

## Altamont: Let's Raise that Spirit!

By Maddy Grant

The Altamont School focuses a lot on one main thing: academics. But do we give enough of our support, time, and attention to sports? What about the students who are not only students but student-*athletes*? Athletes don't want to spend 30+ hours in regular school and a dozen more in practice and games each week just for very few of their peers to show up and support them at game time.

To be blunt, having school spirit doesn't mean just showing up to watch the *boys'* sports teams play once in a great while. It means showing up and supporting your *whole* school on the regular. Our boys and girls teams put in a lot of work to make your night just a little more fun.

Junior baseball player and SGA Vice President Aubrey Sanders said it best: "We definitely can do a better job with promoting sports and arts events and encouraging students to express more school spirit. I think the biggest issue with school spirit is Altamont's intense focus on academics ...I know many students who would rather go home and finish their homework than stay an hour to watch a game."



He's right, but there are many new ways we could improve school spirit and encourage more students to attend games and events: halftime shows, game-day photos, Player(s) of the Week, and more spirit/dress-up days to name a few. High school cannot be *only* about work, work, work, work. High school should be a time to experience things and grow. Kids spend most of their childhood at school, so why not make it more varied in terms of experience, and more fun? Yes, an all-academics life is worthwhile in the long run if you plan to attend college, but what about now, in the moment? Students want something that's fun and is going to keep them on their toes.

"Theme days" are one way to provide that fun, high-spirit, group experience. As far as the themes themselves, Altamont needs to consider all students' opinions, not just the SGA. So many students say they want to participate in theme days, but also that the themes aren't that fun. A lot of students I speak to have ideas of fun theme days that people would love. If students were able to submit their ideas for themes, more students would participate. Some might think it's weird to dress up for themes, but that's crazy because, at every other school, students love participating. Even our faculty seem to love dressing up! Theme days are part of a normal high school experience that should be fun and exciting. For me, theme days are fun, and I used to love dressing up with my friends in middle school, but it's hard to engage when the themes are constantly the same and boring (blackout, whiteout, Altamont gear). We need some

new fun themes like sunglasses/shades day, jersey/hat day, Hawaiian gear day, iconic duo day, opposites day, and more. But theme days are fun only if a lot of students make an effort to participate. With student input, more students would want to join in and dress up.

Another thing that students today love is pictures. I love taking pictures and having memories with my friends. To me, pictures are a great way to remember all the fun times and new people. Since we spend so much time at school, having memories from school that you can save is worthwhile. It's especially worthwhile at games and events because everyone is super-pumped and excited. Memories are made in the moment, but there's nothing wrong with stopping and taking a picture to remember the moment forever. Based on a poll I recently shared, students agree with me. Out of more spirit/dress-up days, Player(s) of the Week, personalized game-day photos, and halftime shows, more students ranked game-day photos as their top choice than any other option. We already have a great photography department here, and plenty of students who love photography. I would love to have some "spirit photos" with my friends and be able to look back on them in five years, or twenty years.

With all that said, I'm not "dissing" Altamont athletics or spirit at all. We're a small school that rightly focuses on academics, and I think Mrs. Salmon has been a great Athletic Director so far this year, her first: Our concessions stand provides many more options than it used to, we have a new food truck at Lily/Comer Field, we have more banners around campus, parents are increasingly involved with athletic awards, and more. There are just some things beyond her control that *the Altamont student body can help to improve*. They say high school goes by fast, and you'll miss it when it's gone. So let's get to it.