherever you can, the path to your goals becomes much clearer.”

Raghu also highlighted the importance of hard work by advising underclassmen to “Take classes and join clubs that seem interesting to you because it’s a wonderful chance to explore a bunch of different areas without having to pay a ton of money. Also, look for opportunities outside of school; they’ll give you some unforgettable life experiences. Nothing is necessarily ever going to fall into your lap so work for what you want and balance that with your other priorities.”

Looking towards the future, Langman will be attending Cornell University where he plans to study Computational Biology. Raghu and Rosenberg are still unsure about their college decisions but Rosenberg shared that he is “optimistic about the future.” These three incredible students will be honored alongside their peers in the Class of 2021 on June 23, where they will receive their diplomas and embark on the next chapter of their lives.
I’m 27 years old, so 20+ years ago I grew up playing on Stillwell Fields. It’s the only major sports field for Syosset soccer, lacrosse, flag football, baseball, and other sports, and frankly if you look at a community like Syosset I always felt that we were deserving of better. I’d go to other communities and they would have these beautiful fields and quite frankly Stillwell is dilapidated. It’s a county owned facility that is currently leased to the Town of Oyster Bay. Under this deal that I was able to help broker, we are going to convey the property to the Syosset school district. Three million dollars that I secured in the Nassau County capital plan in 2019 will be supplemented by $7.5 million in Syosset school district funding, for a long term, really incredible capital plan that will give our kids and our community the fields and recreation center that we deserve.

Nassau County Legislator and Syosset High School graduate Joshua A. Lafazan recently announced that a deal had been reached between the county and Syosset Central School District. In this deal, the ownership of Stillwell Fields would be transferred from Nassau County to Syosset Central School District. The deal was first announced in an email to Nassau County residents.

I spoke with him to find out more about the project, and what motivated him to advocate for it.

The news of the Stillwell Fields project caught the attention of many people in the community. In case our students missed it can you give a brief overview of the project?

I’m 27 years old, so 20+ years ago I grew up playing on Stillwell Fields. It’s the only major sports field for Syosset soccer, lacrosse, flag football, baseball, and other sports, and frankly if you look at a community like Syosset I always felt that we were deserving of better. I’d go to other communities and they would have these beautiful fields and quite frankly Stillwell is dilapidated. It’s a county owned facility that is currently leased to the Town of Oyster Bay. Under this deal that I was able to help broker, we are going to convey the property to the [Syosset] school district. Three million dollars that I secured in the Nassau County capital plan in 2019 will be supplemented by $7.5 million in Syosset school district funding, for a long term, really incredible capital plan that will give our kids and our community the fields and recreation center that we deserve.

What makes Stillwell Fields the right location for a project of this scope?
It’s adjacent to the high school, so the school district is the logical steward. At the school district we need more space for our student athletes. Not only is it right next door to the school, but there are security problems at Stillwell that the school district can’t address because it is not school district property. I know and it was always a complaint of mine that there was drug use and other things happening on the property and the school district couldn’t police it because it wasn’t their property. So because the school district can have cameras and school security on the premises, it protects our students. And, the fact is that it’s going to be a community resource. People love open spaces. We’ve seen during Covid that open spaces are really important. There is going to be a one mile walking path on the property and the preserve is going to remain open space. Having this in the heart of Syosset makes a lot of sense.
Have there been other successful school district and Nassau County partnerships on projects such as this or would it be a first of its kind?

School districts enter into what’s called IMAs, or intermunicipal agreements with the county all the time. I was able to help secure $250,000 to go to the high school tennis courts, and $75,000 to go to the new high school weight room. We do projects like this, where the county assists smaller governments like a school district. But we think that this is unprecedented in terms of its scope, and its $2.50 match to the $1.00 from the county. If it is unprecedented, I hope it sets the standard for intergovernmental cooperation. This is the 21st century, governments need to get along. I say that with all sincerity.

What motivated you to advocate for the new Stillwell Fields project?

