

No Place for APs

BY ALEX LEW

For years, high school students have heard the same mantra: the more APs, the better. So it came as a shock to parents and educators worldwide when one of New York's best private schools, The Ethical Culture Fieldston School, dropped Advanced Placement courses from their curriculum entirely.

Fieldston, like NCSSM, offers a variety of high-level classes designed by the faculty that teach them. Its course catalog is filled with titles like "The Third World and the Cold War," "Advanced Literary Themes in Spanish," and "Law and Society". The way the school saw it, Fieldston had no need for AP courses, in which curricula were rigidly defined and teachers had little room to improvise. Fieldston was confident in its own faculty's ability to develop and teach courses that would challenge students with interesting material.

In a statement released in 2003, Fieldston administrators described the downfalls of the AP program: "Over time, we came to the conclusion that

the AP program at Fieldston . . . lacked courses with multicultural content; in some disciplines, most notably history and science, it left little room for divergence. The AP courses encouraged teachers to cover a great breadth of material superficially, leaving little time for in-depth analysis . . . Standardized testing in subject area essentially smothers

Fieldston's lead."

NCSSM should strongly consider doing just that and dropping AP classes for good. In addition to reasons cited by Fieldston, AP classes are particularly unsuited for NCSSM for other reasons. While at most schools students only have one continuum of courses to choose from—regular, honors, and AP—students at

Fieldston's lead." NCSSM should strongly consider doing just that and dropping AP classes for good. In addition to reasons cited by Fieldston, AP classes are particularly unsuited for NCSSM for other reasons. While at most schools students only have one continuum of courses to choose from—regular, honors, and AP—students at

dents applying to college. As it is, NCSSM offers an odd assortment of AP classes, with AP Calculus, AP Chemistry, and AP Government available, but AP Spanish, AP English, and AP World History are not offered. Students often feel the pressure to have the "full set" of AP courses to compete with their peers at other high schools, so they opt to self-study and take the exams anyway. This puts unnecessary pressure on students.

Some students might be reluctant to give up AP classes, as scoring well on College Board's exams means exemption from some courses in college. There are a few reasons to drop the courses anyway. Many colleges have begun to de-emphasize the role of AP courses by giving credit for fewer courses, giving credit only for students with top scores, or simply not giving credit at all. Furthermore, NCSSM has been negotiating articulation agreements with various schools across the

state, giving students college credit simply for doing well in NCSSM's advanced courses. Evidence shows that schools that have dropped AP courses from their curriculum have been successful: students still get into their top choice colleges, and certainly still learn just as well—if not better. Students don't seem to miss the AP program; the year after the AP courses were cut at Fieldston, registration for AP exams dropped from 150 to just 75, with only 40 students showing up to sit for the exams in May. NCSSM should drop AP courses, too. In doing so, it would not only ease the financial burden on families (4 AP tests, a typical load for an ambitious student, costs \$344), but also allow students to take the courses that truly interest them rather than the ones that might help them get into college. Teachers will teach more enthusiastically when they are in charge of the curriculum, and classes will become more engaging as teachers stop feeling pressure to teach to the test.

Disagree? Write us a note.

"NCSSM should strongly consider dropping AP classes for good."

original thought, more fatally, because of the irresistible pressure on teachers to teach to the tests."

At the time, Stanford's dean of admissions wrote a note to Fieldston. "Your decision reflects the courage of your convictions about teaching and learning. I hope it encourages other schools to follow

NCSSM have a wide range of electives competing for their attention. Students have to make choices: take the Molecular Genetics course that looks really interesting, or take the AP Biology survey course that will help them get into college.

Dropping AP classes might even be good news for stu-

What's in Store?



BY EMMA HAWKINS

To juniors, welcome. To seniors, teachers, faculty, and staff, welcome back. We find ourselves standing at the threshold of yet another school year. If you are reading this paper, it means you have just moved in, or are postponing the moment you will have to unpack the twelve bags your mom insisted you'd need (cough-Mrs. Hawkins-cough). You are in for quite a year. These hallowed halls have provided sanctuary to nearly thirty years worth of students before you, and will offer the same to (fingers crossed) hundreds after you.

