

Students bring awareness to global warming

As environmental issues keep accelerating, many schools have created organizations that try to help and try to fix the issue.

At Annandale, this club is known as Green Atoms.

In previous years, the Green Atoms has been known for collecting recyclable items, such as paper and plastic bottles, from classrooms.

This year, the Green Atoms have a lot of new plans to try and accomplish, specifically when it comes to global issues.

Vice President of the club, junior Eileen Ngo-Tran, says that the club is trying to revitalize.

“We have roughly 83 people who currently participate in the club,” Ngo-Tran says. “At meetings, all of us have been trying to come up with new ways to help the environment, and make activities more engaging so that more people will join and help.”

In recent weeks, the club has had guest speakers come and talk to students about specific issues after school.

Earlier this year, the club held a session with a beekeeper who talked to attendees about the importance of having honey bees in the environment.

Just two weeks ago, Resource Director and tennis coach Hassan Mims held a session in the library.

“The people who came to these meetings were very interested, so hopefully we will be able to do more of these later on in the year,” Ngo-Tran said. “We are also trying to come up with

some sort of incentive with science teachers, too.”

Another thing that the Green Atoms club is trying to do more is Ossian Hall cleanups.

Every once in a while, about a dozen club participants come together and clean the park and it’s parking lot.

They are joined by members of Science National Honor Society who are trying to fulfill community service hour requirements.

“We always have good turnouts for these cleanups. It’s very important that Ossian stays as clean as possible, so we’ll probably do more of the cleanups,” Ngo-Tran said.

Perhaps the biggest new thing that the club is doing this year is a plan to earn the Eco-School Award for Braddock ES.

The Eco-School is an award that is given to elementary schools for excellence in environmental action taken by the school.

Currently, the Green Atoms are working on the process with Braddock’s principal, Keesha Jackson-Muir.

First, they will have to get the program to conduct an environmental audit on the school.

“The audit that will be conducted will be on issues like biodiversity, climate change, consumption and waste, energy, healthy living, healthy school, teaching students about forests, school yard forests, sustainable foods, transportation availability, water, and watershed oceans,” Ngo-Tran said.

Currently, the program is in the process of auditing for waste and consumption.

The club intends to look at the infrastructure of the school, such as the presence of recycling bins and posters around the school.

“If there is a problem with one of the topics that are audited, then we’ll need to have an action plan to change the issues. One example would be reusing food or making sure that untouched food isn’t thrown out,” Ngo-Tran said.

Despite all these new changes and plans, the club is still doing the activity that it is known for: collecting recyclables around the school.

“We can help global warming if everyone takes their part in taking steps to be more eco-friendly,” Ngo-Tran says “We need to think about our planet’s future, and how our actions impact it.”

One way to do this The Green Atoms meet every Wednesdays in Room 104 from 3:10 pm – 4:00 pm.

Climate changing the world

In Sept. of this year, the east coast was hit with Hurricane Florence, whose aftermath is still affecting North Carolina and South Carolina today.

A month later, Hurricane Michael devastated citizens in Florida and Georgia.

Just last month, California was hit with fast spreading forest fires.

These are just a few of the dozens of natural disasters that took place in the U.S. in 2018.

All of these disasters combined have killed hundreds and displaced thousands. Damages that have resulted from the high winds, flash floods, and blazing fires are are believed to

cost several billion dollars.

When all of this is considered, it's only natural to wonder what could be causing the sudden outburst of natural disasters.

Most scientists agree that one major factor is linked to these occurrences: climate change.

Climate change is the change in weather patterns around the Earth due to an increase of the presence of greenhouse gasses, such as carbon, in the atmosphere.

Contrary to popular belief, climate change and global warming are not the same thing. Global warming is the increase of the Earth's surface temperature, and is a cause of climate change.

Though there are some climate change deniers, there is strong and consistent scientific evidence that climate change is happening, and it's happening rapidly.

Since 1880, Earth's surface temperature has increased 0.9 degrees Celsius. The oceans are warming up.

Perhaps the most well known evidence of climate change is the shrinking of the Arctic ice caps.

A report done by NASA concluded that 95% of climate change was caused by human activity.

When all this information is considered, how is climate change connected to extreme weather?

Climate change can be linked to floods, hurricanes, forest fires, and droughts very easily.

As Earth's surface and atmosphere gets warmer, it is able to hold much more moisture. This moisture comes from rising sea levels, which are caused by melting ice near the poles.

This is why precipitation levels are so high nowadays, and why

rain and snow can be seen in areas that are relatively dry.

All of these factors also increase the level of rainfall during hurricanes and tropical storms.

Scientists have also noted a link between an increase in the pressure of hurricanes and rising temperatures. A higher pressure means that the hurricane is likely to be deadlier.

NASA's climate change study also stated that warmer temperatures only increase the length and severity of forest fires.

Climate change's link to droughts is much more obvious.

In some areas, such as parts of the Southwest, Asia, and Africa, the number of droughts is expected to increase.