As a student athlete, being four, five, six years old and having played on those fields, it’s a dream come true to represent my community and pay it forward for the next generation. I think it’s an idiom that we all in government have to adhere to, which is that we should make things better for the next generation. Again, I know what it is like to be a student athlete, I know what it is like to go out of Syosset and say ‘How come they have these gorgeous fields and our fields aren’t even on a flat surface?’ or ‘How come it takes me 45 minutes to pull out of the parking lot?’ I thought it was wrong. It was my motivation to give back to other student athletes, and I’m really, really excited for this project.

Will Syosset Central school district need to raise taxes to fund this project?

No. This is an important point. The $3 million that I secured is from the Nassau County capital plan, which is when the county borrows money for infrastructure. For Syosset, I believe it’s $7.5 million dollars. So it’s $2 million of reserves that are already in the reserve fund, and the $5.5 million is going to be new borrowing. The school district is about to retire old debt, so the tax levy will not rise. I know that everyone is worried about taxes, as they should be on Long Island, but it is an important point that we were able to do this without raising taxes.

At the March 24 Syosset Board of Education meeting there was a vote on putting the proposition to purchase and refurbish the Stillwell Fields property on the ballot in May. One Board of Education member raised concern that Nassau County was just trying to “unload the property without wanting to do the maintenance that they have to.” How would you respond to that?

I respect everyone’s opinion. But, it is very frustrating in government when other elected officials, who are all duly elected, speak without knowing the facts. The county doesn’t maintain the property right now, the Town of Oyster Bay does. It’s currently leased to the Town of Oyster Bay, so they are responsible for the maintenance. Under this new deal, the school district will be
so they are responsible for the maintenance. Under this new deal, the school district will be responsible for maintenance. So as we speak, there is no unloading of a property when the county doesn’t maintain or upkeep it.

Has anyone looked at what it’s costing the Town of Oyster Bay to maintain Stillwell Fields, and what that cost transferred to the Syosset school district might be? We haven’t been able to get figures from the town, but I know for the school district I think that it’s going to be about $200,000 annually for upkeep of maintenance. But I know when speaking to Dr. Rogers and his staff, the school district spends a ton of money busing kids to other facilities because we run out of space. So I believe we’ll be able to make up the money on that end.

As district residents consider the two propositions that will be on the district annual budget vote and election ballot in May, what would you say to a resident who may have doubts about supporting this project?

I understand that there is skepticism when governments propose new ideas. What I would say to people who are skeptics is that this is going to be a long term benefit to this community. If you have children who are athletes, they are going to get to use state of the art facilities. If you like to walk on the track, you’ll get to utilize the one mile walking path. I believe that this will help keep home values elevated, in that we will have such a unique asset right in the middle of the community. At the end of the day, I would say to skeptics, doesn’t Syosset deserve to have a state of the art facility? We’ve been behind so many communities, why don’t we deserve to have this? Quite frankly, after 27 years on this Earth we haven’t had any movement here. I can’t speak to before I was born, but if there have been decade after decade after decade of inaction here, and if we don’t take this opportunity to make a difference, I don’t know if we’ll get a chance to.

What do you think is the most important skill to have as a politician when bringing people together to create a partnership such as this?

I’ll give you two - patience and listening. I think that there is a dearth of both in our politics today. Number one patience, things don’t move as fast as we’d like them to when it comes to government. Being patient in terms of not losing respect, not being acerbic or sharp when you’re angry when things aren’t moving fast. Maintaining that sense of decorum I think is really important. And listening. Listening not to reply, but to understand. Listening to glean the wants and desires of others, listening to glean their doubts or their frustrations. When you can listen and you can be patient, you can help move things along. And again, 2017 I took office, 2019 I secured the three million dollars, 2021 we have this deal in place. Four years is a long time, but not once have I lost my sense of patience and I believe I have displayed an ability to listen throughout that time.
As a Syosset High School graduate is there any advice you would give to our students on making the most of their time at Syosset High School?

The teachers at Syosset are world class educators, and some of our students don’t fully appreciate that until they leave the halls of Syosset High School. Get to know your teachers and really ask questions not just about your course material but about life. I had macroeconomics with Ms. Eager and I can’t tell you how many times I remember sitting in AP Macro and discussing GDP figures and understanding how that played into the economy, and now I’m using my knowledge from Ms. Eager’s class as a legislator. I genuinely remember Ms. Eager teaching me how to read economic charts and forecasting economic circumstances. I remember being in Ms. Esslinger’s speech and debate class and learning about persuasive speaking and how to structure a speech off the cuff and I use it literally every day when I go to speak to groups. I remember being in classes with teachers who changed my life not just because of the coursework, but because of a learner and a person. My biggest advice is to take advantage of the fact that you have world class teachers, who will teach you a lot more than what you will just learn in a textbook. Don’t take it for granted.

