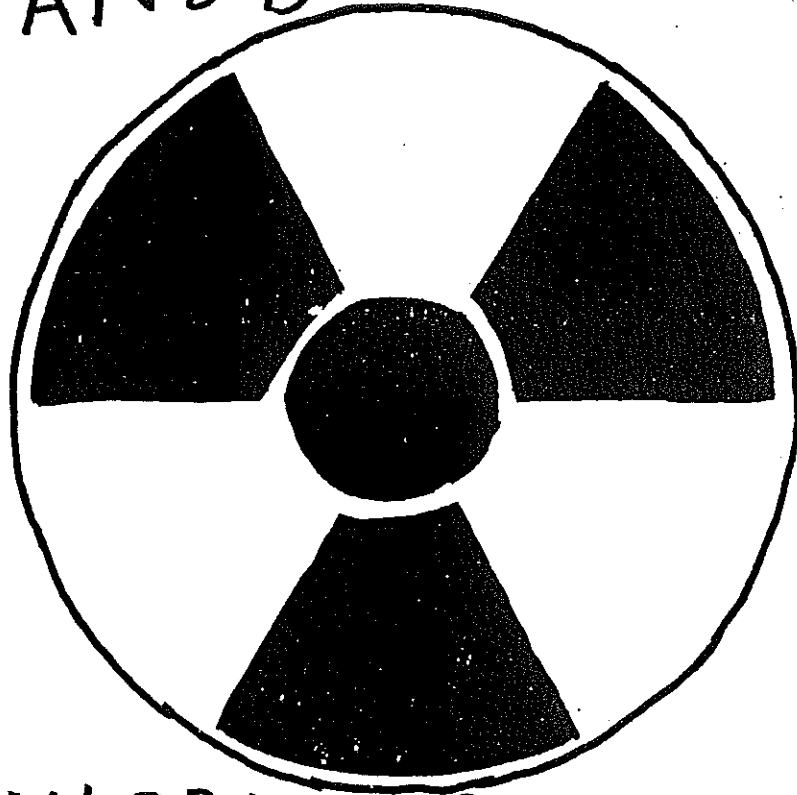


# THE UNDERGROUND

~~NUCLEAR~~  
HANDBOOK



WORK AREA  
~~SHELTER~~

# STUDENT HANDBOOK

# The Underground Student Handbook

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implemented in our school don't come close to living up to the rhetoric of our philosophy. So a lot of people walk around these days thinking that H-B Woodlawn lives up to the role of an alternative program simply because they can paraphrase the philosophy at a moment's notice, or at least feel familiar with it when they read it someplace. A philosophy is meaningless, though, unless it informs the way people act. And our philosophy doesn't do that. Not yet.

## **Verbum Sap Sat**

"Verbum Sap Sat", H-B Woodlawn's school motto, is abbreviated Latin for "A word to the wise is sufficient." Simply put, that means that you, a normal H-B Woodlawn student, are smart enough that you don't need to be completely controlled by adults for every single second of your life. It says a lot about how things work and how people think at H-B. We do not have that many constrictive rules because we, as a school, have faith that you, the student, will learn from your mistakes and grow into making responsible, mature choices. The actual ways that our classes work at H-B also reflects the idea that students are capable of being responsible for their own actions. Teachers will generally not take the trouble to harass you over whether or not you have your homework on time, as long as you can demonstrate to the teacher that you understand the material. Don't give up until a reasonable solution is found.

### **2 IMPORTANT NOTES:**

1) If a teacher thinks that you are in academic trouble, he or she will still help you out. Whether or not they want to admit it, most students need extra help every once in a while, and the teacher may seek you out for that purpose.

2) Some people don't think that this motto is given any attention in the Middle School. That means that Middle School students have to live through more explicit rules and more patronizing teachers. It is true that the younger students do occasionally need slightly more guidance, but many people complain that the Middle School is so strict that it isn't even alternative. If you have a problem with a particular Middle School rule, policy, or activity, bring it to Town Meeting, or talk to Mary Flynn or someone else involved with the Middle School.

## **Why People Come to H-B Woodlawn**

The one thread of consistency as to why students come here seems to be that no one comes here because they want to get an alternative education. Some come to escape the oppressive social atmosphere of the home schools, some come because older siblings were here, some come because parents make them, and many come because it's the natural place to go after having gone to Drew. But, as far as we've been able to observe, very few students enter H-B Woodlawn with the primary intention of participating in an alternative educational experience. Before you gasp in horror, keep in mind that most kids make the decision to come here while they're in the fifth grade. Now fifth graders are great, but we know that we sure didn't think about education when we were in the fifth grade. The only things kids at elementary schools seem to know about H-B are that we have free blocks and off-campus privileges, and that we call our teachers by their first names.

Given the age of our entering students and the low levels of awareness, it makes sense that people don't come here for educational reasons. The problem is that their reasons for being here initially do not relate to the educational concepts of the school, and so they never evolve to thinking about these educational concepts available. Kids tend to like it here because it's a more comfortable place to go to

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# Opening Stuff

## Opening

We wrote this handbook to help address what we see as the growing disparity between what this school could be and what it is. We hope that through it we can impart to the rest of the school some of the direction and inspiration we have gotten from what we have heard, read, and seen about H-B Woodlawn and alternative education in general.

## History of H-B Woodlawn

H-B Woodlawn has an incredibly rich and interesting history and background that we couldn't possibly cover completely in a few paragraphs. We'll do our best anyways, but don't despair, there are lots of great documents and newspaper clippings from the early seventies-onward that can give you a better idea of what produced this school and how it has changed. They are available in the newly created Archives up in the library. If you have a few minutes, go check them out. You could probably even talk a teacher into letting you do a project for a class on the stuff in the Archives. There are also several (living, we think) sources of information right here in our classrooms. Ray, Mary, Mary, Jim Schroeder, Judy M., Susan Senn, Bobbi, Ellen, and Randy have all been involved with the program since its inception long, long ago.

