

THE POPULAR KIDS

Speaker Joe Straus and his powerful chairmen



Quarterback Joe Straus

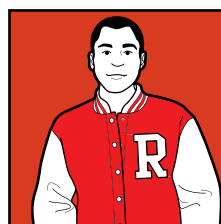
Straus and his gang aren't going down easy. There's Jim Pitts, the student-government treasurer who passes out money, and Charlie Geren, who can always get you a hall pass. And Straus will have some empty seats at his table, with quite a few of his best friends having left school. The question is, who will he invite to sit with the popular kids?

Straus and his gang aren't going down easy. There's Jim Pitts, the student-government treasurer who passes out money, and Charlie Geren, who can always get you a hall pass. And Straus will have some empty seats at his table, with quite a few of his best friends having left school. The question is, who will he invite to sit with the popular kids?

As any cheerleader can tell you, all jocks are not created equal. Before Quarterback Straus turned the "Fighting Gavels" into a real football team, most of the cool kids at House High School gravitated to the all-powerful band led by Drum Major Craddick. When Straus became Joe Cool last session, many held back, skeptical about cheering for the football team. Now some of those skeptics are on the team. Look at little Sid Miller, who passed notes in fourth period defending Straus to the band advocates. Or Larry Phillips, who allegedly threatened to "redistrict" Bryan Hughes right out of school if he didn't start cheering a little louder. Straus' offensive line looks pretty solid this season.

THE JOCKS

Pro-Straus
Republicans



When Debbie

Riddle and Leo Berman put on their two-person play, *Terror Babies Attack*, last year, few people actually bought tickets. Meanwhile, critics like the famous Anderson Cooper gave them scathing reviews. But while they're still largely ignored, these kids have theater in their blood: The show goes on! They sometimes get support from their fellow performance-artists in the band and drumline, though they're really all spectacle.

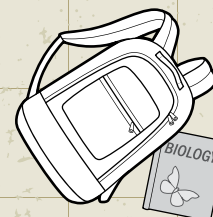
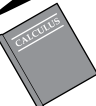
These kids want so badly to be

sitting at the popular table, but students from the Democratic part of town aren't exactly cool these days. Last year, Straus was pretty nice to the AV Club, and even invited some of the pocket-protected—like Rene Oliveira and Mark Strama—to his parties. These kids swear they have the answers to any social ills in the school. And between debate, Model UN, AP classes and the like, they're certainly well-prepared. But now that Straus has more of the jocks in his camp, he may not be quite so benevolent to the nerds. He can't afford to spurn them entirely, though. After all, if it weren't for Scott Hochberg's homework help in that Education class, a whole lot of popular kids would be failing right now.



NERDS

Democratic Policy
Works



IS THIS SEAT TAKEN?

To truly understand the power flow in the Texas House of Representatives, you have to imagine a place where people are friends one minute and enemies the next. Where people can inspire with acts of bravery and kindness, then turn into vindictive monsters. Where the mighty can fall swiftly. Where success is almost entirely determined by the opinions of their peers. Luckily, the freshmen legislators wishing to prepare for the 82nd Legislature have the ultimate resource: Head over to the local high school. See how the kids arrange themselves in the ultimate court of public opinion—the cafeteria. Or, if that's too much trouble, they can read our handy guide to the Texas House High School Lunchroom.

—ABBY RAPOPORT



GO ALONG TO GET ALONG

Everybody else



Most kids in this place aren't looking to make trouble. They get solid Bs, go to class, maybe a party or two. For the most part, they'll follow the path of least resistance—whether it's to the football game, the band concert or the big fight. If they keep their heads down and just bring home reasonable grades to vaguely interested parents, everybody's satisfied. They might not be interesting to watch, but—perhaps rather tragically—they're the biggest group at House High by far.

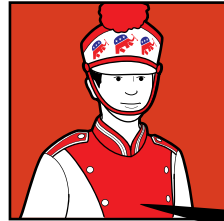


DRAMA KIDS

Former guests of Anderson Cooper

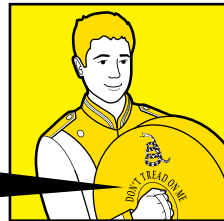


These guys came out of nowhere, making traditional drumbeating sound new and exciting. The music's the same, but these kids—mostly freshmen—sure know how to put on a good show, jumping, yelling and getting everybody agitated. Some are backing Ken Paxton, the drumline leader, in his bid to topple Prom King Straus. But despite their newfound popularity, these guys haven't performed in an actual game yet, and it's not clear whether they can march and play in time.



THE BAND

Old social conservatives



DRUMLINE

Tea Party

Even though the band

and the football team root for the same side when it's game time, the fighting between the groups rages on. Back in 2007, when Drum Major Tom Craddick was Prom King, the band ran this school. They insisted that everybody march in step, and they stuck to traditional music, costumes and the lot. While Craddick seems happy enough in the bleachers, pals like Warren Chisum want to dethrone Prom King Straus and return to power. But the band just isn't as cool as it once was, and the band members are seniors now—a little old to build a new social force. So they've turned to a younger group: the drumline.



THE GOTHS

Disaffected Democrats



These are the kids who tend to sit in the back during classes, clad in black boots and even blacker eyeliner. They consider themselves “outside the system, man,” and they're eager to “fight the power.” They might come from the same streets as the nerds, but unlike the AV geeks, they aren't trying to please anyone. They may be outcasts, but they'll needle, mock and disrupt anything they can. Jim Dunnam, their old leader, got in a bunch of epic brawls last year. While Dunnam's been expelled, his friend Trey Martinez-Fischer is spoiling for a fight.