Why? Higher temperatures are increasing evaporation rates, meaning that water is being removed from Earth's surface in these regions.

Trump dumps on the Earth

On Black Friday, while Americans were busy shopping and eating Thanksgiving leftovers, President Donald Trump's administration was up to something else.

The administration released the National Climate Assessment, a report on climate change.

Worked on by over 300 climate change specialist and 13 different federal agencies, the report was meant to be released this month.

The information in the report concluded that the Earth's

temperature is rapidly increasing at an alarming rate.

It also included that human actions, such as the accumulation of factory waste, was the cause of this. The report went on to say that climate change has the potential to drastically affect the U.S. economy.

It is widely believed that the reason that the reason that the release date of the report was pushed up was because the administration hoped that people would be too wrapped up in the holidays to pay attention to it's content.

Contrary to the administration's theory, reporters and citizens alike latched on to the report in disbelief with what it said.

Within minutes of the report's release, most news channels went from reporting on Black Friday deals to criticizing Trump for it's early release.

Talk about the report was fueled once again on the following Monday when Trump was asked about the report. He responded by saying that he doesn't believe in climate change, and for that reason, he hadn't bothered to read most of the report.

White House spokespeople went on to say that the evidence in the report wasn't completely factual, as it depended on models and data used and collected during the Obama administration.

Trump's remarks aren't surprising, and they only support the belief that he and his administration meant to cover up the report because they disagreed with it's content.

Time and time again, Trump has shown his stance as a climate-change denier. A [list](#) compiled by Vox in June 2017 noted that he had posted over 115 tweets doubting the validity of climate change, just between Nov. 2011 and Oct. 2015.

On Nov. 21, just 2 days before the release of the National

Climate Assessment, Trump tweeted to his nearly 57 million followers, "Brutal and Extended Cold Blast could shatter ALL RECORDS – Whatever happened to Global Warming?"

On Dec. 28 2017, he tweeted, "In the East, it could be the COLDEST New Year's Eve on record. Perhaps we could use a little bit of that good old Global Warming that our country, but not other countries, was going to pay TRILLIONS OF DOLLARS to protect against. Bundle up!"

But as a President, Trump has taken his skeptic beliefs from Twitter to the real world.

In 2017, he announced his plan to pull the U.S. out of the Paris Agreement.

Trump defended this plan by saying that he "represents Pittsburgh, not Paris."

Despite this statement, nearly 80% of Americans believe that climate change is real and needs to be limited, including Republicans and Trump's own daughter, Ivanka.

The Paris Agreement, which was signed on April 22, 2016 by 195 foreign leaders, is an agreement between nations to attempt to lower greenhouse gas levels and work on decreasing the effects of climate change.

Trump's declaration to withdraw is only symbolic for now, as none of the nations involved in the agreement can withdraw until Nov. 2020.

Still, Trump's actions have encouraged other nations to consider withdrawing, such as oil-rich Saudi Arabia.

At the same time, the Trump administration has already taken actions that could accelerate climate change.

Just 2 weeks ago, the EPA announced that restrictions on the greenhouse gas emissions of coal companies would be loosened

up.

Five tips on What to do at Home to Help the Environment

A breeze is blowing at your window and you can feel the cold radiating from your glass window into your room.

You look at your phone and check the weather app and see that it's an astonishing 40 degrees.

After using your phone, you bundle up in a sweater and a pair of comfortable sweatpants.

Once the door opens, you feel the cold rush into your body and you are amazed about how cold it is.

Climate change is the cause of the very cold winter nights and blazing hot summer days.

The cause of climate change is because of the many fossil fuels that have been propelled into the ozone layer, attacking it at every minute.

Many superpower countries have been evaluated as the primary cause of climate change. These countries like the United States, China, Russia and many more have pumped out fossil fuels for the last century, causing the sea levels to rise at least eight inches.

This isn't an alarming subject about the bigger picture, global warming.

As of now, you can do many things to help Earth. Here are five tips to prevent climate change in your own household.

1 Stop using gas on a weekly basis

Instead of going on the bus or going in a car every day to school, make a change and either walk if you live close enough

to your school or ride a bike.

Any means of transportation that uses any fuel will be detrimental to the climate when time goes by.

Cutting down on it will furthermore make life a healthier home and earth a beautiful home for all of us.

This means that using a bike or even walking to school on a nice breezy blue-skied day will be good for exercise.

If this isn't a good choice for you, carpool with others and it'll cut down on how many cars on the road by having a friend or a relative to pick up others and go to school together.

Also, switching to an electric car may seem pricey for others, but if it is in hands reach, going for an electric car from brands like Tesla will be good for everybody.

Just everyday transportation can really push towards the ozone layer depleting and cutting down on this helps later on.

2 Eat greens, not lean meat products

There are four simple changes you can make to your diet to reduce its climate impact.

Prioritize on eating meat-free meals to cut the slack on these innocent animals being slaughtered.