In any case, here's a brief history:

In 1971, Ray Anderson, then a teacher at Wakefield, issued a memo to the Wakefield and County administration regarding the increasing strictness of Wakefield and the need for an alternative program to Wakefield. Two students at W-L found and read this memo, and with Ray wrote a second memo to the County School Board suggesting that an alternative program for high school students be started. 1971 being a very socially active period, the proposal gathered support throughout the county pretty quickly, and before they knew it, it was passed by the School Board in May of 1971. Woodlawn opened the following September, with 180 students in grades 11 and 12. Woodlawn was startlingly different from the H-B Woodlawn of today, in more ways than we can list here. The great majority of work was done outside the classroom, with many classes meeting only for about two hours per week. Independent studies were ubiquitous, and lots of people did apprenticeships in the community instead of classwork. The students were a very politically active, liberal bunch - ask Ray about the infamous W-L streaking and the presidential campaign of 1972. About the only things that remain in our present school from Woodlawn are the Town Meeting and the TA system.

The year after Woodlawn opened, Hoffman-Boston was created as an alternative program for grades 7,8, and 9, and Woodlawn acquired grade 10. Judy Mayeux, Randy McKnight, Susan Senn, Bobbi Schildt, Mary Flynn, and Jim Schroeder all taught at Hoffman-Boston. Hoffman-Boston was marked by lots of contract-based work and open labs, where kids could wander in and work when they wanted. There were informal field trips and a willingness on the part of the young teachers to try almost anything.

The two programs existed in isolation until 1978, when, under pressure from the county (and in spite of fierce protesting by Woodlawn students), they were merged to form H-B Woodlawn, and relocated to the Stratford building that we currently

inhabit. Back at the time of the merger, there was a school wide ballot on what to name the new school, and names were entered ranging from "Recess" to "Stratford on Rye." Unfortunately, voting was split between over 100 different names, and a committee resolved the crisis by giving the school the most boring, uninspiring name possible.

The new school created by the merger is defined in the Merger Report, available in the office and in the Archives. However, H-B Woodlawn was much bigger than Woodlawn or Hoffman -Boston, and the more radical elements of both programs were lopped off in order to accommodate a wider range of students. The administration was also necessarily quite a bit stricter than they had been at Woodlawn because of the larger number of kids in the school and the presence of all the younger kids running around.

Since the merger, H-B Woodlawn has grown steadily more traditional. The Merger Report describes a school that doesn't sound much like the school we go to. Pressures to get into big-name colleges have led people to pile on AP courses that have rigid syllabi and don't allow for educational experimentation. There has also been a significant turnover in faculty, with many of the more alternative minded teachers leaving after a questionable faculty vote in the mid eighties that required full time teachers to teach six classes a day (insuring smaller classes, but making it nearly impossible to sponsor independent study projects). Many factors have resulted in this school being drastically different from either Woodlawn, Hoffman-Boston, or the H-B Woodlawn described in the Merger Report. Much of the change is simply due to social changes in the twenty years that have passed since Woodlawn was established. We don't mean to say that all the changes the school has undergone are for the worse. But there are many things that have disappeared to the definite detriment of the program, the most obvious of which is that we no longer offer an alternative education. At the moment, there is what we feel is a basic failure to live up to the goals of this school, goals that are not unique to a time period and that stand in their validity on their own. The pages that follow describe our school as it is, and as it could be.

## **The Philosophy of H-B Woodlawn**

The philosophy of H-B Woodlawn was formally established in the Merger Report written back in 1978. We highly recommend that you read the complete statement of philosophy; in fact, we highly recommend that you read the whole Merger Report, it's quite edifying. But in case you haven't or don't plan on doing this, we've laid out the gist of things here.

We happen to think that most of this is straight forward when you realize that this school exists to progress students towards being self-directed learners. The two key ideas are that people are individuals with unique needs and talents, and that learning occurs in its highest form when students play an active role in their education. The philosophy also establishes the environment of mutual respect that permeates this place, as well as the notion that schools must meet the needs of students.

We think that this philosophy is great. We also think, though, that it's kind of dangerous, because of the fact that it's rhetoric and nothing more. H-B Woodlawn and the members of its community are subtly inundated with its philosophy. The philosophy is in the description of the school and is told to prospective students and their parents. The problem results because the ways that the philosophy is

school, not because it offers a different education than does Yorktown, W-L, or Wakefield. The perception seems to have evolved within the county that H-B offers a better education, but people don't seem to be aware that our educational offerings should be alternative. Accordingly, parents send their children here with the intention of getting them into an Ivy League school, not of having their children play a more active role in the educational process. And even if the parents have heard the general philosophy of H-B, they often have no idea of how it is implemented in school.

We think that some initiative on the part of the faculty and administration is necessary to begin the process of progressing students towards participating in all the neat educational things that can happen here. The faculty and administration seem to brush off the decline of this school as a product of the type of kids who come here. We think this is a cheap excuse. Fifth graders as people are far from being complete, to say nothing of having developed ideas about education. The idea that they can't be made aware and appreciative of what this school could be is seriously amiss.

We suggest a true orientation, for both parents and kids, to establish at the outset what the object of being at H-B Woodlawn is. Since parents and students don't seem to have the correct motivations coming in to school, the correct motivations need to be developed after kids enter our school.

## **Admissions**

To get into H-B, people register in the fall of 5th grade year. Names are randomly drawn and an effort is made to have a representative amount of minorities in relation to the percentage in the county. Prior to the institution of the lottery, students who wanted to attend H-B would have to have their parents line up in the morning to sign them up. As H-B gained popularity, parents started camping out for up to three days. Seeing that this was a bit ridiculous, the school board switched H-B Woodlawn to the current lottery system.

We feel very strongly, however, that the lottery system is not the answer. It's too easy for anyone to register, and the selection process doesn't screen families to make sure that a) the kid really wants to come here, b) the parents really want their kids to go here, and c) they're interested in H-B Woodlawn because it is an alternative educational environment, not because there's less crime, or fewer minorities etc. Interestingly enough, the School Board seems to agree with us on this issue. The proposal this past year to increase the size of H-B was motivated mainly by one board member's feeling that a lot of the kids who should be getting into H-B weren't. **THIS SHOULD BE TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF!** In addition, Ray has been asked to come up with a new admissions policy for H-B Woodlawn, if you have any ideas Ray would appreciate help with this. Now is the time to change things. If you have a reasonable idea talk to Ray and see if your idea could be implemented.

