

*RIVERDALE KINGSBRIDGE  
ACADEMY*

GAZETTE

FALL 2025



The Mandated  
Curriculum Effect

New Clubs

College Alternatives:  
Trade and Education

Fall Sports

NYC Mayoral Race Technology Ban

Controversies  
in the Music Industry

Hispanic Heritage  
Month



Ms. Prado:  
Assistant Principal



ISSUE I

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# The Mandated Curriculum Effect

By BRYCE K. and JAYDEN B.

## A Nationwide Struggle

With the ongoing controversy of mandated curriculum on the rise, students and teachers debate whether the pros outweigh the cons of systemwide uniformity in the lessons and materials that the teachers deliver to the students. Every September, teachers come back to school and learn the ways what they've taught in previous years are going to be different. They must give their students an updated version of their old curriculum. However, it seems that more and more often, core subject teachers are displeased to find that they are being handed curriculum that replaces their old ways of teaching their students.

Journalism and ELA teacher Ms. Cohen-Agha struggled to be impartial, explaining, "these materials are always just suggestions at first, when it appears to work for a while it becomes a mandate. However, overtime when it doesn't get the huge testing results hoped for, the City's Board of Education or New York State comes up with a new curriculum suggestion. That gets old and a new one is created and the cycle continues." Evident on any RKA student's TeachHub home screen, privately-published curriculums such as HMH, Savvas and OpenSci Ed have been pushed out across New York City.

As to the reasoning behind these mandates, according to the Journal of the National Association of State Boards of Education, "the problem is not simply that teachers are pulling materials of uncertain quality from the internet. Rather, the more serious concern is that this behavior ensures that the material a child studies in school differs from classroom to classroom. Thus, the caliber, rigor, and any rational sequencing of that material both within and across grade levels becomes a matter of luck and chance." Some teachers acknowledge the benefits of a one-size-fits-all approach, including humanities coach and former dean, Ms. Orozco, who said that it "gives solid framework" so that more schools have a higher quality of education across the board.



*"Time and scores will tell how mandated curriculum affects us."*

*-Ms. Orozco, humanities Coach and former dean*

She also talked about it as a support for new teachers who will "have an easier time adapting to the curriculum" expected at RKA. Mr. Devery, history teacher, responded when asked about the ongoing debate, "the system is good but needs slight tweaking."

However, according to Perspectives on Urban Education, "teachers in urban schools often struggle with being micro-managed by administration, especially when vertical alignment and assessment policies are heavily enforced." ELA teacher, Ms. Gilmore stated the government believes everybody learns the same and mayoral control of education is becoming more factory-like. She would go on to say teachers need more freedom to teach differently from each other, and depending on their students. "Special education is difficult because the calendar and material is too fast for them."

Students we interviewed may or may not notice a difference, though some say copying notes from slides makes the class "very boring." That must be true for teachers too who may be upset to no longer teach what they are most passionate about. At the end of the day, nobody learns the same way and teachers don't share the same views on the topic. Only our future will tell whether these curriculum mandates are justified.

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# College Alternatives in Riverdale Kingsbridge Academy: An Investigation into Perspectives on Trade Education

By: Fredrick Lopez & Charlie Fermin

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In America, enrollment rates in four year colleges have decreased in recent years. However, college alternatives like trade school have had a significant increase in enrollment rates. Furthermore, trade schools have also been becoming more acknowledged by high schools all over America but students in RKA have not felt that shift.

Senior Nicholas Reyes expressed his passion for trade school and said it is the career path he would like to pursue after graduating high school. Reyes said that this choice to go to trade school was not influenced by RKA in any way but was influenced by his own research. He stated that RKA “100% does not care about trade school as a first option.” He said that if you want to pursue a career in the trades you have to go and ask for yourself because it's not represented and promoted in RKA. However when he did seek help he said that the guidance counselors were very supportive and helpful in decision making



Senior Diego Soriano shared that RKA has not implemented trade school into the system appropriately. When describing how RKA has represented and acknowledged trade school he stated “not at all, they don't care about it.” Soriano said that he feels that RKA does not influence students to find different pathways like trade school the same way they do for college.

This disparity was on display during the recent College Fair on the 15th of October. Students walked around the gymnasium and had the opportunity to speak to representatives from dozens of schools walked and different colleges to find their way after high school. There were about 30 college booths in attendance but only one booth for the trade school booth in the back corner of the gymnasium.