If this is not possible in your carnivorous meals and diets, when going grocery shopping, look for organic and local foods whenever possible.

These types of foods are really beneficial to your health and can boost vitamins and how you live your days.

After making these quick food switches, remember to not waste food, this is such a heartbreak because of the fact that in the United States, we lead the world in food waste.

Roughly fifty percent of all produce in the United States is reportedly thrown away.

This leads to 60 million tons worth of produce annually thrown away into your trash when it could be reused into different meals and recipes.

The United States is leading the world in the amount of food wasted also brings up the point of growing your own vegetables

in your own household.

Growing food is very simple and easy.

Finding a spot in your backyard or even the front yard if needs be is a perfect spot to start growing simple fruits and vegetables that cuts costs when needing to go grocery shopping, a win-win situation.

3 Reduce, reuse, recycle

A simple thing to do at home is to recycle bottles and just any product that is able to be recycled. Instead of disposable water bottles, making a switch to a reusable water bottle will help too.

Whenever you can recycle paper, plastic, newspapers, glass and aluminum cans is a starter too.

If there isn't a recycling program near where you live though, starting one would be an amazing option to help everyone in your community make it a better living area for everybody.

4 USE LESS A/C OR HEAT

Using less heat and air conditioning can lower the costs of bills in your household.

Adding insulation to your walls and attic and installing new weather strips around windows and doors in your house can lower your heating costs by more than 25%.

This altogether reduces the amount of energy needed to heat or cool your home.

Also, turning down your heat while you're sleeping at night or even turning it off while you're away during the day can really help cut down on these costs and also moderate the temperatures in your house as well.

Setting your thermostat just two degrees lower in the winter or higher in the summer could save about 2,000 pounds of carbon dioxide each year.

This will really protect the ozone layer.

5 TELL YOUR STORY OF WHAT YOU HAVE DONE TO SAVE

A healthy planet with stable climate isn't all about political issues and a discussion of if its real or fake.

It's about the families, the kids living on this planet, the vast communities and the future of humanity altogether.

It's important that everyone hops on board on this wave to work towards solutions for our planet.

People tend to be more influenced by friends than by experts, so make sure to bring up the topic of climate change with friends and family.

Green Atoms bands up together to recycle and go to parks to do the same.

This club has many members and is looking for more.

These simple changes in the community can cause an impact and a movement.

Encourage yourself to use these tips in their daily lives to cut down and help the environment.

Why do people procrastinate on tasks?

Anyone who says that they have not procrastinated a little before is not being truthful.

Everyone has pushed at least a few assignments back a bit.

Maybe it is because you wanted to hang out with your friends, or maybe it is because you just really hate the class.

Doing a few things late is normal. Procrastination is not.

Procrastination is when people push multiple large tasks until the last minute.

It is a chronic problem that affects all parts of the affected person's life.

Many students tend to procrastinate on completing homework and studying for exams.

This is a big problem, as it can lead to poor grades and high levels of stress.

While it may be possible to get away with procrastination in middle and high school, it can lead to big issues in college.

A report published by the Centers for Disease Control noted that 90% of college students procrastinate.

Of this percentage, 25% are chronic procrastinators.

The report also noted that there is a trend that suggests that these people do not end up graduating because of the insurmountable amount of pressure.

While some believe it is just lazy students who procrastinate, there are adults that deal with the issue in their day to day life.

Some adults wait until the last minute to do things like fill out forms and pay bills.

This can lead to massive issues such as job loss and debt due to unpaid late bills.

Nobody wants to work with or trust an adult who cannot manage their time.

Most people do not know what causes procrastination, and often chalk it up to bad character.

Often, procrastination is a sign of deeper issues.

The number one cause of procrastination is poor time management.

Most procrastinators were never picked up the ability to map out schedules, so they never get things done in a timely fashion.

Procrastination can be a sign of low self esteem.

Some people believe that they are bound to do terribly on an assignment or task because they do not understand it completely, so it is better to save time and just not do it.

Often times, these people have the knowledge, but the stress causes them to stop believing in themselves, which just sets them up for failure.

Another issue that can cause people to procrastinate is issues with paying attention and focusing on objectives.

Students who have poor attention spans and trouble focusing,

often have the intention of getting work done, but their wandering mind inhibits them from fulfilling their aims.

Problems with focusing are only exacerbated by things like phones, video games, and social media.

It can be very hard to focus when phones and computers keep buzzing with notifications every second.

"A lot of the time, I will sit down to start my work, but I just can not," senior Hemen Besufekad said. "I get distracted with my phone or thinking about other stuff, and I can not focus on what I am supposed to be doing."

Some people even work to distract themselves.

These individuals will complete unnecessary tasks, such as doing an assignment due in weeks or offering their time to someone else.

This is done in the hopes of giving themselves a pass on doing the work that should be their first priority.

While there are many cons with procrastination, it can be a pro, too.

There are people who tend to do better on assignments when they procrastinate because the pressure encourages them to do better.

