AP Classes Strong Ally in Scholastic Success

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High school scheduling, as simple as it may seem, is an art. For some, the masterpiece is comprised of choosing the easiest classes with the least homework and the most relaxed teachers. Others focus on their passion, whether it's science, art, math, literature, or gym. A dedicated few, however, choose to test their limits and stretch their academic capacities, and hope to groom themselves for the college application process. These students choose to take Advancement Placement courses.

Sanctioned by the National College Board, AP classes are almost always more challenging and time-consuming than other classes offered at a high school. Their purpose is to prepare a student for the tough AP exams which are held in May. A passing score on the AP exam may earn a student credits in college and will always look good on applications.

The AP exam also gives the students a definite goal for the class. Occasionally, a teacher may even choose to essentially end the AP class after the AP exam has been taken.

Junior Anita Tung took AP Calculus [BC syllabus], AP Literature and Composition, and AP US History last year, and is taking three more AP classes this year. Tung has taken AP classes at Loy Norrix, KAMSC, and Western Michigan University (through the ATYP program). Her wide experience has exposed her to many different teaching styles and classroom environments.

"There is lots of variety when it comes to AP classes. The atmosphere depends on the teacher and the students," said Tung.

Although Tung currently plans on attending art school, where she will not be able to make use of many of the college credits that she has earned through her AP classes, she will continue to take AP classes, such as AP European History during her senior year, simply because she enjoys the classes as well as the teachers.

"I'm still taking AP Euro next year, even though I'm not going into History because I like the way Mr. Porco teaches the class," said Tung.

No matter what the AP class, the students who choose to enroll in these advanced courses tend to be very motivated and genuinely interested in the subject matter. Junior Martha Alves commented on the AP European History class that she is currently taking at Norrix.

"I really enjoy it," said Alves. "You get to know all of the kids in the class because you're with them for the entire year. It's really relaxed and you don't get a lot of busy work. There's lots of discussion, but there are lots of tests, so it's hard."

Not all AP classes provide equal levels of preparation for the AP exam. It is important for students who are considering taking any AP class to speak with their peers who have already completed the class. Alves cites positive peer reviews of Porco's AP US History class as one reason for her decision to enroll in the class as a sophomore.

"I've always enjoyed history, and I had heard that it was a good class. I tend to enjoy honors and AP classes more," said Alves.

While a well-taught AP class can improve a student's performance on the AP exam, students enrolled in AP classes must also have the initiative to study for the exam and learn course material outside of the classroom. While that may seem undesirable to some students, a well-structured AP class should teach you how to manage your time and study efficiently, skills which will prove to be valuable later in life. Alves has learned these skills, among others, from the AP classes that she has taken.

"I know I've used a lot of the skills I learned in AP US in other classes and when taking the ACT," said Alves, "especially my essay writing skills."

AP classes benefit not only the students who take them. Often, especially in literature based AP classes, the teachers are given different perspectives each year. AP College English teacher Ron Burch has read *Don Quixote* over 7 times with his classes and has yet to be bored of it.

"Each year a student reads *DQ* [*Don Quixote*] in a different way. They always show me a different side of the book, which keeps it fresh," Burch commented.

In some cases a class may acquire, but not fully deserve its AP label. For the class to earn the AP signature, a teacher's curriculum must be submitted to the College Board and approved. However, in order to truly deserve its AP label, an AP class must have not only an approved curriculum but also a teacher who actively engages and challenges his or her students.

"The class can't just have an AP title. A good [AP] class is one which doesn't just give you busy work, but makes you understand the material," said Alves.

The importance of an excellent teacher cannot be underestimated. While it is important for the students to be enthusiastic about their class, their eagerness can do little without a strong leader focusing their efforts. The quality of the teacher can make or break an AP class.

"There has to be an understanding between the teacher and the students," said Tung. "You have to realize that it takes more time and effort, and you have to be willing to put in the hard work."

Considering AP Classes?

Next year, Loy Norrix will be offering a greater variety of Advanced Placement courses, in an effort to increase student enrollment in AP courses within KPS. Furthermore, the $82 fee required for each AP test will be paid by KPS. Listed below are the AP classes that will be offered next school year, their respective teachers, and assignments which should be completed prior to taking the class.