Principal O'Mara said that trade school is a great opportunity and option for those who "Prefer to work with their hands, and are strong in spatial reasoning and problem solving, enjoy an active profession, and wish to earn a good salary all without the costs of a college education." She also mentioned that she had many friends working in the trades that are happy with their career choices and that many of them earn excellent wages.



# Hispanic Heritage Month

By: Vanessa Khan & Jaelyn Payne

## RKA HONORS HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH WITH CREATING A WAX MUSEUM!

IN RKA, DIVERSITY IS SOMETHING TO BE PROUD OF! OVER 64% OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS AND 21% OF STAFF IDENTIFY AS HISPANIC. WITH SUCH A LARGE PRESENCE OF LATINOS, HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH IS MORE THAN JUST A TRADITION HERE, IT'S A TRUE CELEBRATION OF IDENTITY, HISTORY, AND COMMUNITY.

Hispanic Heritage Month is a celebration of Latino communities ranging from September 15 through October 15. It was originally started as a week in 1988, but President Ronald Reagan extended it to a full month. Celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month is a great way to honor and acknowledge the impacts that Latinos have made on the Hispanic community. In RKA, staff that come from different latino communities appreciate and embrace their cultures by decorating, teaching, events, hosting cultural fairs, and bringing food.



This year, the World Language department hosted a special “Hispanic Heritage Mock Wax Museum,” where students from their Spanish class create a script that represents a different Hispanic country. When visiting the exhibit, students participated in gallery walks, exploring and learning about the unique cultures. Mrs. Martinez says, “Each class chooses a topic like a country, food, or historical figure and creates posters that tell that story,” she explained.

Celebration of Hispanic Heritage is happening all year long at RKA, thanks to these dedicated teachers. Mrs. Conception, who is both Puerto Rican and Colombian, emphasizes the importance of culture in her classroom. She decorates with Latino artwork, introduces students to traditional foods, and connects lessons to real-world Hispanic traditions. Mrs. Prado helps organize schoolwide cultural events throughout the year. She was instrumental in last year’s “Paint and Sip” night, where families and staff painted traditional Puerto Rican casitas while learning about their cultural history.



She also helped plan RKA's multicultural fair, which showcased traditional clothing, foods, and dances from around the world. "Seeing so many students celebrate their culture was eye-opening," she said. "It made me feel connected to everyone in a really special way."

For some RKA teachers, the celebrations continue after the school days end. At home, Ms. Martinez's family celebrates Mexican Independence with traditional clothing, music, and homemade dishes. "Being bilingual is my superpower," she said. "It allows me to connect and help others." Mrs. Prado continues to honor her Mexican and Dominican roots year-round with celebrations like Día de los Muertos and Nochebuena. "It's hard to separate culture from a person," she said. "I don't call myself Hispanic, I'm Dominican, I'm Latina. That's who I am." Outside of school, she attends cultural shows, museum exhibits, and community events, and she has instilled pride in her own son from an early age.



*Students portray themselves as wax figures and say facts about different Hispanic countries.*

Mrs. Conception also founded RKA's Seal of Biliteracy program, which recognizes students fluent in multiple languages; about 40 students have earned the honor so far. "Students should be proud of their culture and the languages they speak," she said.

At RKA, Hispanic Heritage Month is a chance for students, families, and teachers to share their heritage and feel represented. Through events like the museum, classroom projects, and school wide activities, RKA ensures that Hispanic culture is recognized, honored, and celebrated every year.



*Posters of different Hispanic countries made by students.*



# Kicking off the fall season



By Julio Roman, Elijah Mateo, and Brendan McCarthy

The fall season for RKA has recently begun with our soccer team starting off going 7-0! The volleyball team also stands undefeated with a record of 4-0. Cross country currently has 4 top 10 finishers in its meets so far.

Sophomores Ethan Lopez and Mason Tejada are two of RKA's runners that earned top 10 spots in their most recent cross country races. The soccer team has been dominating as they've won every game by 4 or more goals and have even had two games ending with a score of 13-0. The volleyball team, winning all games so far, have been competing for the first place title against IN-Tech, a nearby school. Their highly anticipated match will be happening on 10/15.

As of October 16th, the boys soccer team is now 9-0-1 with their most recent match being a draw since the score was 2-2 by the time it was over. This match was against Samuel Gompers at Van Cortlandt Park. This is actually the least amount of goals RKA has ended a game with. "Bigger, stronger, faster" were the words used by varsity soccer team coach Mr. Cushing to describe this year's team compared to last year and so far it has been shown since the team is yet to have an official loss. However with the upcoming playoffs, there will be better competition and the team will have to be at its best to make it to the championship.