"Personally, my best work is done at the last minute," junior Elizabeth Dula said. "The things that I procrastinate always have more quality, and I earn better grades on them."

People who procrastinate tend to be extreme perfectionists.

They want to ensure that their work is in tip top shape before they turn it in.

Sometimes, this is a good character trait. It ensures that their work is always great.

These types of people tend to go through their work multiple times, so they notice more errors along the way.

At the same time, perfectionism can lead to trouble.

Since perfectionists seek to reach unrealistic goals, they are often met with disappointment when their work and grades do not meet their ultra high expectations.

Perfectionism can also lead to the belief that it is better to not do a task, rather than do poorly at it.

While procrastinating may seem like a good idea at times, it will just lead to more issues.

Chronic procrastinators report high levels of stress, anxiety and depression.

These are all terrible for both physical and social health.

They can lead to physical symptoms, such as coronary disease.

They also have the ability to lead to poor relationships with others

Other people, including employers and teachers, have a hard time trusting procrastinators.

Employers will not want to give procrastinators hard tasks that can move them up career-wise.

Teachers will expect poor work and effort. Both will not have sympathy for the person.

All the tasks that were pushed until the last minute will close in and drown the procrastinator in a wave of pressure and guilt.

The work will not be sufficient for a good grade, and most times, it will not be completed at all.

The CDC report also noted that 85% of procrastinators feel regret for not doing things in a timely fashion.

Once all this information is looked at, it is clear to see that while there are valid causes of procrastination, it has terrible side effects, so it is best to try to let the habit go.

Eight tips to help you manage your time better

Everyday, people tend to put things off to the side.

Sometimes it's those little things like cleaning up the house, doing chores, or delaying homework and studying.

But often times procrastinators avoid large and difficult tasks by putting distractions before important tasks to waste time. Procrastinators usually give them something to do before facing the fact that they have these tasks at hand.

Procrastination is a horrible habit to pick up at an early age and is detrimental later on.

There are many different ways like doing your work on time or manage your time wisely but here are tips to start now.

1 Use your agenda

Agendas are very useful to keep your tasks tidied up and have everything sorted out.

It's easier to remember what you have to do if it is written down

"I think that having an agenda will really help you manage your time," junior Sydney Wuhrer said. "I use my personal agenda for everything since the school didn't give us agendas at all."

At AHS, agendas used to be given out to every student but this year, they changed that policy.

The agendas are now given to the freshmen class and are also sold separately to upperclassmen for five dollars.

"As a freshman, I don't really use my agenda," freshman Stephanie Alvarado said. "I feel as if they should've given the agendas to every class and not just ours."

2 keep a schedule

You should keep a schedule along with your agenda.

Once your teachers give you dates for when assignments are due, you should plan out how long it will take you.

Try your best to write down what times of what days you are going to work on an assignment.

If you write this sort of information down, you will feel more motivated to not only do your work, but do it in a timely fashion.

"I keep a schedule of what I'm going to do during the day," junior Emily Shawish said. "I keep track of what time my

practices are, and how long I'm going to spend on each assignment."

3 Start with the hardest tasks first

Starting the day with your biggest tasks will lighten up the workload that you will have to do later.

Starting with the hardest and most challenging task first will relieve yourself of the most stress making the rest of the day more positive. Also, you'll feel good about yourself and a sense of relaxation.

"If I had an essay due the next day, I would start it first," freshman Jasmine Covington said. "It really helps that doing the hardest thing makes the rest of the day easier and my to-do list even lighter.

4 Smaller tasks first, bigger tasks later

Similarly, you should do small assignments, then larger ones. Breaking down tasks is quick and easy.

First, take out all of your assignments and break them down from sheets of paper, packets, and study guides.

Then, make a note of how long it will take to do each. If it takes less than ten minutes to do a sheet of paper, start on that.

Then proceed to tackle everything else.

"Once I get home, I do the homework that takes five to fifteen minutes first" freshman Jasmine Covington said. "Then, I start on my bigger tasks like packets or study."

5 Limit electronic usage

Once you plop down on your bed, resist the temptation of using anything electronic.

With the amount of time you already get from going to school and going home, time management is key to getting your work done and getting the grades that you want.

Playing games and using social media will take up your time before you know it.

This is really hard when you use your phone for hours at a time.

This tip will really help you stop the urge of procrastinating by cutting down the usage of your electronics.

“I tend to use my phone a lot and it takes up a lot of time out of my day,” junior Kevin Calix said. “I see the outcome of it since I don’t do my homework.”

6 Stop thinking, start doing

Instead of contemplating about doing something and wasting time, start doing them.

This is the easiest and simplest tip that you can start doing now.

Simple and quick actions is really time consuming if it all adds up.

When you think about something, you’re wasting minutes and even hours at a time not doing the work that you should be doing.

“With all of these new game releases, I don’t like saving all of my work for later but I have to,” junior Lucas Tewolde said. “The amount of time that I have spent procrastinating is too much to comprehend.”