## **A Word or Two on Alternative Education**

Alternative Education is what we're all about. "Alternative" is a word that people here toss around in reference to this school, and that is in fact in our title. Very little thought, however, is ever given to what this mysterious phrase actually means, and to how it relates to our school. Taken literally, alternative education means just that - an alternative to traditional education. As an "alternative program," H-B Woodlawn is supposed to be an alternative to what the rest of the county has to offer in the way of schooling. Our most basic goal, though, is identical



to that of all other schools - to educate. Some people (us included) have never thought that traditional schools do a very good job of educating motivated, interested students, and H-B Woodlawn was established to offer an alternative to these students in the hopes that it could do a better job.

The verb "educate" is derived from the Latin word "educare," meaning "to bring out." It beats us how schools as restrictive as most American high schools are can expect to "bring out" anything from their students. We believe very strongly that in order to educate people, or "bring out" and develop their potential, there needs to be an environment in which people have the freedom to explore themselves and take a prominent role in the decisions that are made regarding their education. We believe that this is true for everyone, and think its a pity that many of the things we do here at H-B have to be alternative, since all schools would benefit from instituting some of our ideas. However, it turns out that by the time kids reach high school, a lot of them aren't suited to our program because of the way that they've been accustomed to a highly structured environment by traditional schooling. It is crucial that it be realized that our program is not for all high school students. This is particularly relevant to our criticism of the lottery. A random drawing implies that all entrants are equally well-suited for our school.

# Administrative Stuff

## Division Of Power

Who runs this school? One of the nicer elements of H-B Woodlawn is that unlike most modern-day American high schools, we are not at the whim of a totalitarian dictator-principal. Our principal and vice-principal (in H-B jargon, this is Head Teacher and Assistant Head Teacher), Ray Anderson and Mary McBride, respectively, share power with the students, teachers, and parents through Town Meeting (see the section on TM). On paper, TM is the only governing body of our school, giving instructions to Ray and Mary on rules, allocations, setting up classes, and millions of other things essential to running a school.

However, there are a few other forces at work in our school. Ray and Mary sometimes make rules on their own. If you don't like the rule, you can bring it up at a Town Meeting. The omnipotent (incompetent?) School Board, those folks who keep making our school bigger, has the ability to overrule any TM decision. If you weren't here during the '93-'94 school year, ask somebody who was here about coed bathrooms for a good example of the School Board using its power.

There is also an organization called the PAC, or Parent Advisory Committee, which is made up of parents who can't come to Town Meeting because they have to work at 10:15 on Wednesday morning. They have no real power over anything, except to "advise", but they like having a forum so they can disagree with us if they feel like it. When the School Board is debating an issue of relevance to H-B Woodlawn, like how many extra kids they will add next year, they are supposed to consult TM, but often consult the PAC instead, because of the fact that our parents can vote and we can't. Despite these things, TM is the center of power at this school and can do much more than most people realize towards changing the school.

The one exception to this are matters of curriculum. The Merger Report grants the Faculty full power over decisions of curriculum. However, the Town Meeting has an advisory role in curriculum matters, and, most importantly, can decide what is and what isn't a curriculum decision, thus having control over the extent of the Faculty's power.

The faculty also wields a great deal of power, most of it unofficially. The teachers wield power through their faculty meetings by expressing their views to Ray directly as a body weekly. The teachers also control Allocation Meeting by overwhelming majority participation and the fact that students don't attend to a significant degree. Teachers also tend to control the Teacher Hiring Committees, further increasing their power and decreasing the power of the students.

## Town Meeting

Town Meeting is a big deal because it is the decision-making body that runs this place. **There is no other high school in the nation that allows the students to have this much power over their school environment**, in fact many colleges do not give their students this much power. Town Meeting meets on every other Wednesday, during the set-aside Town Meeting time, and is usually held in the library, although sometimes Town Meeting meets in the gym when there are issues that the administration feels a lot of people will or should be interested in. (Note: Town Meeting can meet anywhere. We think there should be a Town Meeting outside sometime.) The Town Meeting is responsible for all school policy decisions. (see Division of Power)

Anyone can attend Town Meeting, and anyone can put something on the Town

Meeting agenda, which is posted outside the main office. The agenda is divided into Motions, Announcements, and Other Stuff (Queries, Discussion Topics, Etc.). If you should think of an addition to the agenda at the last possible minute (as Town Meeting begins), there is time set aside at the beginning of Town Meeting to make additions to the agenda.

There is always a chairperson and a minute-taker for Town Meeting. These positions are open to anyone and are decided at the start of each Town Meeting, although for the past few years they have become de facto permanent positions. The duty of chairing the Town Meeting also seems to have been an exclusively male dominated position for as long as we can remember, don't ask us why. Town Meeting is run according to standard parliamentary procedure, which is described in detail in Robert's Rules of Order, the standard guide to parliamentary procedure (the library has a few copies). Town Meeting chairpersons have been known to stray considerably from Robert's Rules of Order, however, and some rules have been formally altered to facilitate our purposes. Pay attention at a Town Meeting or two, and you should get the hang of things. (Parliamentary procedure in a lot of cases consists mainly of calling pretty simple things big names.) Also, don't hesitate to speak up and ask the chair to explain something if the procedure is unclear.

The Town Meeting chairperson used to wear a Town Meeting cape, and have a gavel, but both of those items have mysteriously disappeared over the years. We strongly recommend that someone find replacements. The Town Meeting is also usually announced right before it starts, and the fire alarm is briefly rung to let people know it's starting.

