



PGHS Fights Omicron, Stays Open

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How PGHS Is Fighting the Omicron Variant



By Abbey Fitzpatrick, Class of 2022

Covid-19 case rates have reached an all-time high in Monterey County. According to the Monterey County Weekly, the case rate is 108.6 per 100,000 residents as of January 18, breaking the previous record set last January of 107.8 per 100,000 residents. Covid-19 is surging across the country due to the new variant virus experts call Omicron. This variant was first reported as a variant of concern by the World Health Organization in late November in South Africa and quickly made its way to the United States.

Due to the surge of Omicron, many health experts recommend double masking and using more effective N95 and KN95 masks for greater protection against the virus. Before returning from Winter Break, PGUSD and every K-12 school district in California provided students with a free at-home rapid Covid-19 test.

PGHS has been taking additional steps to help keep students safe and in the classroom. One of those steps is pooled testing in randomly selected 3rd-period classes on Wednesday mornings. Pooled testing allows an entire class to be tested in just 15 minutes. Each person swabs their nose and places their swab in a large tube, which is then run as a single highly accurate lab PCR test. This new testing practice will help PGHS quickly detect new Covid-19 cases and slow the spread. Parents can sign their students up via email to participate in free pooled testing when their student's class is selected.

Considering upgrading your mask and participating in pooled testing is a great way to help stop the spread of Covid-19 in our PGHS community. For more information about pooled testing, active Covid-19 cases at school, and Covid-19 resources, go to pgusd.org/Covid-Resources.



Left: A KN95 mask.

A Review of the Post-Quarantine First Semester



By Maryam Baryal, Class of 2024

Last semester was the first time students returned to the classrooms in-person after more than a year of distance learning from their laptops. To understand how the first semester back in-person went for PGHS students, *The NewsBreaker* conducted multiple interviews with fellow Breakers.

Returning back to school after such a long time away was nerve-wracking for almost all students, but more so for freshmen and sophomores, who had not attended normal, fully in-person high school before last August. Freshman Dia Gupta-Lemus shared that for her, the first semester involved a lot of change and transition, but it was overall a good experience. As a new student, Dia felt that in the beginning of the school year, "it was hard to make connections with people, especially after online, but once I put myself out there, even just making small talk, it became a lot more fun- you're going through new things with other newbies." She also feels that the transition from middle to high school would have been easier if the end of middle school had been in-person because she "would be more prepared and feel more at home in PG, but there's no use [in] looking back now..."

With regard to academics, sophomore Isabelle Kraft felt that "the first semester back on campus was a fairly difficult transition from doing minimal work online, to suddenly having a full high school course load for the first time." Freshman year is supposed to be a transitional period from middle school to high school. However, sophomores were not given that opportunity, making their second year of high school even more difficult. Kraft adds that "Teachers of sophomore classes generally expect students to be better adapted to high school after their first year," so sophomores this year were left playing catch-up on everything they missed in their freshman year. Because of this situation, Kraft says that the transition was "much more awkward and stressful."

On the other hand, upperclassmen claim that it was easier for them to return to school, which may have been due to the fact that they attended high school before lockdown and distance learning. Senior Madalena Taurke claims that she

“found that this semester was not as stressful as school before quarantine.” However, she says that that may have been because she purposefully tailored her schedule for an easier semester.

Besides students’ social and academic life, *The NewsBreaker* also asked Breakers about how they felt the school was handling Covid-19. The responses demonstrate that some students have a greater issue with how the school is handling Covid-19 now than they did last semester. Dia Gupta-Lemus states that she feels mostly safe at our school, except in the lunch line, where people stand very close to one another, and when people wear their masks below their nose or eat in class when they are not supposed to. Kraft shares that “the school is definitely taking measures to ensure Covid safety with frequent testing of sports teams and masking, but the amount of cases in the school right now seems to indicate [that] there is more that could be done.” Taurke explains that the school did its best to make sure everyone was safe last semester, but she and multiple other students are struggling with the school’s lack of a response to the number of students testing positive for the Omicron variant. She adds that “The school is incredibly reluctant to even think about the possibility of going back online, and I think if you look at the school’s situation from an outside perspective it might be a necessity, if only for a few weeks until the peak of the Omicron variant has ended.”