7 Do a power hour

First, take an hour out of what you are doing and do as much work as you can in that one hour.

This one hour is very helpful because once you get home from school the free time that you have seems like a lot but is very little if wasted.

This hour you have a wide variety of things to get done.

“Personally, I have gotten so much work done in an hour,” Tewolde said. “From study guides to homework, all done when I took an hour out of my day from everything, even including games.”

8 Change yourself

At the end of the day, all these tips are helpful.

However, you need to change yourself.

Procrastinating takes a toll on your life and how you manage your time.

Changing this habit can be very beneficial to your everyday life.

Stop beating yourself up about the past tasks.

Thoughts such as “I should’ve started this earlier,” or “I need to stop procrastinating,” are negative and will only make matters worse.

Instead of focusing on other things such as playing games or hanging out with friends, strive for excellence, creating excellence.

At the same time, make sure to take a look at yourself, and focus on getting your tasks done.

Procrastination tales

Days packed with homework and practices.

This is the norm for junior Megan Le, an IB Diploma candidate and swimmer for the school’s swim and dive team.

Le is a participant in several clubs, such as Science Olympiad and Key Club. She is also a member of Math, National, and Science Honor Societies.

However, one factor in Le’s life that makes her involvement in so many clubs so difficult is her struggles with procrastination.

“Some days, I find it very difficult to do work,” Le said. “Especially after I’ve been tired out by after school activities.”

Sometimes, Le forgets that assignments are due, or underestimates how long that they will take.

Most nights, she has to stay up to do her homework. Regardless, her work is always done on time.

“It’s very hard to do, but I stay up nearly every night to ensure that my work is done on time,” Le said.

Below is the schedule of a typical day in the life of Le:

Morning:

Le wakes up at 4:00 a.m. in order to attend morning practice for swim.

"Sometimes, it can be really hard to wake up, but it's very important to attend this practice," Le said

R1/W2:

For R1, Le has IB Spanish I. For W2,

Le has IB Physics I. "The hardest part about Spanish is studying for the tests," Le said. "Physics is pretty straightforward."

R3/W4:

For R3, Le has a free period.

"I spend most of this time talking to friends," Le said. "My W4 is very noisy, so it's really hard for me to focus in there."

R5/W6:

Le has IB Math SL I for R5, and IB History of Americas for W6.

"Math is a bit confusing this year, but the homework is not that bad," Le said. "But the H0A homework takes a long time.

R7/W8:

IB Biology HL takes up Le's R7, while IB Literature I HL takes up her W8.

"I get a lot of math homework, but minimal homework for English," Le said.

2:55-4:30

Some days, Le has swim practice during this time. "It's kind of hard to have practice after school because it makes me so tired," Le said.

4:30-7:00

Le spends this time period doing fun things, like hanging out with friends and watching Netflix.

"This is sort of my time to unwind and relax," Le said.

7:00-1:00 a.m.

This is the time period where Le works on her homework. "It can be very hard to focus some days, especially when I have my phone laying around," Le said.

1:00-1:30

Le uses this time to prepare herself for bed. She prepares her backpack for the next day and sets out her outfit.

"Most nights, I'm up this late, which is really bad since I have to be up early in the morning," Le said.

Le's daily routine is very packed and ends up giving her roughly four to five hours of rest each night.

With this work pileup, each time she uses her phone, minutes to even hours go by.

"Once I wake up, I always feel so tired and I want to stay in bed," Le said. "I wish I could just keep my hands off of my phone but it is so hard."

Time management queen

Junior Cynthia Nguyen is a busy student. Along with being an IB Diploma candidate, she is also a year-round athlete, running for the school's cross country, winter, and spring track teams.

Even with all of these extra-curricular activities, Nguyen is also a member of Social Studies Honor Society.

Even though her days are packed with a million deadlines, Nguyen has always been able to successfully manage her time and avoid procrastination.

"In the past years, I struggled a little with finding time to do things," Nguyen said. "But this year, I have learned how to prioritize and get things done in a timely fashion."

Nguyen does her homework as soon as she gets home, and prioritizes her tasks in order to ensure that the important

things get done.

"I'll put more focus and time on studying on a test, rather than putting all that effort into a simple worksheet for homework," Nguyen said.

Below is the schedule of a typical day in the life of Nguyen:

Morning:

Nguyen wakes up at 6:30 a.m. in order to prepare for her day. She gets ready and eats breakfast. She then walks to school.

R1/W2:

For R1, Nguyen has IB Spanish I. For W2, Nguyen has IB Physics I.

"Some days, I get a lot of homework in Spanish, other days I have none," Nguyen said. "For Physics, I don't get homework often."

R3/W4:

For R3, Nguyen has a free period.

"During both of these periods, I try to finish up all the homework that I get in R3 and W4. I try to not talk to my friends too much," Nguyen said.

R5/W6:

Nguyen has IB History of Americas for R5, and IB Social Anthropology for W6.