Every one's vote counts equally at TM, although there are some people out there who think they deserve more. No proxy votes are allowed at the meeting. That means if you want to vote, you have to go. Most importantly, majority rules. Voice votes are taken unless there is a close vote or someone asks for a hand count, in which case a show of hands is used, or at Allocation Town Meeting, when this year paper ballots were used.

The Town Meeting is what political scientists would call a pure democracy. This means that the populace votes directly on each issue. The Town Meeting takes its name from the actual town meetings that were held in a similar fashion to make decisions for towns in New England.

After a Town Meeting decision is made, it is up to the community and the Head Teacher (i.e. Ray) to put the decision into effect. It is the Head Teacher's responsibility to see that all important issues get brought before the Town Meeting. This seems to happen most of the time, but the Head Teacher is busy person (what with fending off the rest of the county all the time), and can forget things, so it's best to keep an eye on him. The Head Teacher often advises the TM about the background of an issue, or about the Superintendent's or School Board's policy towards an issue, but the Head Teacher cannot overrule a TM decision. Scary, huh? The Head Teacher then becomes the spokesman for the school, representing the position of the TM with central staff and School Board. The Head Teacher is morally bound to follow the decisions of the Town Meeting, and there have been no reported instances yet of the Head Teacher overruling the Town Meeting.

Our Town Meeting decides community rules, discipline, change in school procedures, miscellaneous and special events, and teacher selections. That's reason enough to attend it, don't you think? H-B has a very fluid structure because of TM-- just because something is here one year, doesn't mean it will be here the next, so it

might be a good idea to be informed about TM decisions. Faculty makes curriculum decisions, with advice of the TM. The TM also decides what is and what isn't a curriculum decision. That's a very big deal; to be able to decide what you want to be able to learn in school, and what you don't.

Supposedly in the '94-'95 school year the minutes from Town Meetings will be posted outside the office, so if by chance you might miss a meeting, you will be informed about what happened in your absence. If you are interested in starting this, make it happen.

A lot of people say that the Town Meeting is in decline. It's true that there haven't been as many serious issues brought before the Town Meeting in recent years. To try to compensate for this, a few years ago a group of students created the Psilly Committee to think of silly things to put on the agenda. While the agendas did have more items on them, a lot of students and teachers quit coming to Town Meetings because most of the items weren't real serious (the Squid Relay comes to mind). However, what most people don't realize is that Town Meetings were never well attended. And low attendance is not necessarily bad. What is bad is that people no longer think to bring real, important issues to the Town Meeting, that a lot of people don't know that they can change anything that isn't curriculum through the Town Meeting, and that people seem to no longer take seriously the few efforts to change things through the Town Meeting that do actually occur. The extent to which this is the case, though, is determined solely by those who inhabit this school.

As a note of advice, not everything should be taken to the Town Meeting. If there's something that doesn't affect the school as a whole or a significant portion of it, stay out of red tape and don't bring it to TM. If, however, what you want to do affects lots of people, take it to the Town Meeting.

## The Administration

The Administration (Ray and Mary, basically...) acts as a liaison with the central staff, other schools, the School Board, and the community. The Administration is also responsible for teacher evaluation, for focusing attention on school problems, and for providing leadership of the school. They are also suspiciously hard to find. So if an alien walks up to you and says, "Take me to your leaders", the proper thing to do would be to take them to Ray and Mary.

The Administration is composed of one Head Teacher (Ray), one Assistant Head Teacher (Mary), and the Office People. The Office People live in the Office, and they are very friendly. The Office people include: Mary Carol (Guidance), Linda Zimmermann (Instructional Secretary), Sharon Hall (Registrar), Dorothy (Secretary), and Karen Eberhart (Treasurer). Just don't make any quick gestures, and remember, no flash photography. If you are nice to them and have a reasonable request, they are likely to be willing to help you.

## The Faculty

Name	Subject/Job	Room #
Ray Anderson	Principal, History	106
Luciano Baez	Custodian	134
Jutta (Yoota) Bauman	German, Math	326
Bill Blackwell	Head Custodian	134
Mary Carroll	Guidance	Office
Carroll Carr	6th Grade Core	109

Name	Subject/Job	Room #
Carla Chapman	French	209
Carol Clark	Government, Psychology	304
Susan Click	English	315
David Contessa	History	105
Sally Davis	Latin	210
Mike Demick	Drama	Theater
Joan De Moss	Photography	002
Mark Dodge	Physics, Computer Science	318/317
Karen Eberhart	Treasurer	Office
Sharon Elwell	6th Grade Core	109
Cecilia English	6th Grade Core	109
Carol Erion	Chorus	103
Raphaella Flores	Custodian	134
Mary Flynn	MS Coordinator, French	131
Marjory Franklin	Psychologist	313
Peggy Gaines	Nurse	200
Steve Garman	Physical Education, Health Gym	209
Laurie Gilkenson	Drama	Theatre
Ginny Graham	English, Community As School	309
Sharon Hall	Registrar	Office
Linda Hardin	Science	202
Christine Harrison	Cafeteria Mgr.	Cafeteria
Joe King	Bond	007
Nancy Kinneman	Art	003
Elly Kluge	History	305
Ellen Kurcis	English	310
Mike Lee	Custodian	134
Cynthia Matos	MS Secretary	MS office
Judy Mayeux	Librarian, Creative Writing	Library/324
Mary McBride	Asst. Principal, History	205
Aaron McInturff	Math	302
Randy McKnight	English	314
Patrick McMahan	Middle School Aide	203
Alicia McMahan	Music	104
Liz McNerncy	Science	312
Francoise (France-wazz) Mengebier	French	210
Susan Miller	Social Worker	313
Sally Moss	Physical Education, Health Gym	209
Sue Nachmanoff	Library Aide	Library
Pam Nagurka	Science	301
Nancy Oliver	Math	204
Daysi Palomeque	HILT	206
Judy Paseur	Business, Keyboarding	004
Judy Pendergast	Math, Science	108
Cynthia Petway	Cafeteria	Cafeteria
Betsy Powell	Resource Teacher	322
Muree Reafs	Nurse	200

Name	Subject/Job	Room #
Christine Rhyne	Occ. Therapist	129
Jeff Ring	Math/ Computer Science	326/317
George Sarpong	Custodian	134
Kathy Scheimer	Resource	129
Bobbi Schildt	Social Studies	106
Jim Schroeder	Math	306
Jim Senn	Spanish	301
Susan Senn	Science	316
Jack Smith	6th Grade Core	110
Deneen Snow	History, CDC, YES	309/322
Kathy Sypula	HILT	205
Magda Vargas	HILT	207
Elaine Waite	Library Aide	Library
Jari Walsh	Spanish	104
Linda Zimmermann	Instructional Secretary	215

### Faculty Meetings

The faculty and administration meet collectively every other Wednesday morning in the library, usually at 8:30. Students are allowed to attend unless a particular student is being discussed. The content of the most recent faculty meeting is supposed to be announced at the beginning of each Town Meeting, but rarely is, so if you want to know what happened, ask a teacher.