Vacation, All I Ever Wanted



By Nathan Binder, Class of 2022

Winter Break was a relaxing, well-needed two weeks that benefited all students at Pacific Grove High School. During the break, some students traveled, while others enjoyed a calm holiday season at home. However, is two weeks actually long enough for students to fully enjoy a mid-school year break?

When 149 PGHS students were asked whether they traveled or stayed at home during the break, 30 respondents (20.1%) answered that they traveled, 70 (47%) stated that they stayed at home, and 49 (32.9%) said that they both traveled and stayed at home over the break. When 90 of the respondents who traveled were asked where they went, 67 (74.4%) stated that they stayed within California, 18 (20%) said they traveled within the US, and 5 (5.6%) traveled internationally. From these statistics, it is evident that the majority of respondents did not travel very far from Pacific Grove, if at all. With only two weeks of vacation, it can be difficult for one to travel far, and fit in all of their plans, especially when factoring in family time and holiday celebrations.

When 149 PGHS students were asked whether or not they believe two weeks is enough time for Winter Break, 90 respondents (60.4%) stated that they would prefer more time, while 59 (39.6%) stated that two weeks is enough. Some PGHS students expressed their own opinions regarding the length of Winter Break. Senior Anthony Biondi said, “Students need time to wind down and not have to think about and be stressed over school work. Winter Break is a great time to wind down and one more week would let us prepare and get back on schedule for school.” Freshman Graham Smith states, “Having just two weeks feels really short, and I usually end up having to cut or shorten some of my plans to be able to fit everything I want to do into the break.” For many students, an extra week during Winter Break would be beneficial, not only to fit in all the activities they have planned, but also to be more ready to tackle the final semester of the school year.

Even though it was just two weeks, Winter Break was a

well-deserved break from school for all PGHS students. Two weeks off was definitely needed to help students recharge and prepare for another semester of learning.

PGHS Girls’ Basketball Keeps Winning as Season Progresses



By Claire Qasem, Class of 2025

The PGHS girls’ basketball program has successfully played its way through the preseason and the first league games of the 2021-2022 season. The varsity and junior varsity teams have managed to bring home numerous wins for the Breakers. The varsity team has a record of 9-3, while the junior varsity team has a record of 5-2. The girls have strived to represent the PGHS student body in the best light, and their season has been full of enjoyable events, from beach workouts to team lunches. The girls participated in the Kiwanis Club Hole-in-One Competition to raise money for the program and the varsity team played in the historic Breaker Classic tournament. Coach Robin Lewis is the head of the girls’ basketball program and leads the varsity team. He has a passion for basketball and likes to prepare his players for life in the process. Coach Lewis is assisted on the varsity team by Greg Marshall, and the new coach of the junior varsity team is Anthony Hannah. The league season continues through the rest of January and much of February. Come support the girls’ basketball teams at home games and bring your Breaker Pride!



Above: Sophomore Sofia Gambello shoots a free throw during a home game.



Above: Senior Madison Sepagan prepares to play defense.

“Rumors of War” - Kiev and Moscow: The Impending War Series Part II



By Nathan Jennings, Class of 2023

In December 2021, rumors forecasting an upcoming Russian invasion of Ukraine ran high, with 100,000 troop reinforcements along the Russian border with Ukraine. This week, United States and United Kingdom intelligence reports suggest a plot by Russia to install a pro-Russian leader within Ukraine. Yet not enough information has surfaced from American and British intelligence officials to guarantee any such action. Some believe that the reports may be a False Flag operation against Russia by NATO powers, so as to pin the blame on Russia. Moreover, pro-Western sympathies and the desire of Volodymyr Zelensky, Ukraine’s president, to join NATO has fueled Russia’s preparations for the predicted conflict.