"I get very long packets for HOA, and projects in IB Anthropology," Nguyen said.

R7/W8:

IB Math HL I takes up Nguyen's R7, while IB Literature I takes up her W8.

"I get a lot of math homework, but minimal homework for English," Nguyen said.

2:55 p.m.-4:30 p.m.

During this time period, Nguyen tends to have practice for sports.

"Practices don't run too long, compared to other sports," Nguyen said.

Nguyen focuses solely on preparing for meets and races during practice.

“I do not think about my homework during this time.”

4:30 p.m.-9:00 p.m.

Nguyen uses this time period to complete her homework for all her classes.

“I try to do my homework the day that I get it,” Nguyen said. “This is to ensure that I have the maximum amount of time possible.”

Nguyen does simple tasks first, then completes larger assignments.

“I do simple worksheets, then I work on studying for tests and doing big projects, like,” Nguyen said.

9:00 p.m.-10:00 p.m.

During this hour, Nguyen prepares for bed. She sets out her backpack and outfit for the next day.

Nguyen’s daily routine is very well managed and she gets the perfect amount of sleep for any teenager.

With this routine, Nguyen never has to stress about staying up after midnight working on school assignments.

“Getting in bed at 10 is a must-have in my daily routine,” Nguyen said. “It helps me maintain the energy needed to succeed in all of my classes.”

How you can prevent the spread of STDs

A sexually transmitted disease, commonly known as an STD, is an infection that can spread during any type of sexual contact with another person. Anyone who is sexually active can get an

STD.

Unfortunately, Americans ages 15-24 make up about 50% of all STD cases. Those statistics are more than enough to get parents and schools worried.

However, thanks to the talks we get from parents at home, what we learn in health class, and the posters that hang in most doctor's offices and clinics, most teens know that there are ways to prevent the contraction of STDs.

Here are some methods of prevention that sexually active teens can use:

1) Condoms

This is undoubtedly the most used method. It is also the only form of birth control that also protects against STDs. This means that they also provide protection against pregnancy, which is one reason why they are an ideal option.

When condoms are used consistently and correctly, they are effective 98% of the time. Since so many people use them incorrectly, the total effectiveness is actually closer to 85%. They can easily be bought at drug stores for cheap prices. Some dorms at colleges even hand them out for free.

2) Vaccination

This method is safe and effective, but its abilities are limited. Vaccinations only provide protection against two STDs: hepatitis B and the human papillary infection, also known as HPV.

It's best to get all the shots before becoming sexually active, but it's perfectly fine to get them after, too. These vaccinations include three rounds and are recommended to all girls up to age 26 and all boys up to age 21.

3) Having few partners

It's okay to have multiple partners, and this method doesn't guarantee that you will never get a sexually transmitted disease. Still, statistics show that if you reduce the number of sexual partners you have, then the chances of getting a sexually transmitted disease will reduce as well.

4) Mutual Monogamy

Mutual monogamy means that you have agreed to be sexually active with just one person, and that person has agreed to only be sexually active with you. Being in a committed relationship with a partner that you know to be uninfected is definitely one of the safest ways to prevent getting an STD.

5) Frequent Testing

Before you take all these steps, it's important to know if you have already contracted an STD. You should get tested every time you have sexual contact with a new person.

You should also get tested if you have sexual relations with an old partner after a long time, and/or if your partner has been sexually active with someone else. Getting tested often is also a good idea because then if you do have an STD, you'll be able to catch it early.

6) Open Communication

It's also important that you and any partners have honest conversations when it comes to STDs. You should let your partner know if you have an STD before having sex with them, and they should do the same. It's best to not have sex with someone who refuses to tell you about their status.

7) Practice Abstinence

This is the only 100% way to avoid STDs. Abstinence is the choice of simply not having any type of sexual encounter. Many people practice abstinence for religious reasons. It's okay to start practicing abstinence after you have already had a sexual experience. Although it can be difficult, it's worth considering.

Is FLE class effective?

According to a 2017 study conducted by The Center for Disease Control, 39.5% of teenagers have had sexual intercourse.

Of that percentage, 3.4% had sex before they were 13.

13.8% reported that they have never used any sort of protection, while 91% said that they had never been tested for STDs.

When publishing this data, the CDC noted that risky sexual behavior in teens can be reduced by educating them more on things like contraceptives and STD testing.

The question is, are teenagers actually learning enough information about sex and relationships in order to make healthy decisions for themselves?

Some would say the answer is no.

Since elementary school, students at Fairfax County schools have had the option to participate in Family Life Education (FLE).

In these classes, teachers give students a variety of lessons, ranging from the makeup of a family to dating to sex trafficking.

"It's important to have this information, whether you're using it now or later in life," PE and health teacher Cragin Winkler said. "

For years, parents and older students have complained about the curriculum.

Some say that there is too much information provided to students, while others argue that their kids are not taught enough.

In reality, the course does not add much benefit to students' lives.

