



# The High School View

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## Minnesingers enchant audiences

PHOTO BY JOSH SOMMERS

The Minnesingers performed at the Old Whaling Church in Edgartown during their annual holiday concert last Friday night. The vocal group also performed on Saturday, when they were joined by Santa Claus. This winter concert focused on holiday music arranged and composed by American musicians, but also featured well-known classics with contemporary arrangements.

## To study or not to study?

BY SARAH ORTLIP-SOMMERS

This is part two of a two-part series about the regional high school's new AP policy.

Preparation for college work, not just admissions, is a popular reason for taking AP classes in high school. Said Julia Cooper, "Sometimes I had a lot of work [for AP classes], but that only taught me better time management and allowed me to prove to myself that I would be able to survive in college."

Said senior Sam Permar, "High school is largely about preparing students for college, and therefore students should be responsible for making their own decisions."

Administrators and teachers worry that students enrolled in multiple advanced courses won't have time for other activities. "This school has always been very supportive of the well-rounded student. If students are overloaded with APs, they can't do other things as well," said AP Biology Teacher Mrs. Bennett.

"Often the kids who take multiple AP classes are the same kids who want to be

in the plays and in sports. They want to be invested in school," said assistant principal Andrew Berry.

Some teachers and students have other concerns. The new limit will force students to choose which academic subjects they would like to



ARTWORK BY THORPE KARABEES

study at the AP level. The existing tracks for most subjects culminate in AP courses. In addition, there are no honors history courses, so advanced students must take AP history courses in order to feel challenged.

"Almost all second-year courses, especially in the sciences, are at the AP level," said AP Physics teacher Dana

Munn. "In science, sadly we do not offer a non-AP option for accelerated students. Having second-year courses would be helpful."

Said Julia, "Personally I was tracked into AP Spanish and AP Calculus BC. But I chose to take AP Physics and AP Statistics. And I wouldn't have been content taking honors English and a common level history knowing that I could be moving at a faster, more challenging pace with AP."

"The way the current schedule is set up, what would you take in place of an AP? In some cases, for accelerated students, there are no other courses," said Mr. Munn. He expressed a desire to offer more advanced, non-AP courses for second-year science students that would still be challenging.

Currently, the school offers courses that seniors can take for English or Social Studies credit in subjects like film, journalism, psychology, and Irish history. However, the fact that these courses are either unweighted or weighted at the College I level, as well as not offering an academic challenge, dissuades some students from enrolling.

## Marijuana-related incident at school

BY NATHANIEL HORWITZ

Two regional high school students were treated at the Martha's Vineyard Hospital last Friday for ingesting brownies that allegedly contained marijuana.

On Monday, December 16, principal Stephen Nixon sent a newsletter to parents and guardians concerning this incident and another concerning a severe allergic reaction by a student to food brought into the classroom by another student.

As a result, administrators have created several new or updated policies. Eating food will no longer be allowed in

the hallways or classrooms. The Oak Bluffs police will be going with staff members, who have been placed on heightened alert. The source of the marijuana is under investigation. Mr. Nixon said, "We hand over all cases of this severity to the police. The police have initiated an investigation, with assistant principals Andrew Berry and Matt Malowski acting as liaisons."

The policy concerning no food consumption in the hallways or classrooms has always been in place, an extension of a guideline by the state Board of Health concerning school safety. "On certain times of the year, like

this," said Mr. Nixon, "there is some leniency." For example, the school's student government traditionally fundraises by selling candy canes during the holiday season. "But during an investigation it is better to err on the side of caution for the safety of our students," said Mr. Nixon.

Mr. Nixon added that the school does not drug test students in cases of suspicion. "We encourage parents to take their kids to the hospital. We average two or three marijuana-related incidents each year. During this time, it's a matter of encouraging the students to use caution. Be careful." **MSV**

Instead of simply rejecting the new policy, some students and teachers believe the limit should be accompanied by other changes. "We should take it on a case-by-case basis. If you have prior success in APs, you should be able to potentially take more," said Mr. Munn. "If a student shows an ability to perform at that level, it seems fair to me that he or she could take more AP courses."

Mr. Munn is not alone in his belief that a strict rule is not the answer. Teachers, parents, and students agree that

prior academic success as well as communication should determine if a student should be allowed to enroll in multiple AP courses. Said AP European History teacher Elaine Weintraub, "I'm against a blanket one size fits all in any setting. No one should be stopped from genuinely challenging themselves."

Perhaps the said objective prerequisites for enrollment in AP classes are not high enough. Currently, students must receive at least a grade of 80 in the previous honors class in order to take most AP

classes. "If you scored below a 90 in the honors prerequisite, you simply aren't ready," said Nathaniel. "Perhaps there should be a 95 cut-off."

It does seem that some students don't understand the work required of such advanced courses. "There should be serious counseling to help students understand the time and commitment required," said Mrs. Weintraub.

Said Molly, "Students should have the freedom to decide what they are capable of without spreading themselves thin." **MSV**

## Retreat encourages acceptance

BY MADDY MOORE AND ZACHARY BRESNICK

Students at the regional high school were excused from two days of classes to talk and explore prejudices at the tenth annual race culture diversity retreat held December 10 and 11 at the YMCA teen center. The retreat's participants were recommended by teachers based on their leadership skills and backgrounds. They were expected to share their backgrounds and the prejudices that they've faced.

The retreat focused on how to try and prevent -isms and stereotypes from influencing

the high school community by teaching students to value different backgrounds and cultures. The retreat began with an activity in which each participant paired with a student he or she didn't know and exchanged questions. The students quickly became comfortable with each other. Junior Mia Arenburg said, "I feel like I made some new friends."

Sophomore Taynara Gonsalves said, "I felt blessed to be there and so grateful to have met all the new people."

The retreat was directed by seniors who were part of the retreat in prior years. They led discussions and activities and

shared stories and insights. These facilitators also led "home groups," small groups of students and faculty members. Amy Lilavois, faculty advisor and home group leader, said, "I think the senior students who facilitated the retreat did a great job engaging everyone in the group."

Many students were able to share hidden feelings about race issues. Justine DeOliveira, a second-year facilitator, said, "People were willing to share and be open with each other."

Said senior Lucas Amarins, "It was interesting to hear the different perspectives people had on the same topic." **MSV**

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