The cross country team has recently competed in their borough championship on 10/15, however the results are yet to be released on PSAL.

The girls Volleyball team has won their anticipated match for first place on the standings against IN-Tech 2-0. The team has gotten a lot of kills this season and have performed well remaining undefeated now being 5-0. "I would say the volleyball team is determined," said Ms. Purdy, the coach of the volleyball team, when asked how she would describe the team in one word.



Runners from the cross country team before a race



Players from RKA's soccer team huddling up before a match

The team has worked hard this season with William Gillette getting first place in the 1.5 mile race and freshman Emerson also finishing top 10 in the 1.5 mile race getting 6th. Ethan, a runner who got 7th in a cross country race, the second highest this season stated "I love running the races and I'm happy with my performance in the race and it was a good workout run". He has consistently been putting up around 21 minutes every race, finishing top 20 2 times this year and putting up some of the best times on the team."

# What It Takes To Make A Team

RKA offers a variety of sports broken down into 3 different seasons. Fall tryouts start in June before the previous school year ends, Winter tryouts start in late October, and the Spring tryouts start in February. Tryouts are a perfect opportunity for coaches to see what level in the sport a player is at.

The process in trying out starts off with a PSAL informational meeting that takes place after school in the auditorium, where the Athletic Director Mr. Edmond, Talks about what to be expected if you want to be a student-athlete. The paperwork consists of medical forms and sport requirements that parents, as well as students, have to sign. “The paperwork was harder to do than Homework”, said Fetun Shimles.

The tryout process typically happens within the span of 2 days that is managed by the Captains and Coach. The majority of tryouts are located in the Riverdale Kingsbridge Academy gymnasium. Sports, such as soccer and baseball, are held at Seton Park. The boys and girls cross country and track and field meet at Van Cortlandt Park, as there are no try-outs required to join the team. The teams have drills based on the different positions in the sport that they do, as well as conditioning (running, jumping, etc.).

After days of workouts and drills, the final roster has been finalized and published on the Google Classroom for that selected sport. The students who made the team are here to represent our school. Coaches have noticed that the selected players are coachable, can adjust quickly to any changes, and show strong dedication and teamwork. Mr. Cushing, the head coach of the boys' soccer team, shared that he tends to pick more underclassmen. “I think for the long term quality of the players, I take the younger players.” That isn't to say the upperclassmen don't get picked at all, as he proceeded, “If the skill level of the Juniors and Seniors are high, I will pick them.” Now, the teams are focused on bonding and preparing for a successful season ahead.

For those who didn't make the team, coaches always emphasized the effort they put in, regardless of the outcome. They also encourage students to attend programs so they can return stronger next season. There is no limit on how many times a student can try out for a sport. Bryce Ketter, a senior who tried out for the boys' soccer team but didn't make it, reflected on his experience by saying, “Just keep on practicing.” Every tryout is a chance to learn and grow as an athlete.

Whether they made the roster or not, all participants who tried out showed the commitment and spirit that make our school proud. The upcoming season promises exciting moments, and everyone who participated in tryouts contributed to that energy. Congratulations to the new team members and the returners, and good luck to all as they continue to pursue their athletic goals.

# Technology ban Impacting RKA

Since the implementation of the new technology ban at school, teachers and students have seen changes in classroom behavior, effort to complete assignments, focus, and participation. The ban which limits the use of phones or other digital devices during school, has shown challenges and surprising benefits.



There are different opinions but early signs suggest the technology ban may be helping for a better academic performance, social interaction, and participation in classrooms. Humanities coach, Ms. Orozco, reported that teachers are happier and students are more focused. Teachers now have to plan with anticipation when they're using the computer cart because there is not enough for every class or student and there's a lack of computers in the school. "Teachers are working very hard to plan classes and be successful without technology" she said, which demonstrates that the ban can be a good change for the students and teachers but it demands more work.

Similarly, Mr. Devery, the history teacher for high school said that his classes are "more concentrated and engaged," with less distractions. He mentioned that students seem to be following the ban well, and he has even noticed less absences: "It's too early to tell, but I feel there's less skipping now—since students don't have their phones, they can't communicate to skip."

Students have also expressed mixed reactions. One student initially found the ban "shocking," worried about being unable to contact her family in an emergency. However, she later felt that it's "easier to learn now" and that less distractions help her focus better on class.