SYOSSET HIGH SCHOOL JUNIOR CAROLINE HSU WINS PRESTIGIOUS NATIONAL YOUNGARTS FOUNDATION AWARD FOR MUSIC

BY KYLE DAPICE, STAFF WRITER

Caroline Hsu was named a 2021 YoungArts Finalist, one of the top awards in the nation for high schoolers in the arts. The National YoungArts panel selects around 20 of the most accomplished classical musicians in the country to receive the recognition every year. She joins a notable group of YoungArts alumni that includes Terence Blanchard, Timothée Chalamet, Viola Davis, Allegra Goodman, Josh Groban, Judith Hill, Nicki Minaj, Billy Porter, Andrew Rannells, and Kerry Washington.

How long have you been playing piano?
“ I started playing piano when I was 4, but I only began taking it seriously heading into middle school.”

What motivates you to play piano?
“Honestly, just being able to make music in itself is motivating enough. On the piano, you can play anything from Mozart to Scott Joplin to Disney music to Dua Lipa (Levitating is such a bop!). Playing piano has been incredibly important to helping me manage my workload and stress. Furthermore, I believe that sharing music is one of the most gratifying feelings—both when I’m teaching younger students and when I perform for audiences who may not regularly hear live music, I’m grateful that I get to share and do what I love.”

Caroline playing piano, Photo: Martin Lijinsky
frustrated, I just go for a walk and scream a few times in frustration and then I restart.”

How did the competition operate differently due to COVID-19?
“The competition is generally judged through an online platform, so I submitted audition videos back in October. However, the winners are usually invited to Miami in January for a weeklong experience, where winners from all disciplines (ex. music, visual arts, dance, writing) collaborate together and take classes from leading artists in their field. Unfortunately, it was adapted to a virtual experience and while I was disappointed to have missed the collaborative and social environment, I heard from Dua Lipa’s choreographer (who also worked with Harry Styles on the “Watermelon Sugar” video), so that was really neat.”

How did you feel when you learned that you had been named a National YoungArts Foundation Finalist in Classical Music?
“I got the call after math class, and I was stunned. Especially after months of relative isolation due to the pandemic, I’m grateful that I’ve still been able to practice, record, and perform from home. Being recognized on the national stage for something that I’ve been pursuing for over a decade means a lot to me.”

Do you have any advice for other musicians?
“Don’t let failure in competition define you as an artist. Given that music and other art forms are so subjective, it’s impossible to please everyone whenever you put out a piece or song. As long as you’re assured in your vision and enjoy what you do, it’s worth it.”

Do you have any musical inspirations or favorite musicians?
“I love the music of film composers Hans Zimmer and John Powell but when it comes to classical music, I can’t name one specific musician off the top of my head but anything from the Berlin Philharmonic is always amazing.”

What is your favorite song?
“Just one? I’ve been listening to EDM music a lot recently, so there are a lot of songs from Avicii and Alesso in my Spotify playlist. I remember hearing “I’ll Wait” from Kygo and Sasha Sloan at the start of the pandemic, and it’s definitely one of my favorite songs. “Coming Home” from Dimitri Vangelis & Wyman and Mike Perry is another song that’s super upbeat.”

What is the most difficult song to play?
“Contemporary music is especially tricky to tackle. The pieces always include so many dissonant harmonies and a lot of the time, it’s atonal so there’s nothing really tying the piece together. It all works out though; when I get frustrated, I just go for a walk and scream a few times in frustration and then I restart.”
Medicare for All guarantees free and equal healthcare insurance for all Americans. The United States is the only developed country without universal healthcare insurance. Over 40% of privately insured patients face surprise medical bills, acting as the primary cause of two-thirds of personal bankruptcies in the U.S. (USA Today). In Syosset, 2.37% of the population is uninsured and 65.1% is covered under employer-based insurance (Data USA). Tens of millions of Americans, including the 2.37% uninsured population and 65.1% employer-based insurance beneficiaries in Syosset, struggle with medical debts and avoid needed care for fear of the cost (Federal Reserve). Medicare for All would allow all Americans to gain access to healthcare while boosting economic prosperity; Syosset is no exception.