The invasion of Ukraine is an obvious expansionist aspiration of Russian president Vladimir Putin, and he has successfully provoked the West. However, the only international response to Putin's aggression in the 21st century has been sanctions. In 2014, Russia annexed Crimea, the southernmost province of Ukraine. The Western response was nothing more than sanctions. But now the West has asserted itself more strongly in favor of Ukraine and against imperialist Russia, demonstrating a potential willingness to intervene in future conflict. In a statement made by UK Foreign Secretary Liz Truss, "Russia must de-escalate, end its campaigns of aggression and disinformation, and pursue a path of diplomacy." This statement affirmed the US's proposed response to the prospect of war. According to the *Wall Street Journal*, "The White House... clarified that any new movement across the border by Russian troops would be met with 'a swift, severe and united response'" (Wall Street Journal).

Convoys of American tanks were spotted in Romania, possibly to prepare for combat in eastern Europe. Also, the Donetsk People's Republic observed 120,000 Ukrainian military aids along the eastern Ukrainian province of Donbas on January 22, 2022. Furthermore, 10,000 Israeli diplomats have been escaping Ukraine to Israel in case of war, and American mercenaries have been arriving at the potential frontline in Donbas. 90 tons of American military equipment was given to Ukraine as 100,000 Russian troops remain stationed along the Russian border. *National Public Radio* made the statement on Saturday that, "Overall, the U.S. has provided \$650 million in defense equipment and services to Ukraine in the past year- the most it has ever given that country, according to the State Department" (National Public Radio). But how does this all relate to war? These are the rumors of the future conflict, and the question most likely is not if it will happen but rather when it will happen. This crisis will continue to be shaped by the upcoming Winter Olympics in Beijing, China, which may be met with protests and geopolitical messages. For more information visit <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-60095459>.

The NewsBreaker Riddles

By John Powley, Class of 2023

I'll try to tell a crime riddle or any logic puzzle in an understandable manner and you, the reader, can solve it! The answer to this riddle will be featured in Issue 8.

An old woman called the police with an urgent tone. She had just returned from the store and her house had been robbed. The police drove to the scene and found the front window to the home shattered. Two officers walked inside the home to investigate what items were stolen. The main officer outside inspected the shattered window. As he walked up to the broken pane, he heard the shrill sound of breaking glass. He looked and saw a large pile of glass beneath his feet.

The two officers searched the house as best they could, but the only items out of place seemed to be a TV and some expensive dishes. There were stray wires in the living room suggesting that a large appliance such as a TV was missing. Also, the china cabinet was completely empty. The rest of the house looked completely clean with no sign of intrusion. The two started taking prints near the suspicious areas and the main officer took the old woman's alibi.

"What time did you leave your home?" he asked.

"At about 12:20," she replied. "I was only gone for a half-hour and now my TV set and expensive china from England are missing!"

"Don't worry ma'am, we'll find who stole your things," the main officer reassured. "Now I need to review with my colleagues our findings." The officers regrouped outside of the house and discussed the details.

"No prints near where the TV set was gone. The thief must've been wearing gloves."

"Same with the china cabinet. The house is clean from top to bottom. The thief is a professional."

The main officer offered his observations. "The door wasn't tampered with, meaning that the thief most likely entered and exited through that shattered window."

The police assured the victim that her stolen items would be retrieved and that they would look around the neighborhood for any shifty characters. They then promptly left the scene.

What is wrong with this story?

Schedule of Events (January 24, 2022 to February 6, 2022)

January 24-28 - Spirit Week

January 24-28 - Closed Campus

January 26 - Poetry Out Loud Semi-finals at Lunch in the Sea Wing Theater

January 28 - Winter Sports Rally

Current Sports: Boys' Basketball, Girls' Basketball, Boys' Soccer, Girls' Soccer, and Wrestling



Our Staff

The NewsBreaker is made possible by the dedication of journalists and editors from the Pacific Grove High School student body.

Will Coen



Class of 2023

William Coen is currently a junior at PGHS. He is in his third year on *The NewsBreaker* staff and first year as an editor. He enjoys learning math at school and running for the cross country and track teams. Outside of school, Will likes to spend as much time as possible biking and skiing.