Course guidelines have been decided with politics and parents' opinions in mind, not what is best for the teens that it was meant for.

FLE places too much emphasis on things like puberty and anatomy. It doesn't leave much space or time for sex.

In middle school, students do not get the opportunity to have questions about certain topics, such as oral sex, answered because the course guidelines do not allow it.

One of the major points of FLE is to teach teens how to make healthy sexual choices.

How is this goal supposed to be achieved if student's curiosity on the topic is shut down and deemed inappropriate for class?

Another problem with FLE is that when sex is discussed, it's with abstinence heavy lessons.

Throughout middle school, students are encouraged to avoid premarital sex at all costs. There isn't a single lesson about contraceptives or STDs to benefit those who do participate in sexual activity at that time.

In high school, students are taught about both contraceptives and STDs.

But at this point, abstinence is still emphasized as the ultimate goal.

There's nothing wrong with abstinence, and it is important that students know about it.

But this is is a massive problem because when teachers are giving students the idea that having sex is wrong, it can make people who have already engaged in sexual activities feel ashamed about their choices.

Another reason why this is an issue is that teens are going to have sex, regardless of what adults say.

With this knowledge in mind, it makes much more sense to teach them to have safe sexual habits. Otherwise, they'll continue to make poor choices.

Still, the FLE program at FCPS is very inclusive, especially when compared to other schools.

Ninth and tenth grade students learn about abortion as an option, and there are topics about sexuality and transgender people.

"When criticizing FLE, it's important to note the things that it does do right," junior Kadajah Janneh said. "We aren't just focused on heterosexuality in that class, which is really

good.”

Most FLE teachers do try to meet students’ needs and answer questions.

“If there’s ever a question that I don’t know the answer to, I’m always okay with saying that I don’t know. I don’t want to give out misinformation, so what I will do is I’ll do research and try to find the right answer,” Winkler said.

But schools are not the only ones at fault for the lack of teenager’s knowledge about healthy sexual behavior.

Another culprit for this issue is parents.

When the topic of sex is brought up, most parents shy away. They dance around the subject in the hopes of sheltering their kids.

In fact, a report done by the CDC said that 75% of parents would rather have their kids take a class like FLE rather than teaching their kids themselves.

“Whenever I try to bring up sex at home, my parents always get annoyed with me,” junior Abby Kitila said. “They shut me down; they don’t want to talk about it.”

It’s easy to understand why parents do this. It’s an uncomfortable talk and they don’t want to believe that their kids are sexually active.

But the reality is that there’s a possibility that they are.

Even if some teens are not sexually active, sex is pretty much everywhere nowadays – from television to movies to music. There’s no way that they don’t have some sort of understanding of what sex is.

Taking that into account, parents should find the time to have a serious conversation with their kids and answer any questions.

Ultimately, kids know what sex is, and most want to learn more about the topics that surround it.

Schools and parents should try their best to answer questions so that teens will practice safe sex and feel

The rise of STDs

Everyday, more and more teens are at risk of being exposed to deadly sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and diseases (STDs).

Many medical surveys released in 2015 have shown a spike in teenagers who have contracted STIs and STDs.

“It should be well known that teenagers should abstain from having any sexual activity until they’re older,” sophomore Isabella Rodas said.

As opposed to the results of the 2015 survey on people who have contracted STDs, there has been a decline in the number of people who have had sex in 2016.

This also led to a decrease in the amount of people who have contracted STDs or STIs.

The survey showed that teens and adults between the ages of 18-30, who reported having sex twice a month, has plummeted from 75% in the early 2000’s to 66% in 2016.

Gail Bolan, the director of the CDC’s Division of STD Prevention, said exactly that these two trends in sexual behavior were happening at once.

She thoroughly explained that the sexual behaviors known to be contributing to widespread STD transmission have almost nothing to do with how much sex people are having but instead, it’s the riskier sex that people have been having.

“Hearing about how many times Americans have sexual activity surprises me,” Rodas said. “But with the rise of STDs, you’ll never know when you might get it.”

In the study of STDs, the New York Times states that the rise of these sexually transmitted diseases are comm  only found in minorities or young people.

This means that students at AHS are at a higher risk of contracting STDs or STIs.

The most common STD contracted by 15-28 year olds is chlamydia. Unfortunately, chlamydia rates are the highest. These rates counted for two-thirds of the diagnoses in 2015. According to the Centers of Disease Control, the study on STD rates in the United States will be published this fall. This study will put everything into full effect such as demographic information on who is most affected.

In regards to chlamydia, Virginia was ranked No. 24 with a rate of 473.2 cases per 100,000. Washington D.C. has reported with the highest percentage once again.

Of the total 1,008,403 reported cases among the entirety of the nation, 63.1% of the cases were persons ages 15-24 years.

One dangerous sexually transmitted disease is syphilis. Syphilis itself starts as a painless sore.

However, when left untreated, it will cause rashes, swollen lymph nodes, and fevers within six weeks.