### The Teacher Hiring Committee

H-B Woodlawn has a wonderfully unique way of hiring new teachers. When a vacancy occurs, a small committee of interested students, staff, parents, and frequently Ray interview candidates. The committee has the power to make a recommendation to the Head Teacher, who makes the final decision. Effectively, though, the committee makes the decision, since to our knowledge there has never been an instance of the Head Teacher overruling a committee decision.

The Head Teacher nearly always posts sign-up sheets for these committees either in the office or outside near the main entrance when interviewing is about to occur, but the sign-up sheets can sometimes be hard to spot, so keep your eyes open. The committees should also be announced, but this can be unreliable, so your best bet is to ask Ray what is coming up. Interviewing usually takes about a half-hour per candidate, and is something everyone should try at least once, particularly if you're going to be in a class of the teacher to be hired. Most applicants appreciate the opportunity to discuss schooling with their prospective students, and it's good for students to see another aspect of what it's like to be a teacher. The Teacher Hiring Committees are also a pretty powerful method of determining what your education will be like, since you could conceivably hand-pick the candidate that you think would be the best teacher for you. We don't know of any other public school in the country that allows its students to hire their teachers. The opportunity should be utilized.

One limitation to this process is that we get our candidates from the same pool of applicants as does the rest of the county. Arlington County has certain requirements (in terms of education and teaching experience) that all applicants have to meet. So we can't hire just anybody. In addition, Arlington County does not

advertise vacancies at our school as vacancies in an alternative program. So we don't attract people in alternative education to the degree that we might if ads were put out for a position at an alternative school. There are ways around this. It is possible to independently place ads in the newspaper, just ask Ray. The county doesn't usually like this, but if it's done by a group of students, there's nothing they can do.

## **The TA System**

We don't have a real guidance department here at H-B. Instead of spending tax dollars on guidance counselors as other schools do, the Allocation Committee spends the money each year on extra teachers. This system has the major advantage of giving H-B smaller classes, while giving the advising/counseling functions for a smaller group of students to each teacher, who can hopefully get to know each kid better than a guidance counselor could. The one limitation to this system is in the scholarship department, perhaps one of the few times we can recommend going to the home school. The official place to go for this is Mary Carol's scholarship book, but the home school's guidance department is really the place to go.

Towards the end of the school year, students submit a ballot on which they state their preferences for a Teacher-Advisor for the following year. Your TA has all the functions of a guidance counselor, including approving what courses you take, checking up on your academic performance, and, when the time comes, writing college recommendations. They also occasionally will organize TA activities, which can range in scale from milk and cookies one afternoon to a full-fledged beach trip. In theory, as an interface between you and your teachers, the TA is also the person to help you initiate individualized projects and programs of study in your classes. Our experience, though, has been that the teachers here are not very aware of the alternative options available here, to say nothing of being enthusiastic or encouraging. They're also often preoccupied with other things. For this reason, the Community As School position was expanded this year ('94), and hopefully will be able to assist students with individual projects, even if they fall outside the jurisdiction of the Community As School program. Good luck.

## **THE PAC**

PAC stands for Parental Advisory Committee. The PAC is a concerned group of parents that meets every month or biweekly, depending on what they think is going on in the school. Like most parents, they are well intentioned and truly believe that they know what is best for their kids and our school, but our experience with them has led us to believe otherwise. Unfortunately, the PAC has in recent years usurped the role of the Town Meeting in dealing with the rest of the school system. Last spring, when the School Board was considering changing the size of H-B Woodlawn, it was the PAC that wrote letters to the School Board and that went and spoke at meetings. The fact that they are parents drawing on often no or extremely limited experiences within H-B Woodlawn makes them poor representatives for the school.

We suggest that 1) Students become more aware of what is happening to their school. 2) Students use the Town Meeting to deal with the county. 3) Students keep in contact with the PAC, so that the PAC is not totally in the dark, in part if a few students make a concerted effort to go to PAC meetings, this will help and the PAC will appreciate it also.

# Inside H-B Woodlawn

## Rules And Privileges

### Open Campus:

This policy grants any student, in grades 8-12 who has obtained the permission of a parent or guardian (in the form of a signed note to the student's TA) the privilege of leaving school property at any time. You may go wherever you wish, and we urge you to thoroughly and responsibly explore your environment. Just don't set any lawns on fire or hold up the 7-11. Students in grades 6 or 7 run the risk of earning a mild lecture from your TA, as well as a friendly phone call home from Ray if caught off campus during school hours. Use your judgment.

### Late Policy:

This policy varies from teacher to teacher, but we suggest that you show up to class on time. Most teachers start class as soon as the block begins, and by showing up late, you run the risk of missing something and being an interruption to the rest of the class. You will find that most of teachers are fairly reasonable and understanding should you have to show up late for class - don't abuse the flexibility. Remember that this is your education and it is under your control. If you find yourself being habitually late for class or if you find yourself not wanting to attend at all, you need to be assertive about the situation and deal with the real issues which are discouraging your attendance. If you do this, most teachers and TAs will respect the fact that you're coming to them, instead of their coming to you, and be more forgiving than they would if they have to hunt you down in the cafeteria every day.

