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Kid's Page

Dear Vany

Junior Reporter Vanessa “Vany” Masterson answers her latest set of questions from *Palisadian-Post* readers. If you have a question you would like to send to Vany, email it to mypost@palipost.com.



Dear Vany,

I am now in eighth-grade and am starting to think about high school and what clubs I will want to join. How do you pick when there are so many options out there?

I'm so glad you are excited for clubs in high school! Joining clubs and extracurriculars has been one of the best parts of high school for me so far, and I know you will love it too!

When I was deciding which clubs I wanted to join, I took a few things into account. One was where my friends were, another was the stuff I was genuinely interested in, and the last was things I wanted to learn.

People say “don't just follow your friends around” or “don't do something just 'cause everyone else is” but honestly I think joining clubs and extracurriculars mostly just because your friends are can be a great way to put yourself out there and try new things.

I will randomly bring my friends to some of my club meetings sometimes, and they end up loving it and wanting to come back week after week. You could discover you are really good or passionate about something you didn't even know existed, all because of a friend.

That said, you definitely also want to figure out what really sparks your interest and find a club/extracurricular you can get involved in that with, because you will meet a lot of people who share your interests, who you will in turn make deep connections with. I have met some of my best friends because I decided to join the theater department at my school, and they are people I wouldn't have crossed paths with otherwise, but I couldn't imagine not being in my life now.

Finally, if you are looking at the list of clubs at your school and you see one centered around something you want to learn or a service opportunity that really excites you, don't be scared to just go to the meeting and try it out. I know that's easier said than done, but just remember that all the people in there, the presidents of the club and all the other members, were once nervous freshmen too.

I hope you have a great time in high school, and just remember you can join or leave clubs in the middle of the year, nothing is too binding, and anyone is lucky to have you join them!

Sincerely,
Vany

Dear Vany,

I want to excel academically, but I'm feeling overwhelmed. How can I balance my studies, personal life and extracurriculars?

The overwhelmed feeling during the busy school year is one I share with you. It can be really difficult to feel like you aren't excelling in all aspects of a bustling life, but with a little time management, balance will come. And as someone who participates in dance, theater, and is a freshman in high school, I've got some tips for you.

The first one is to use what your school offers and ask for help. If you have a question about something difficult on a homework assignment, mostly all teachers would be happy to answer it if you approached them at lunch or nutrition. It can feel kind of intimidating at first, especially if you've just met the teacher, but they are there to help and support you and want you to ask questions.

Also, if your school has a math lab or some other kind of study group before/after school, that is definitely something to utilize. I am not the strongest with numbers and the math lab at my school has been valuable.

My second tip is to NOT do your homework in your room. This one is more of a mental trick.

Studying or trying to complete assignments at a desk right next to your bed is just too tempting. You will always want to go sit down and look at your phone, and also there's a level of comfortability in your room that can make it really hard to focus. Also, your room should be like your sanctuary. Who wants to do things they don't particularly like in their sanctuary?

I recommend going to a different part of your house, a local library, the study center/library at your school, or even a low-traffic cafe to do homework. It psychologically separates your personal life from your academic life.

Another tip I have is make lists and do homework on weekends. As someone who usually has dance/rehearsal every day after school, it can be very hard to get work done during the week, and if I am, it's at my school library right after school.

Instead, (and be it I am very lucky to have teachers who accept late work, if yours don't this might not work for you) I make a list Saturday morning go everything I need to get done for the weekend, and save it all for Saturday and Sunday afternoon. I try to keep my weekends free so this method will work.

Finally, just know you're not alone, lots of teens feel this way but with enough motivation and support, you will be able to feel stable in your work/life balance!

Sincerely,
Vany