

Tops in Texas—News 2024  
Madison Gordon—Denton Ryan (5A)

Following a proposal by incoming senior class president Lynsey Hanklin wanting to implement gender neutral homecoming court and events for homecoming, freshman, sophomores and juniors will vote tomorrow over the proposed changes.

“In 2024, our society shouldn’t divide everything by boys and girls,” Hanklin said. “There’s no such thing as ‘boys activities’ and ‘girl activities’ anymore. I feel strongly that our student council should reflect the school community we are here to serve.”

The proposed changes will omit the previous king, queen, beau, sweetheart, prince and princess roles and change it to have two honorees for each: homecoming royalty, clubs royalty, athletics royalty and fine arts royalty.

“Why should someone’s gender play into whether their fellow classmates can honor them?” Hanklin said. “With the new court structure, any person in the school will be eligible to win a spot on the homecoming court. This is the best way to represent our student body, and I expect the results on Wednesday to show that.”

However, junior Lisa Jaccar is concerned that there will be less inclusivity, due to the decrease in homecoming honorees.

“Since band is so much bigger than any other fine arts group, their drum majors will win no matter what,” Jaccar said. “I think fewer groups will be represented on the homecoming court—not more. Maybe they should add more categories to get more students involved.”

The proposed changes will also replace the powderpuff football game with a co-ed kickball tournament, where any student can sign up to play on a team with their grade level.

“One of the things I love about being involved in student council is that big decisions like this are truly made by the students,” sophomore student council representative Tony Falco said. “Students can effect change in their school. Students have a voice. That’s the way it should be.”

The student council has voted to approve the changes, and last Friday, they hosted a meeting where students could ask questions about the pending changes. Seniors will not be allowed to vote because they will not be in school next year.

“Our administrators will support the students in whatever decision they make in the vote Wednesday,” Principal Carmela McGregor said. “Any time the students use their voices in an effort to make the school better, that’s a win for us as educators.”

Tops in Texas—Features 2024  
Sydney Pritchett—Gladewater Union Grove (2A)

The unseasoned pork roast sat on the counter. Preparing the seasonings, he picks up a jar of apricot preserves and turns to look for more seasonings when he hears the phone ring. He answers the call and hears the shocking news. The glass jar slips from his fingers and shatters.

After being selected to compete in a new Food Network show called “Home Chef Champions”, sophomore Alfonse Delgado will fly to Los Angeles May 25. The school is hosting a practice day May 17 where people can present Delgado with surprise ingredients to help him prepare for the show.

“I’ve spent my whole life watching my mom in the kitchen,” Delgado said. “To save money, we never ordered pizza or went out to eat. We learned how to make delicious meals with the ingredients we had in the pantry.”

After watching the show during winter break, Delgado’s mother convinced him to apply. In February, he received a call to audition via Zoom.

“The Zoom audition was a little awkward,” Delgado said. “They had me set up my computer in my kitchen and talked to me while I prepared a tamale casserole. My mom came on-camera and tasted my creation at the end of the audition. I think she was just proud to taste the dish that might get me on TV.”

A few weeks after the Zoom meeting, the casting director notified Delgado that he was selected to compete on the show.

“While I was surprised he got a call for the audition, I wasn’t surprised he was chosen,” Delgado’s mother Jenai Delgado said. “Of course, I’m a little biased. He’s always been my little assistant in the kitchen.”

The Food Network will fly Delgado and his mother to Los Angeles to film his episode and compete to win \$15,000.

“At this point, I don’t care that much if I win or lose,” Delgado said. “I just want to make my mom proud. Don’t get me wrong. It would be great to get \$15,000 and put a down payment on a new car for my mom.”

After years of helping his mother in the kitchen, Delgado joined the culinary arts program and is in a double-blocked class for students to prepare and serve meals for catering jobs and box lunches for faculty and staff on Fridays.

“On the second day of school, I gave students a chicken breast, access to seasonings and a stainless steel pan, just to see what the students would come up with,” culinary arts teacher Gladys Day said. “Alfonse tenderized his chicken and seasoned it well. I didn’t even need to eat lunch because I finished eating his assignment.”

During the show, Delgado will compete against three other amateur chefs in three different rounds: appetizer, entree and dessert. During each round, contestants will receive a box with three surprise ingredients they must use to create their plate.

“We’ll be pulling for him while he’s in L.A.” Day said. “I’ve only taught Alfonse for one year, but if I’ve ever taught any student who can pull off something like this, it’s him. I’m sure he’ll put together some delicious food for those judges.”

Members of the community will come together and bring surprise ingredients boxes to help Delgado practice for the competition.

“My friends and I are putting together a box with a cucumber, Red Vines and shrimp,” senior Adriana Sanchez said. “I’m not sure I’m going to want to eat whatever Alfonse comes up

with, but it will at least be interesting to see what he does. We're all excited for him to represent Leaguetown on the Food Network."

The ingredients could range from Skittles to peanut butter to Cap'n Crunch. Delgado must include all ingredients in the box into his plate.

"Ms. Day said to make sure I have salt, fat, acid and heat on each plate and that I taste my food as I go," Delgado said. "I think if I follow her words of advice and keep thinking about doing this for my mom, victory could taste pretty sweet."

Tops in Texas—Editorials 2024

Tierney Withrow—Argyle (5A)

A proposal by Superintendent Alberto Fedrigotti would create a district police department by hiring a licensed police chief, dispatcher and one officer for each of the two high school campuses and the two middle school campuses. The estimated cost of creating the department would top \$1.2 million for infrastructure, equipment, facilities, vehicles and employee salaries. The school board will vote on the proposal Thursday.

The board must pass Fedrigotti's proposal to create a district police department.

The current campus police system is not efficient. To comply with a 2023 state law requiring at least one armed security guard on every school campus, the district hired retired police officers to serve as school marshals. When an arrest happens on campus, the district and marshals collaborate with three different law enforcement agencies. Forming a district police department simplifies the process of keeping students safe.

If a major incident were to happen on a campus, having police on site could diffuse the situation faster. A study by the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights showed that schools with police officers on campus have 30% fewer fights and threats and a 150% increase in weapon detection on campuses. The district needs police working to prevent crime rather than just responding to it when it happens.

Those opposing the proposal believe creating the department is too costly. However, there will be no additional tax increase for the community. According to Fedrigotti, the cost of forming the department is a small increase to funds used last year to hire the marshals.

A district police department would be beneficial to the district. Students, staff and parents must speak at the board meeting and show their support for Fedrigotti's proposal to prioritize campus safety.