

## **December 2025**

Good evening! As usual, I'll kick off my report with some updates on what students are staying busy with at East!

To begin, our winter sports teams have been hard at work. These sports include boys and girls basketball, the dance team, boys and girls hockey, the winter cheer team, the nordic ski team, the alpine ski team, and the boys swim team. Recently, an East senior and boys swim captain, Joey Zelen, competed at junior nationals in Texas. Turning to the fine arts, the speech, debate, and One Act teams have all been hard at work too! With games, meets, and competitions, East students work hard and represent our school well. If you'd like to support students at any of their events, make sure to check the activities calendar on the East website for schedules.

In other news, this week is yet another spirit week at East. Winter Week is put on by StuGo and is filled with festive dress up days, decorations, and activities. Currently, East students are watching Elf in the cafeteria, and tomorrow, StuGo will deliver candy cane grams. Today was our assembly, which featured performances from the choralaires, cheer team, and dance team. Additionally, there was the yearly teachers vs students basketball game and a competition between the winter sports captains.

On Friday, the school will certainly be a bit emptier. All of the music students will be spending the day at the DECC rehearsing for the holiday concert. There have been morning rehearsals happening for weeks—a testament to the dedication and talent of our music department. Make sure to catch the concert on Friday evening!

In January, StuGo will be hosting an event to benefit local non-profits. The Freeze Fest will feature raffle baskets filled with goods from local businesses, ice skating, smores roasting, and many fun winter activities.

On December 10th, I hosted elections for next year's student representative. The junior class came together and heard presentations from four incredibly qualified and talented candidates. In January, the lovely Miss Kalina Mattila will be joining you as East's new representative. Kalina is an involved and well spoken leader, and I couldn't feel better about having her as my successor.

With that said, there is one big issue that is my responsibility to address. That issue is the addition of Gemini AI on our chromebooks. I've had multiple students reach out to me within the past few days who wanted to speak at the listening session but weren't able to find the link to sign up or didn't find it before it was full. I just mention that to emphasize how big of an issue this is in students' minds. I brought up the issue of AI in schools during a recent student forum meeting and was met with distress and confusion. The communication about this initiative has been even less than minimal, so forgive me if I seem to be speaking without looking at the whole picture—I simply don't have the whole picture. I appreciate how many aspects there are to your decision making. It's my job to make sure that the aspect of student feelings, education, and experiences is at the front of your minds.

From what I've heard, the reasoning behind this initiative is that AI isn't going anywhere, so we should be educated on it. And that's absolutely true! We need thoughtful, comprehensive, and structured

education. Unfortunately, the short timeline on the implementation of this initiative will guarantee that details will be overlooked. I bet anything that those details will be the ones of student and teacher experiences.

Students turn to AI to do work for them when they're tired, don't know what to do, or simply don't want to put in the work. That's a fact. We already have AI overview and AI mode on our Chromebooks. Students have their phones with them. If students want to use AI, they will, and they do. If students want to cheat, they will, and they do. Rather than investing time and resources into making students feel more capable, you are taking actions that will increase apathy and reduce literacy. With generative AI even more accessible for schoolwork than it already is, more and more students will stop putting in the work that defines a high quality education. Duluth Public Schools will produce graduates who do not proofread their own papers. Graduates who ask a chat bot rather than struggling through a math problem. Is it no longer important to focus on the quality of the details that make an education well rounded? Students want AI as a tool, but more than that, we want tools and education that mean we don't need AI to feel like we know what we're doing. We need support, not a computer program that gets us out of facing challenges.

I asked student forum members, and not one person said that they or their peers would be attentive to district guidelines or rubrics regarding AI. If AI isn't going anywhere why are we rushing? Would you rather have semi-formed plans that will ensure student apathy now, or do you want effective and engaging education a little bit later? Have you looked into other AI options designed for students? For example, there are programs that only generate outlines and suggestions only from data (like class notes) that a student provides. Have you considered whether the AI education should come before Gemini AI is put on the Chromebooks in order to ensure that students already have the info they need? Have you considered how thoroughly (or not) curriculums will be implemented when they are added over half way through the school year? Have you talked to students about how they feel this will impact them? Have you asked teachers?

Whether you're for or against AI on a broader scale, I think we should all question whether this is a healthy, responsible, and effective way to implement it in our schools. We've seen this issue in the past: the district makes big decisions with a short timeline, overlooking the details of how it will impact students and teachers once it's implemented. I've said this before and I'll say it again: it's not necessarily about what the decision is, it's how the decision is made and communicated.

I can say with a whole lot of confidence that if AI is implemented in February like I've been told it will, the negative effects will far outweigh the positives. This is a district that values having long term visions and goals, so take some time to look at the big picture. I am not saying that teaching us about AI isn't important. That couldn't be farther from my intention. What I'm saying is that this issue is big enough that it deserves more time to become a fully formed plan. We deserve clear communication. We deserve consideration for our mental health. Students already use AI. This initiative will simply make apathy and cheating more accessible. I don't think that's what you aim to stand for.

During my time on this board, I have begun to learn the complexities of a group like this one. Schools are incredibly intricate organizations, and I appreciate the enormity of your task. Students don't fully appreciate how much you deal with, and you don't fully appreciate how much students deal with. We all

know our own perspectives, backgrounds, and struggles the best. By serving as a student representative, I have expanded my perspective, and I hope that my challenges to you have contributed to expanding yours.

For the final time, I'd like to share my monthly reminder to take student feedback with a fresh perspective each time you hear it. To quote one of my prior reports, "You see only some of our perspectives, and students see only some of yours. There needs to be balance, and luckily, that's something you can contribute to. I challenge my peers to question why decisions that frustrate them are necessary. I challenge them to look at broader pictures. I challenge myself to encourage collaboration rather than frustration. It's an ongoing goal with imperfect execution. I hope that you will continually and critically reflect on how you're incorporating student voices. (I've got to say that one more time.) I hope that you will continually and critically reflect on how you're incorporating student voices. There is a difference between listening and hearing."

Thank you for your time and this opportunity.