On occasion, you may find that your teacher, not you, is the one who is late for class. If, or rather when, this occurs, you should allow 10-15 minutes for your teacher to arrive, and if by then, the teacher has not shown up, you can usually consider it safe to assume that your class has been canceled. You should check though, at the beginning of the year with your teacher about their own policy regarding lateness, for some teachers have been known to have a policy of expecting you to wait for them for the whole block until they arrive, and will mark you as absent, if you are not present when they finally decide to stroll on in.

### Smoking Policy:

Smoking is prohibited by Arlington law in any Arlington County School building (including H-B Woodlawn). School policy says that smoking is prohibited on school grounds. Don't smoke. We don't want cancer.

### Drugs And Other Illegal Substances:

These substances, as the name suggests and everyone probably knows, are illegal everywhere in the country. If you bring these to school, we have an obligation to enforce this rule. Please spare yourselves and all of us the problems that occur when these substances are brought to or used at our school. If you feel that drugs are absolutely required for your existence, please do not make it obvious to the rest of the school, we don't want to deal with your use of drugs or the consequences of your actions on yourself.

### School Attendance Policy:

School attendance is generally reported by the TA. Each TA will have its own way for you to check in, which can range from signing in to just stopping by and



saying "Hello". We encourage everyone to attend school whenever possible, and warn you that missing too much school can become a serious matter with your TA, teachers, and parents. If there is something going on during school hours that you wish to attend, which you think would be enriching, educational, or just plain fun, then get permission from you parents, check with your teachers, and go for it. You are also encouraged to try to organize a group of students or a class that would be interested in going and take a school-sponsored, Town Meeting approved field trip.

### **Class Attendance Policy:**

Every teacher has their own rules about this. Some take attendance regularly, some don't. In any case, learning should, on the whole, be interesting. If your classes bore you to the point where you would rather lie around in the cafeteria instead, something is wrong. Think about why you don't like the class, and talk to your teacher to see if you can work something out. We can't reiterate enough that there is no reason for you to be dissatisfied with any element of your experience here!

### **Visitors Policy:**

This has a been a source of controversy lately, so to set the record straight, students from other schools are not allowed inside H-B Woodlawn during the hours that they're supposed to be in class at the home schools. They're not allowed in at any time if they're here to raise a ruckus (ask Ray or Mary if you're unsure on this point). Town Meeting has the power to ban any individual from school property - this has been done before. Barring these restrictions, visitors are allowed if they're accompanied by an H-B Woodlawn student and have signed in the visitor's book in the main office.

### **Skateboard Policy:**

Skateboards are prohibited by County law at all schools, so by definition also at H-B Woodlawn. The enforcement of this law has been fairly lax, but if abused then stiffer measures may have to be taken by Ray and the teachers; this would be unfortunate because it would tend to also affect the responsible members of our school in the process of correcting the excesses of the few. Verbum Sap Sat.

### **Sexual Conduct:**

First of all, sexual harassment or discrimination of any kind is not permitted by the Arlington County Schools. The Town Meeting also forbids any harassment or discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. As for individual sexual activity, limited public displays of affection are generally tolerated, although they can be disruptive. Please use common sense, and above all be safe.

### **Various Other Rules:**

A full listing of most of the rules ever passed by the Town Meeting can be found in the office and in the Archives in the library. Every student should read these, they're informative and also pretty entertaining. Other rules, which apply to individual classrooms, are made up and enforced by the teacher that uses that room. The library is continuously involved in a debate over whether it constitutes a classroom. (See Also: sections on TM and Free Blocks)

## **H-B Extracurricular Activities**

### **Chess Team:**

The chess team meets frequently to play practice games, each Wednesday or Thursday afternoon for matches against local schools. In the matches, five people compete from each school, but anyone can come and play for fun. If you are interested, contact Aaron McInturff (Room 302) or a member of the chess team.

### **Plays And Other Dramatic Events:**

H-B has a thriving drama program, and acting roles or spots on the stage crew are often available, if you are up to the rather demanding time commitment. There are numerous signs around school telling when and how to audition for a particular play. If you want to direct a play, talk to Mike Demick.

### **National Honor Society:**

At the beginning of sophomore year, students who have high grades are sent a message inviting them to apply for the National Honor Society. All members must maintain a 3.6 GPA or higher, complete 30 hours of community service per year, attend the induction ceremony, and attend the meetings. H-B started an NHS when students here had a hard time dealing with home school NHS's. Most people claim that the NHS recognizes academic excellence, but we're somewhat skeptical, given what grades really represent. NHS membership mainly looks good on a college application. For more information, talk with Judy Mayeux or Nancy Oliver.

### **Tuesday Society:**

The Tuesday Society is devoted to performing community service. It does things on days other than Tuesdays, though, so it's unclear where its title came from. If you're into being socially conscious, you might want to check this out. Talk to Jim Senn if you're interested.

### **Debate Club:**

The Debate Club was started in '93-'94. As far as we know, it met only once. To our knowledge, there isn't really anyone in charge of it, so if you feel like starting it up again, make an announcement and have a meeting.

### **The Miraculous and Utterly Fantastical Writer's Group**

The Writer's Group was instituted at the very first Town Meeting of the 1994-95 school year, by Vicky Racz and Evan Johnson. It's a fluid flexible group, for writers who want a little more out of their writing. Information on Writer's contests, and publishing is readily available. Poetry readings at local coffee establishments are a regular feature. The group does not consist only of H-B'ers, anyone from anywhere is invited to attend. In short, this group is for anyone who wants to do anything with writing, so check it out if you're interested. And if you're not interested, go buy the Writer's Group lunch. Pizza, please, or Chinese, if you can't do any better.

### **Yearbook:**

At the beginning of the year, the Town Meeting will endorse one yearbook proposal. Usually the yearbook is organized by a couple of the seniors who were involved with it the year before, and there isn't usually any question about who will do it, so the Town Meeting vote is basically a formality. Generally, anyone who is

interested can work on the yearbook. To get involved, listen to the announcements and go to a meeting when they're announced, or leave a note in the Yearbook box in the office.