Chloe Anna Austria



Class of 2022

Chloe Anna Austria is a senior this year. She started writing for *The NewsBreaker* last fall. Chloe Anna is also a barista, and outside of work and school she likes to read, watch tv (*Friends* is her favorite show), and bake.

Maryam Baryal



Class of 2024

Maryam Baryal is currently a sophomore at PGHS. This is her second year on staff for *The NewsBreaker*. Outside of school, she likes to listen to music, bake, read, and watch Netflix.

Abbey Fitzpatrick



Class of 2022

Abbey Fitzpatrick is a journalist and photographer for *The NewsBreaker*. She is a senior at PGHS and this is her first year on staff for *The NewsBreaker*. Outside of the NewsBreaker, she is the PGHS yearbook editor. Some of her interests are music and politics.

Yasser Alkhalaf



Class of 2025

Yasser is a freshman at PGHS. He loves math and would enjoy discussing concepts with anyone. He is a member of the robotics team as well as mock trial and choir. He knows python and Java programming languages and is actively learning more about these languages every day.

Nathan Jennings



Class of 2023

Nathan Jennings is in his junior year at PGHS. For *The NewsBreaker*, he will be writing about world news that pertains to global affairs. His interests include swimming, fitness, hanging out and/or playing video games with friends or his sister, and drawing. Nathan has been fascinated with writing and journalism ever since he was young. When he was a toddler, he'd develop brilliant creative stories and pieces, and he now takes that creativity to writing articles for *The NewsBreaker*.

Brayden Schmidt



Class of 2022

Brayden Schmidt is currently a senior at PGHS. His hobbies include playing video games and playing instruments for the PGHS Breaker Band. He is enjoying all of his classes and teachers this year.

Billy the Breaker



Class of ???

Billy is a wave. He likes to occasionally give advice, but mostly he takes credit for the advice written by other staff members of *The NewsBreaker*. He isn't exactly a team player...

Emmitt Withrow



Class of 2022

Emmitt Withrow is a senior at PGHS and has been writing for *The NewsBreaker* since his freshman year. This year is his first year as an editor of the paper. He enjoys watching movies, learning about history, reading comics, and listening to music.

Nathan Binder



Class of 2022

Nathan Binder is currently in his senior year at PGHS. He began writing for *The NewsBreaker* in his sophomore year. Outside of school and writing for *The NewsBreaker*, Nathan enjoys mountain biking and practicing karate.

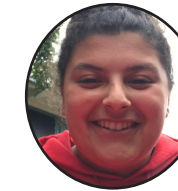
Thomas Coen



Class of 2025

Thomas Coen is a freshman at PGHS and he joined *The NewsBreaker* because he enjoys writing and hopes to improve his writing skills. He loves running, studying math, and going to the beach. His favorite sport is cross country followed closely by tennis and golf. Outside of school, he enjoys watching *The Office*.

Claire Qasem



Class of 2025

Claire Qasem is a freshman at PGHS and is in her first year on *The NewsBreaker* staff. Claire plays tennis and basketball at PGHS. She also plays clarinet in the marching band and tenor saxophone in the jazz band. During school, she loves to say hi to everyone and learn about math. Outside of school, she enjoys listening to music, making things, going to Galaxy's Edge at Disney, and occasionally reading comics.

Gavin Hunter



Class of 2023

Gavin Hunter is a junior at PGHS and this is his first year on *The NewsBreaker* staff. He is a member of the PGHS water polo team and enjoys swimming.

John Powley

Class of 2023

John Powley is a junior at PGHS. This is his second year writing for *The NewsBreaker*. He runs on the school cross country team and also enjoys history, math, and science.

Zane Coutts

Class of 2023

Zane Coutts is a junior and a first year staffmember for *The NewsBreaker*. Outside of school, Zane enjoys playing with his dog, bodysurfing at Asilomar Beach, and running for the PGHS varsity cross country and track teams.