Literature/Composition
Teacher: Anne Bowser
Offered: 12th grade
Summer Assignment: TBA

Language/Composition
Teacher: Ron Burch
Offered: 11th & 12th grade
Summer Assignment: Students select a book from a provided list and write a book report on their chosen book.

Physics
Teacher: Frank Ryan
Offered: 11th & 12th grade
Summer Assignment: None

Chemistry
Teacher: Linda Stevens
Offered: 10th, 11th, and 12th grade
Summer Assignment: None

United States History
Teacher: Matt Porco
Offered to: 10th, 11th, & 12th grade
Summer Assignment: TBD

Studio Art
Teacher: Cindy VanLeiu
Offered: All grades
Summer Assignment: Drawing and sculpture students must complete a sketch and idea portfolio for use in class.

Art History
Teacher: Sue Lyons
Offered: All grades
Summer Assignment: None

Calculus (AB Syllabus)
Teacher: Adam Hosler
Offered: 11th & 12th grade
Summer Assignment: None

European History
Teacher: Matt Porco
Offered: 11th & 12th grade
Summer Assignment: None

Biology
Teacher: Mitch West
Offered: 10th,11th, & 12th grade
Summer Assignment: None

AP Government
Teacher: Art Williams
Offered: 11th, 12th grade
Summer Assignment: TBD. May involve a political analysis of two political candidates and of the national convention.

There are also many AP classes available at KAMSC. See your guidance counselor for details.

Inadequate Sex Education Contributes to STD Increase

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to abstinence only, it stops the discussion about sexual relationships. Students eventually in their lifetime are going to have sexual relationships and high school is the time to initiate that discourse. It's better to discuss having eventual positive sexual relationships than assuming that once you're married birth control is not needed. Not everyone who is married wants children," said Pillsbury.

Two of Kalamazoo's private high schools, Hackett Catholic Central and Kalamazoo Christian, teach abstinence only. Students learn about sex but not how to protect themselves against STDs or pregnancies once sexually active. However, they are taught family planning for the future once they are married. Kalamazoo Christian biology teacher Steve Dyk explains the curricula.

"I basically teach the reproductive system from an anatomy standpoint, with a discussion on sex that is abstinence based," said Dyk.

Many of these teachings come from religious beliefs that the school is founded upon.

"We believe sex before marriage is wrong! Should you teach students how to more safely break into a car, just because 'they are going to do it anyways'?" said Dyk.

Kalamazoo Christian also has the outside community program Teen HEART come in to instruct freshmen. Teen HEART teaches ways to say no to peer pressure, signs of healthy and unhealthy relationships, and abstaining from sex.

As the Teen HEART website states, "Teen HEART is a school-based, peer-led program designed to help young people make safe and healthy decisions about sexual abstinence. The focus of the Teen HEART curriculum is to emphasize the importance of developing healthy relationships based on trust and respect, help teens understand the full range of consequences of unhealthy decisions."

The other religious and private high school in Kalamazoo, Hackett Catholic Central, also teaches abstinence only education. Hackett religion teacher Deb Gambon explains the purpose of the program.

"The Senior Moral Theology Course at Hackett Catholic Central addresses the issues of human sexuality through The Theology of the Body program... The main focus of our program is truth and freedom, chastity... dating with purpose and purity, the Vocation of Marriage and the Sacrament of Matrimony, celibacy... and religious life," explained Gambon.

Hackett also chooses to base their education on religious ideas that follow the school's beliefs.