# MS. PRADO WASN'T ALWAYS YOUR ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL

Staff members are the backbone of any school community; the teachers, administrators, lunch ladies, janitors, deans — all of them contribute to why a school runs in the first place. Any one of these roles carry significant responsibilities, bearing three within one career sounds impossible! But Ms. Prado, who has worked at Riverdale Kingsbridge Academy for years, has been a Spanish teacher, the coordinator of student activities (COSA), and now, vice principal.

Not only has she worked across multiple different roles, but she has driven her career forward on international levels, working at a school in Pennsylvania, all the way to the Middle East. Throughout her years of working with people younger than her, she learned countless lessons, with one major takeaway that “all children, no matter where they come from, need to feel seen and heard,” she stated in our one- on- one interview. She was thrown into a completely different culture when teaching in the Middle East, and she said that “it was all so different from RKA, how their traditions are different from ours, but I walked in one day – and they were singing Latin music!” This highlights the universality of what it means to be both a student and a teacher, showing how despite our cultural differences, we still appreciate other’s, especially in a classroom setting.

***She compared them (her students in the Middle East) to the students in Pennsylvania, and how they acted differently, yet still wanted to feel seen as every other student in the world. When she returned to Riverdale Kingsbridge Academy, she could not feel any happier that she was where she was, stating that the community made her feel proud and lucky to have been in so many different roles to contribute to them.***



Mr. Edmond worked closely with Ms. Prado for many years at RKA. He worked with her as the COSA and got to know her very well. While they are adjusting to her being vice principal instead of working with them in the student activities role, they said during her time working there she would always try to bring a sense of community to the school. The staff describes her as a very helpful partner and community member, while the students say she is a great and kind leader. It could be summed up in this quote from Dalia Tineo, a student who has worked with her: “She is very caring, and always wants to bring people together.”

# NEW CLUBS!

6 TO 7 ESTABLISHED



Recruiting for Yearbook at the Club Fair

Clubs bring people of common passions and interests together to form communities and families. Not only that, the clubs aren't just limited to "only middle school" or "only high school" students. Most clubs are open with mixing both the high schoolers and middle schoolers together, to create a big family.

Have you ever wondered what new clubs have been established? Want to join a band and play with people that share the same passion? Want to learn about not only the history of hair textures, but how to manage and maintain it? Want to create little miniature sculptures with clay? Want to assist in gardening? The possibilities are endless and this is due to the new clubs that have been established.

The Rock Club's first meeting, at the start of October, brought together a mix of both middle school and high school students. Not only that, everyone had a chance to be a part of the band. Whether it was their first time playing an instrument, no one was discouraged. Instead, everyone was encouraged to make mistakes.

Mr. Schiller, rock band club coordinator, told the students to value connection. "It's okay to take chances, to connect with peers without the usage of social media. And without the easy access of their cell phones."



The Rock Club Meets



Senior Mianya Acosta recruits for her brand new club: Future Medical Professionals

While many of the clubs were established by teacher passions, this year an official student led club, the nursing club was established. Introducing Mianya Acosta, a senior at RKA, who is passionate about nursing. She felt the need to share with others on why nursing is important and why there should be a club at school. The advisor of the club, Ms. Schmidt has a high passion for science alongside nursing, which go hand and hand.

So, with all of that said, which club will you be joining this year?

# How RKA students are engaged with this year's New York Mayoral Race



**By Isabel Valentin and Hannah Silva**

Political awareness of students at RKA is essential. This month's mayoral race has critical aspects that can shape our futures. How much do Riverdale Kingsbridge Academy's students know about what is at stake?

Around a week ago, we sent out a poll regarding the knowledge the students of RKA have on the mayoral race. A large sum of the responses were able to state important information about the mayoral race. All New York mayoral races are important, but the one happening this year has received a lot more engagement and has grasped the attention of a wider range of age groups. In the results, there was frequent mention of support for one specific candidate: Zohran Mamdani. If elected, he will be New York's first Muslim mayor. For many decades, the people that have been elected to fill this role in the executive branch have been predominately white. Aside from this, his beliefs and the values he has promoted, such as economic equality, and free bus services, are not only ones that most mayors in the past have not advocated for as heavily, they are also drastically different beliefs from the ones of his two opposing candidates.

At this time of year in U.S. History, we are discussing the Constitution and its three branches: Legislative, Executive, and Judicial. The mayor's race falls under the executive branch, which includes titles such as the President, the Vice President, the Cabinet, and additional roles that inform executive decision making. The three candidates running for Mayor in 2025 are Andrew Cuomo, Zohran Mamdani, and Curtis Sliwa.