Guaranteed healthcare would eliminate the struggle many Americans face from choosing between life or crippling debt. Additionally, according to UC Berkeley, accessibility and choice of prescription medicine will increase under Medicare for All since out-of-pocket payments and out-of-network healthcare professionals will no longer exist. According to Ms. Lamond, a social studies teacher at Syosset High School, “if wasteful spending can be eliminated, it would certainly bode well for people employed by [Syosset] hospitals and clinics. Our healthcare system reflects our historic racial and class inequities at every turn. If we continue to treat healthcare as a privilege, instead of a human right, then we are accepting the reality that over 30 million people’s lives are treated as expendable in this nation. The poorer communities of color live in the areas that are in both ‘health care deserts’ and ‘food deserts.’ The current COVID-19 pandemic has exposed health care inequities for all to see, and will hopefully lead to a renewed push to make serious institutional changes, such as ‘Medicare for All.’ A main problem will be how to disentangle the profit motive from the accomplishment of equal access to quality health care.” Clearly, the current dysfunctional system is not satisfactory for many Americans.
Since the largest industry in Syosset is healthcare and social assistance (Data USA), the popping of the private healthcare stock bubble and subsequent recession could put many Syosset residents out of work, causing massive economic harm to the Syosset community.

Clearly, the universal coverage and economic benefits that Medicare for All would provide are critical for the health of American citizens and the U.S. economy. Through lower drug prices, equal access, and a public health motive, hundreds of Americans might not be pushed into poverty, avoid medical care for fear of high costs, or lose family and friends in a possible future pandemic. The potential for economic prosperity and growth is undeniable.

Healthcare spending is rising at an unprecedented rate - faster than the growth of the US economy - leading insurance premiums to rise over 90%, according to the Wharton School. Thus, families will have to pay more for healthcare than they do now due to excessively high private insurance administrative costs (University of Massachusetts). The University of Massachusetts also reports that the total savings from Medicare for All would amount to $5.1 trillion dollars, which could act as a safety net for future recessions. The University of Cambridge warns that by allowing healthcare costs to skyrocket, the healthcare stock bubble could pop as employers and citizens push back on excessive healthcare costs. As a result, healthcare insurance companies could accumulate massive debt to make up for the decrease in revenue from consumers, and investors might rapidly sell healthcare stocks. The resulting impact of a healthcare stock bubble pop could mirror that of the 2008 recession caused by the housing bubble pop, which led to a devastating recession that put up to 900 million people in poverty (Huffington Post).
“WE’RE NOT GOING BANKRUPT” - A.C.T. LIVES TO PERFORM ANOTHER SHOW

BY JULIA SCHENONE AND EMMA STALLER, ENTERTAINMENT EDITORS

This past year has been a turbulent time for many groups and clubs at Syosset High School: A.C.T, the thespian club, is no exception. Due to COVID-19 safety protocol, the club has had to perform their productions virtually. With the annual musical production set to appear on stage soon, a pressing question has arisen: how can the integrity of the theatergoing experience be maintained through a screen? To answer this, we went straight to the source: supervisor and director of A.C.T, Mr. Connor.

Evidently, there have been a few setbacks for the group, specifically when it comes to "learn[ing] how to work in a completely different environment", Mr. Connor explained. As the pandemic went on, Mr. Connor began to have worries about whether the cast would "be able to perform in front of a live audience", or have the "opportunity to tell stories" at all. However, due to the grit and determination of the club's members; "I've been very pleased. I've been very pleased with the way people want to work. I've been very pleased with how they've been willing to give so much of themselves and make these productions happen, and I'm really so grateful to all of the students."

According to Mr. Connor, the productions will be showcased in an intimate, movie-style fashion, streamed live for viewing audiences. This opportunity was made possible by the club's film editors. The camera techniques utilized by the crew include filming with "three cameras every single time", and "then taking those camera shots" and deciding "what looks good, what's going to make a good looking story." In the words of Mr. Connor, "it's really their editing that's making everything happen."