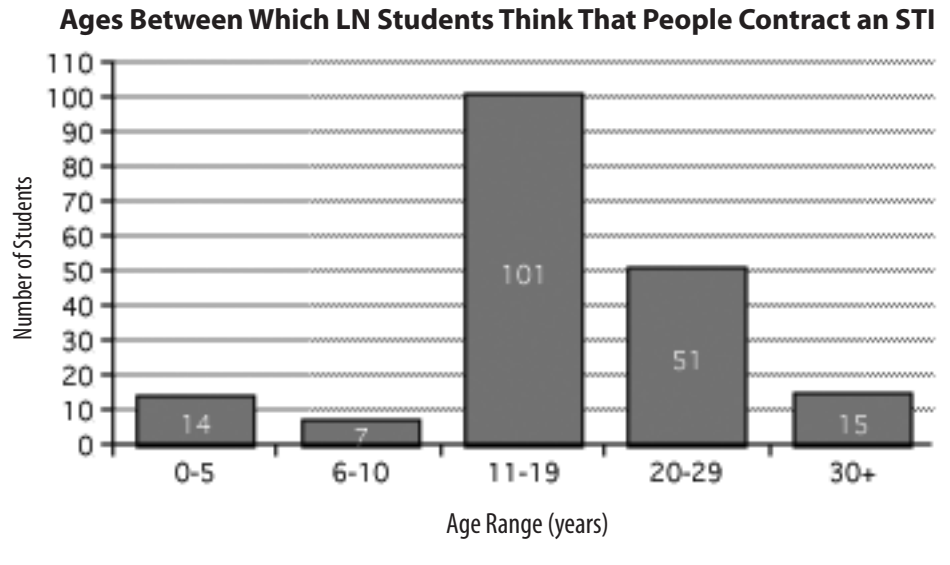
"The Theology of the Body program is based on the teachings of Pope John Paul II (1920-2005) on the meaning of the human body, sex and marital love. The pope dedicated 129 of his "Wednesday audiences" during the first six years of his papacy (1979 to 1984) to a series of talks about the human body and sexuality," said Gambon.

It's not possible to say if either type of education is right or wrong, because not all students are the same. Some teens are at high risk for STDs and greatly need as much sex education as possible. Other teens do not need, nor want, that much sex education, and are prepared for their future with abstinence only education.

"Different kids at different levels emotionally and different levels physically, need different educations," said Zull.

Regardless of a person's religious beliefs, personal morals, or sexual viewpoints, the high school sex education curriculum needs to change. Both safe sex and abstinence only sex education are failing to prepare teenagers enough, as seen by the rise in STDs. Students need to speak up about wanting a stronger education for themselves, because one in four teenage girls with an STD is one too many.

188 Norrix students were interviewed at random to find out what age they think most people contract a sexually transmitted infection. Most people actually contract an STI between the ages of 15 and 24.



Grinding at School Dances

GRINDING
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wasn't me, I didn't want to do it, he just started to dance with me. Now the young man dancing with Sally could be accused of sexual harassment and potentially lead to discipline or legal issues, said Boggan. Boggan spoke of another possible scenario.

"Now this dancing is very common at school parties and for many students seems harmless, but if a male student started to do this dance with a female student and she went along with it because all of her friends were cheering and she didn't want to seem 'weird' by saying: I am not comfortable with this. So she goes along with it and the male student has no idea that his female partner is uncomfortable. The next day at school I have this female student in my office discussing how she felt; which could include being embarrassed, ashamed, pressured and or uncomfortable. This story applies to two girls dancing, two guys dancing and a boy and a girl dancing," said Boggan.

Derring believes that there are boundaries to this dance. There is a time and place for everything, said Derring, frustrated.

The last thing the school wants to do is shut down one of its dances, but other public places have resorted to that.

"If you wouldn't want your parents to see you doing it [grinding] then you probably shouldn't do it," said Boggan.

Loy Norrix Blood Drive Exceeds Goal

Jack Stankewicz
Copy Editor

Loy Norrix's chapter of the National Honor Society held its annual blood drive on March 31st. With the help of over one hundred people who signed up to donate, the blood drive exceeded its goal of 81 pints of blood, reaching a total of 91 pints.

This year's success contrasts with last year's challenges. Last year's drive was plagued by no-shows and bureaucratic difficulties. Because of these problems, last year's drive was part of a series of drives that failed to meet projected totals.

However, many of these problems were corrected to help this year's drive achieve its target for the first time in several years.

"Carly Wheaton [NHS Vice President] made an emphasis on scheduling that made a big difference," said Art Williams, one of the staff advisors to NHS.

NHS volunteers still had to contend with some issues this year. The primary difficulty was a lack of available nurses to help potential donors. This resulted in long wait times for donors and meant that some potential donors had to be turned away near the end of the day.

In response to the lack of nurses and the impressive results, Matthew Porco, staff advisor to NHS, said that the goal would be raised to 101 pints of blood next year. Raising the goal will bring more Red Cross nurses to the blood drive and will allow schedulers to accommodate more potential donors.

Despite these issues, NHS officials expressed pleasure in the results and hope for continued success next year.

"I feel it was a huge success, I don't think there's much we need to change for next year," said Danielle Matlick, NHS President-elect for the 2008-2009 school year.

CORRECTION:

- Luis Cabriales was misrepresented in Knights Speak. The photo included with his quote was not him.