Among severe cases, syphilis may cause damages to the heart, brain, nerves, eyes, joints, bones, liver and blood vessels.

"I remember learning about this type of stuff in FLE class back in middle school," senior Patrick Brown said. "Honestly, to just not even have this happen, just don't be silly and wrap your willy."

Contracting STDs can be extremely damaging to your life. While some of these diseases can be cured, many last an entire lifetime.

Once contracted, there is no undo button.

All three of these diseases can be cured with antibiotics, but if left untreated, there can be serious health consequences: infertility, pelvic damage, and organ damage.

However, it is entirely preventable.

"Personally, I always wear protection," junior Kevin Gonzalez said. "Getting these diseases and hearing about all of these percentages really worries me."

With all of these studies it really shows how dangerous any sexual activity is. Parents should teach teenagers more about the dangers of having sex. "My parents taught me and my little brother, Thomas, a lot about the dangers of sex." senior Jon

Figley said. "I will promise to abstain till marriage."
Keeping these recent studies in mind, it's clear to see that safe sex is the best sex.

Do's and Don'ts for Freshies

Freshmen year is infamous for being a year filled with fear, shyness, curiosity and obvious awkwardness. Not only are you in an entirely different school, but it feels like you are on an entirely different planet: high school. Say goodbye to your pre-teenager middle school days; you are finally a high schooler!

Sadly, movies and the media hype high school up to be a place filled with vampires, werewolves, cliques, mean cheerleaders, and love triangles. In reality, high school is much different than how the entertainment industry projects it.

However, this does not make high school any more comfortable. Four years can come and go in a blink of an eye. But, when you are always making mistakes left and top, high school can feel like it lasts forever. These are a few of do's and don'ts for freshmen year that will hopefully get you by.

1 Don't sleep late

Staying up late and pulling all nighters to talk to your friends or catch up on the latest shows on Netflix may seem "cool," but it is not. In future years, you will have a horrible sleeping schedule, even if you do not procrastinate. Especially for the people who want to take IB courses or take an attempt for the IB Diploma, be prepared to run on four hours of sleep every day. Before you have to face that horrid tragedy, you might as well get as much beauty sleep while you still can. What is so "cool" about dark circles and acne? Nothing at all.

2 Do be open minded

Just because you were in a particular "posse" or "squad" in middle school does not mean you cannot make new friends. With your arrival in high school comes new opportunities to meet people with similar interests as you. A great way to meet new people is by joining clubs and sports. Do not build up a particular viewpoint or perspective of the activity before joining. Just give it a shot. Most things are as they seem. You might find yourself surprised when you enjoy yourself at a Key Club event or during the Swim & Dive team practices.

3 Don't make a wrong first impression

Do not try to start drama or beef your freshman year because it will follow you for the rest of high school. You will be known as the girl or guy who did this or said that. The safest option is to try to be helpful and friendly to everyone. This tip not only applies to classmates, but it also applies to teachers as well. Teachers talk, so if you do something horrible in one of your classes this year, most likely all your teachers next year will know about it. So, try to be on your best behavior.

4 Do make an upperclassmen friend

Making a friend who is in a higher grade than you has many benefits. Not only can they inform you about the insider secrets of certain classes or teachers, but they can also give you fantastic guidance. Everything that you are going through now as a freshman, they already breezed through. Thus, they can provide their wisdom on specific problems that you might come across during the year.

5 Don't slack off

College applications may seem to be in the distant future now, but it is closer than you think. Make sure to raise and maintain a high GPA your freshman year. This is a critical year where colleges can see just how much potential you have and what you can offer to them. For this reason, also join as many extracurricular activities as you can. Some great suggestions are Just World Interact Club, Key Club, Green Atoms and Mission Possible.

6 Do cash in on some helpful tools

There are many apps on your phone, some free and some that you have to pay for, that can assist you in the long run. A high recommendation goes out to Grammarly, which is an editing tool for your essays and other assignments. It is a fantastic application and will ensure you both a good grade and better writing skills. Another great tool is SpanishDict, an app that can be purchased with no cost. On this app, you can look up Spanish vocabulary and verb tenses. There is also a website. The last recommended app is Quizlet. Making flashcards may seem outdated and an extremely long process, but Quizlet allows you to test your knowledge and learn your tenses.

7 Don't forget to study

As every school year progresses, the harder classes become. Studying will help relieve the stress and will make classes become a breeze. Getting into this habit will set you up for future classes if you are thinking of taking any advanced or IB classes. But, this isn't just useful for high school, this will help you in College also. Studying with a friend will also help you and they can encourage you to do more and on the bright side, it won't be as boring.

8 Do be prepared and organized

Always make sure that you have the things that you need. Bring everything with you in your backpack. Homework, supplies, a snack, a water bottle, lotion – you can never be too prepared. You should also make a schedule of what you're going to do everyday. Include homework, staying after school, practices, any meetings, and any places that you're going to go to. This will help you stay organized and ensure that you never forget to do anything.