One issue that has not disappeared from previous years is the matter of audience turnout. Despite an excess of posters lining the school halls, with the exception of the group's musicals, "it has always seemed like a struggle to get an audience in for the shows, even in a non virtual setting. 100 to 150 people in the crowd has always been an amazing thing." Cast and crew members wish they "could get more from the community in terms of only family and friends being the ones to come see the non-musicals."

In terms of this year's predicted turnout, Mr. Connor believes "the musical is going to be very popular" because geographically distant relatives "can now see the show that they've never been able to see before. All they need is a code and some wifi."
Luckily, increased attendance is not the only positive the pandemic has granted the club. As a result of this year’s productions being virtual, A.C.T hasn’t “spent as much on the shows as [they] normally do. Part of this is because "the district has offered to help to recoup some of the losses from last year by buying all the materials this year." Since the start of the club, A.C.T. has “always been self supporting” from a financial standpoint, and only receives “about $3,000” from student government: the remaining budget is money that the club has raised through fundraisers and shows. Although $3,000 is a generous amount, running a single musical costs upwards of $19,000. In the past, A.C.T has spent $8,000 on costume rental, $3,000 on lighting, and $6,000 on rights and royalties. A.C.T. tackles this substantial bill with cost-efficient practices: “we reuse a lot of our sets and have storage containers outside. We try to be inventive.” Many of the stage pieces A.C.T. uses are reimagined incorporations of past productions.

A.C.T. has built a reputation for itself that is nothing short of impressive. Mr. Connor proudly boasts about having “a couple of alumni in Broadway productions”, and sending students “to schools and theater programs like Boston University, Ithaca, Syracuse, North Carolina School of the Arts, and Carnegie Mellon.” A.C.T’s undoubted success leads us to ask, why does the high school choose not to fully fund the club? According to Mr. Connor, “if the money is coming from the district, there’s just so many extra steps.” Regardless of the means of funding, A.C.T. is an incredibly valuable club for students in the arts and has been met with much success in the Syosset community.
Syosset High School’s Annual Dance Show involves students from every grade collaborating to choreograph a dance routine, which is then performed for friends, family, and the school community. Unfortunately, last year dancers were unable to put on a show when school went remote due to COVID-19. Now, with CDC restrictions loosening up, will the students be able to take the stage this year?

This year, the dance program at SHS has had to make many modifications to their practice sessions due to virtual and hybrid schooling. Despite the challenge, the department’s goal is to keep participants engaged and active, while also having fun. To do this, students are required to keep their cameras on during meetings to encourage participation. Mr. Connor, the dance and theatre director at the high school, said “since dance is such a kinesthetic art, the only way to really learn is to do it consistently: to train the muscle memory on how to perform each step.” Students learn the same set of choreography two days in a row so that hybrid students have a chance to review the steps on the day they attend in person. Additionally, “all virtual” students are provided with alternative ways to have their performance assessed and show participation. One of the options is that when the class has dance projects, these students are able to modify the project and present to the teacher via Google Meet.

Dance class has definitely been one of the more difficult classes to adapt to the setting of virtual learning. Since the classes have to review previously learned choreography every day, planning for the dance show is seemingly behind schedule. According to Mr. Connor, “at this point, things are still unclear as to what type of dance show we’ll be presenting. We have to keep the safety of our students first and foremost in any type of production we plan to present.” Mr. Connor explained that the dance department does not anticipate there being a live performance in front of an audience in the auditorium. Still, they are constantly checking with the district to see if any changes have been made to the guidelines. On the positive side, there is a good chance that there will be a virtual performance in place of a live show, although teachers have yet to determine the location where filming will take place while keeping everyone properly distanced. Nevertheless, a virtual performance right now seems to be a much more viable and realistic option, as it can include all virtual students.

Mr. Connor ended the interview claiming that “the year has been going well, considering the difficult position we all find ourselves in. We’ve learned how to adjust a little more to creating dance in this new medium. It will never take the place of being together every day and collaborating with students, but we’ve learned to continue to help all of the dancers grow by challenging them with new ways to work.”