### **Sports:**

The bottom line is that H-B can't have regular school sports, since we're not really a school. We did have a pretty successful club volleyball team a few years ago, and there could certainly be club teams in other sports if somebody took the initiative. There are a lot of informal sports at H-B. There is a student-staff-alumni basketball game every Friday during TA time, and pick-up basketball games can often be found going on in the gym.

### **On Starting New Clubs:**

Anybody can start any club or activity that they want. If you're going to be using school space, money, or time, or if what you're doing affects a lot of people, it's a good idea to take your organization to the Town Meeting for approval.

## **Building Facilities**

### **The CaFATeria**

To many people, the cafeteria is the heart of H-B Woodlawn. It tends to be (along with the library) the social center of the school, as well as a museum of times past, as a glance at the walls will reveal. Ever since 1987, each graduating class has painted a wall in the cafeteria. The cafeteria is also home to some of the many murals that adorn the H-B walls.

The cafeteria is open all day long for people to loiter, lounge, and leap around in, and is an OK place to go to study if you can handle the noise level.

The cafeteria is also home to the student lounge, a room that has been used for storage for the past year, but that used to be a place for kids to sleep, hang out, and play music in, and was fully equipped with old furniture and a coffee machine. The student lounge could be easily reclaimed through Town Meeting, if the interest was there. In the years following the writing of this, a new student lounge will have to be found, since we think that the current one is being demolished in the construction.

The cafeteria also serves food, although its role as meal provider has been in many ways usurped by local restaurants. There are soda, fruit juice, and snack machines in the cafeteria that are turned on after lunch. The cafeteria serves food from 11:05 to 12:25. Come prepared, though, as the sight of these prepared foods running across the floor can be quite disarming. Just kidding. In fact, they are starting to initiate changes in school lunches to make them more nutritious.

Originally, the Woodlawn program didn't have a cafeteria, due to a lack of cash on the part of the County. Luckily, now H-B'ers can dine upon the same delectable treats students from other schools can, though some rumors have it that we have better food than some of the other schools because it is actually prepared in the kitchen rather than at the county prison.

If you're lucky enough to enjoy open campus privileges (see Rules and Privileges), you can go off campus to find something to munch. Don't be surprised to see other students there. The Lebanese Taverna, Arrowvine, Subway, and Safeway are healthy alternatives that are very close by (see map). If you're short on cash or

sick of the shredded rat bones that keep appearing in the burgers from McDonalds, brown-bag it - you'll save your money and quite possibly extend your life a few years.

Don't forget, the people who work in the cafeteria are human, so if changes need to made, talk to them. Who knows, they might be flexible.

### **The Gym**

The gymnasium is another primary meeting-place at H-B Woodlawn. It's usually open for pick-up basketball or anything else when Steve and Sally don't have classes there.

### **The Office**

The office, with the triple attraction of air conditioning, xerox machines, and a lovable, sympathetic staff, has become an attractive place for some students to drop in and chat. Hang a right after the Main Entrance, and you'll see it.

### **The Computer Lab**

The computer lab, administrated by Mark Dodge and now Jeff Ring, is a haven for programmers and game playing enthusiasts alike, despite the somewhat legendary battles that occur occasionally. Check the schedule on the door. Even if you've never heard of C or Tetris, it's a great, COOL place to work on a paper. (Game playing has been restricted to G and H blocks)

### **The Library**

The library, located on the third floor, is the duchy of Judy Mayeux, H-B's Librarian and Creative Writing teacher. The library is the preferred place of gathering for those in Judy's TA, and there is a suspicion that the "Quiet in the Library" rule does not apply to them. The library is also often host to fierce political debates that usually end up being finished outside the library doors, as the noise-level tolerance of the Library Staff is quite low. Rumor has it that John Birch Society Member and former H-B Woodlawn student Ben Taylor holds the record for the number of times he was kicked out of the library.

On a more serious note, food and drink are not permitted in the library except during Town Meeting, which meets regularly in the library. As of this writing, games are also not permitted in the library, due to its functions as a classroom. The library has a fair selection of reading material, and if what you're looking for isn't there, you can request books via Judy, who is in charge of what books get ordered. The library is used most frequently as a place of study. It suffers in this regard from the constant rumble of whispered conversations that go on continuously. A proposal was brought to Town Meeting last year to play classical music in the library at low volume, to cover up the noise and facilitate study. Unfortunately, the library staff didn't feel that the music would create favorable study conditions for everyone, and the proposal was thus defeated by narrow margin. Even without music, the library still makes a good place to study if you can ignore the distractions.