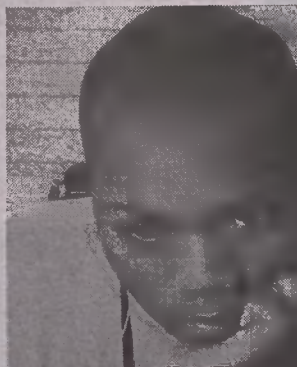
With all the formalities out of the way, I would like to formally introduce the '11ers to some of the wonder that is Smath. When I am asked to describe NCSSM to people who have never attended, I find that it is close to impossible. "Think Hogwarts, without the wands and with Southern accents," I often answer, though it doesn't do the place justice. It is so much more than a wandless production of JK Rowling's imagination. However, I'm not going to try and describe it

here; you'll figure that out for yourself. But there are several things that I'll communicate of what this place has taught me. The first, and most important, is that caffeinated beverages are God's gift to man. Seniors, reflect back to second trimester. Juniors, just wait. Perhaps you did not chug Red Bull, but I guarantee, you know someone who owed their entire state of consciousness to some form of liquid energy. The second, and perhaps more profound, is that no amount of Monster or coffee is going to guarantee your success; you have to put forth the effort. There's no shame in going to the tutorial or asking a question in class. There's no harm in studying a little every night. I know I sound like a PSA, but who knew those things were actually true?

To the seniors, we have one more year. You now can go yell your graduation year at random intervals throughout your day. I will be. Consider yourselves warned. This has been eighteen years in the making, show some senior pride. But be nice to the juniors. I do not, nor does the *Stentorian*, endorse hazing. Instead, take your junior brother or sister under your wing. Show them the best studying places, encourage them to go to school events, tell them which foods to avoid at the PFM. And whether they are your little junior responsibility or not, you should treat all juniors as your equals. Remember, we may be older, cooler, and more awesome than they are, but some day, they will be taking over our legacy. But not until **June 5, 2010.**

To Unicornland... and Beyond

A look into things to do on campus and off



BY LANAIR LETT

Life at NCSSM is full of adventure and possibility. For a Uni, there is really never a dull moment. Here at NCSSM, there is a plethora of ways to stay occupied. Balancing rigorous academia with refreshing down-time is something that the seniors of NCSSM have nearly perfected, so here at the *Stentorian* we figured we'd share our wisdom with the class of 2011.

On campus, we have over 70 chartered student-run organizations that host activities throughout the week. Here at Science and Math, we have your standard clubs like FBLA and HOSA, but we also have some unusual NCSSM favorites like the Pasta Appreciation Club and the Asian Cultures Club. On August 22nd, the Student Government-sponsored Club

Fair will be held in order for students to develop their awareness of many different clubs on campus and sign up for the clubs that most interest them. Over the weekends there are also mixers held by different halls on campus that students from all around the school are invited to attend. Also, if parties really aren't your thing, there are also great movies shown in the lecture hall on Fridays and Saturdays.

Though Science and Math has plenty to keep you busy, it's important to take full advantage of the Durham area. By now, I'm sure all you juniors have heard the two infamous words—Bali Hai. Bali Hai is probably the most popular restaurant among NCSSM students. It offers a unique experience in Mongolian grill-style food at a cheap price. Beyond Bali Hai, there is Dale's Indian Cuisine, Cosmic Cantina, Elmo's Diner, and many more great restaurants.

If the on-campus and Durham area activities are not enough to keep you busy, Science and Math also offers bus loops to nearby malls and shopping complexes including Southpoint and Brier Creek. Need that last minute thing for class and it's not available at the school store? Take advantage of Walmart Wednesdays and Target Tuesdays—two very

convenient and much-used loops.

Although we can divulge more tips for NCSSM, it's always a little fun to discover things for yourself. Talk to other unicorns and go exploring. Class of 2011, Unicornland holds endless possibilities.

Stentorian Staff

Editors-in-Chief:
Jennifer Zhu, Alex Lew,
& Kirby Varnadoe-Russ

News Editor:
Avani Uppalapati

Features Editor:
Peter McNeary

Opinion Editor:
Emma Hawkins

Lifestyles Editors:
Lanair Lett &
Erica Venning

Advisor: John Kirk

Have something to say about the August issue? Send an email to stentorian@ncsm.edu and we might publish your letter.