Each candidate is running on platforms that are specific to their own parties' priorities for the city. Our google form showed results stating that there is little to no mention of this topic in their classes. 11th Grade US History teacher, Mr. Cushing, has expressed how he hopes to individually try and address the events of the Mayoral Race. "I plan to talk about the Mayoral Race after the elections and see if students have any feelings or thoughts about the political candidate elected."

## CANDIDATES BACKGROUNDS AND PERSONAL VALUES



### Zohran Mamdani (Democratic)

- Economic equality
- Housing as a human right
- Progressive policies
- Racial and Social justice

<https://www.zohranfornyc.com/s>

### Andrew Cuomo (Independent)

- Experience and competence
- Financial conservatism and public safety
- Anti-extremism

[andrewcuomo.com/issues](https://andrewcuomo.com/issues)

### Curtis Sliwa (Republican)

- Law and order
- Animal rights
- Social activism

<https://www.sliwafornyc.com/meet-curtis>

# ENGAGEMENT IN THE MAYORAL RACE



*“We talk about it amongst ourselves at school, so I feel like in higher education it’s talked about a lot. But this race specifically, I have not stopped talking about. All the other races, I have not been as active in.”*

*-Social worker at Bronx Community College, and sister to author Hannah Silvah*

In this interview, the prevalence of political knowledge is demonstrated as something that contributes to overall social work. Social work deals with trying to help families and/or individuals work through difficult circumstances, circumstances that can often require legal involvement. The contributing factor of the mayoral race to this field of work is how the executive decisions and laws passed by the mayor and additional city managers ultimately affect how well and how much a social worker is able to do for the person who’s case they are working on.

## RKA Classroom survey

With the help of others, we split up into groups of 2-3 to survey entire classes on questions regarding their status of interaction in the mayoral race and it’s outcome.

### **1. Did you check for updates on the mayoral race before going to bed?**

With all 7 classes that were interviewed combined, 52% of the students confirmed that they did check updates on the mayoral race before bed.

### **2. If you could have voted, would you have voted?**

With all 7 classes that were interviewed combined, 57% of the students agreed they would have voted if they were legal age to vote during this election.

As shown in the results, more than half of all classes interviewed voted positively with these questions. These results prove that regardless of whether or not there were certain capabilities available, the students of RKA still had some form of engagement in the mayoral race.



# The community's take on Music

By Nicholas Reyes and Christopher Tralongo



## “Can you separate the art from the artist?”

Music is a big part of many people's lives in RKA, especially with the bands we have, the music classes, the clubs, and our welcoming community. Music drives people, we listen to it on the commute to school in the morning, learn about it in our required classes, and listening to your own unique playlist that you've been building up for years to even staying up till 3AM for your favorite artist to drop.

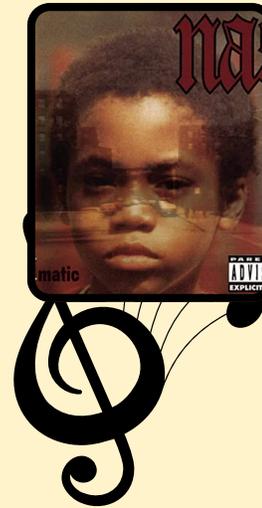
*Sadly, in the music industry, many controversies go on, and it's important to hear what our community thinks about them.*

Mr. Patel. Patel has a big love for 90s hip-hop; his favorite artist is Nas. When asked about his opinions on whether or not it is possible for him to separate the art from the artist or not, he told us that because an artist changes who they are late into their career, we, the consumers, should still be able to respect how good the work is. Still, it is completely understandable if someone can't, given how terrible the artist turned out to be as a person. In our interview, he stated, “But the social norms change over the years.” he thinks that a big part of it too is that things that were acceptable once, then now are unacceptable.

Ms. Fee adores pop music, specifically Taylor Swift, So much to the point that she owns swiftie merch on the wall behind her desk. When asked the question “can you separate the art from the artist?” she would not be able to, because when an artist is given a platform with lots of followers they are held to a very high standard, which in turn makes it hard to separate their actions and persona.

Mr. Cushing’s favorite music as of late is Irish music. When asked the question whether or not he was able to separate the art from the artist, his response was “ there is value in boycotting those who do wrong.” In doing that, condemning artists that do bad things it wouldn't be encouraged, and an end would be put to it.

Cover of Nas' first studio mixtape Illmatic



Mr. Patel in his soccer clubs jersey



Ms. Fee on vacation



Taylor Swift's twelfth studio album



Mr. Cushing playing the violin



Irish artists behind a four leaf clover