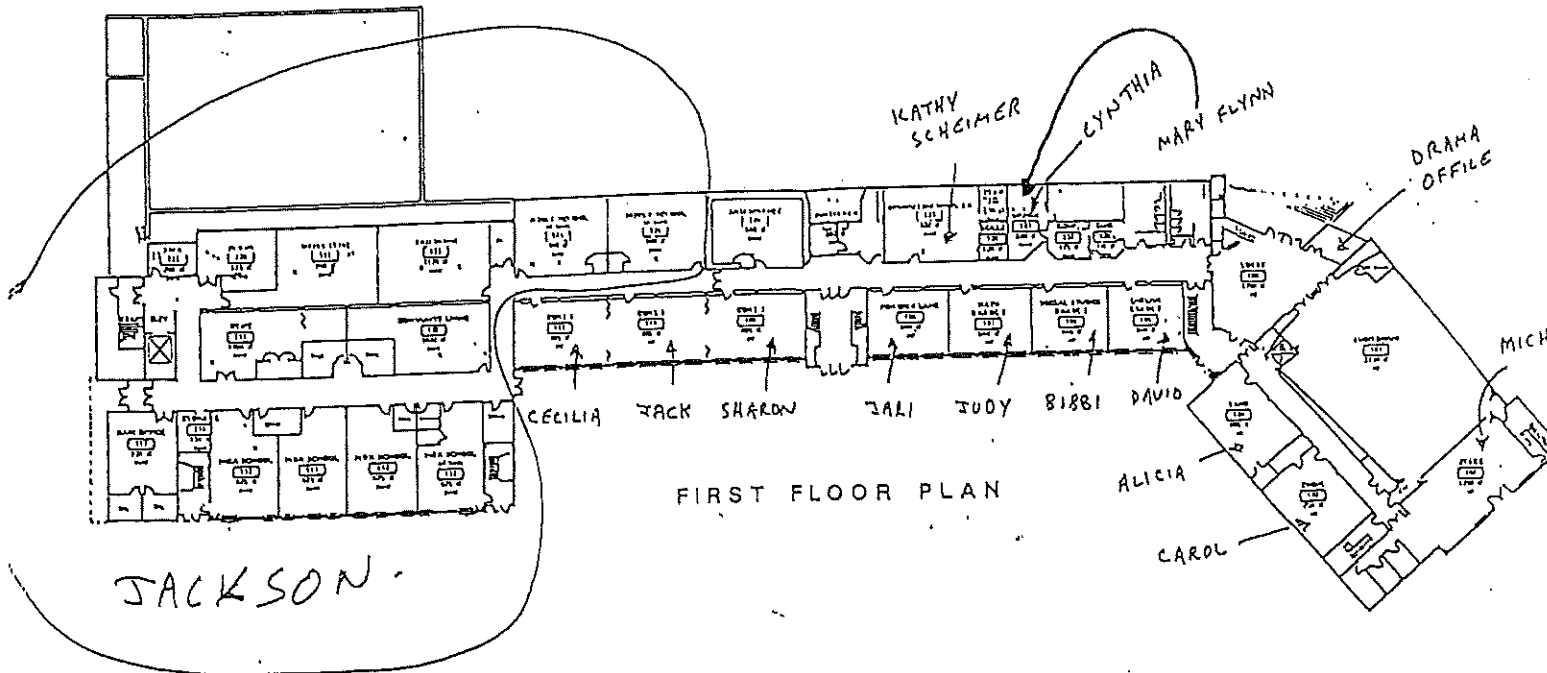
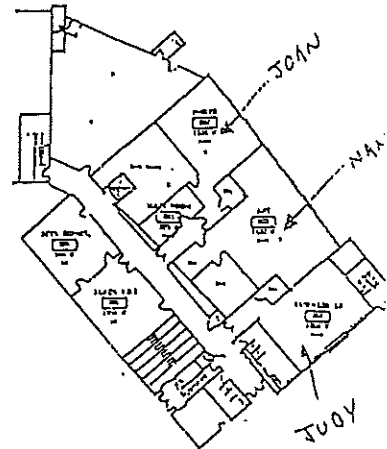
### **Other Places To Study**

- Hallways
- Picnic Tables
- Trees
- Stairwells
- Cherrydale Library
- The Roof
- Grassy Areas
- Empty Classrooms
- The Computer Lab

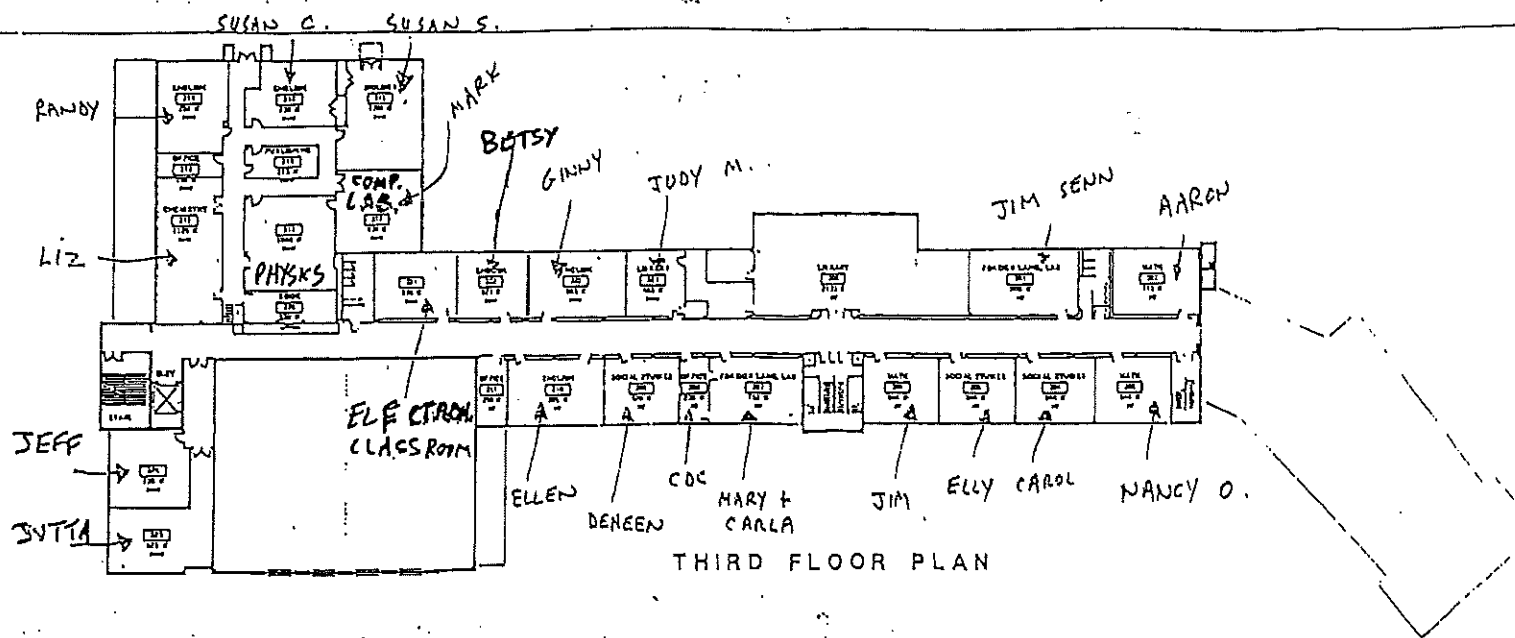
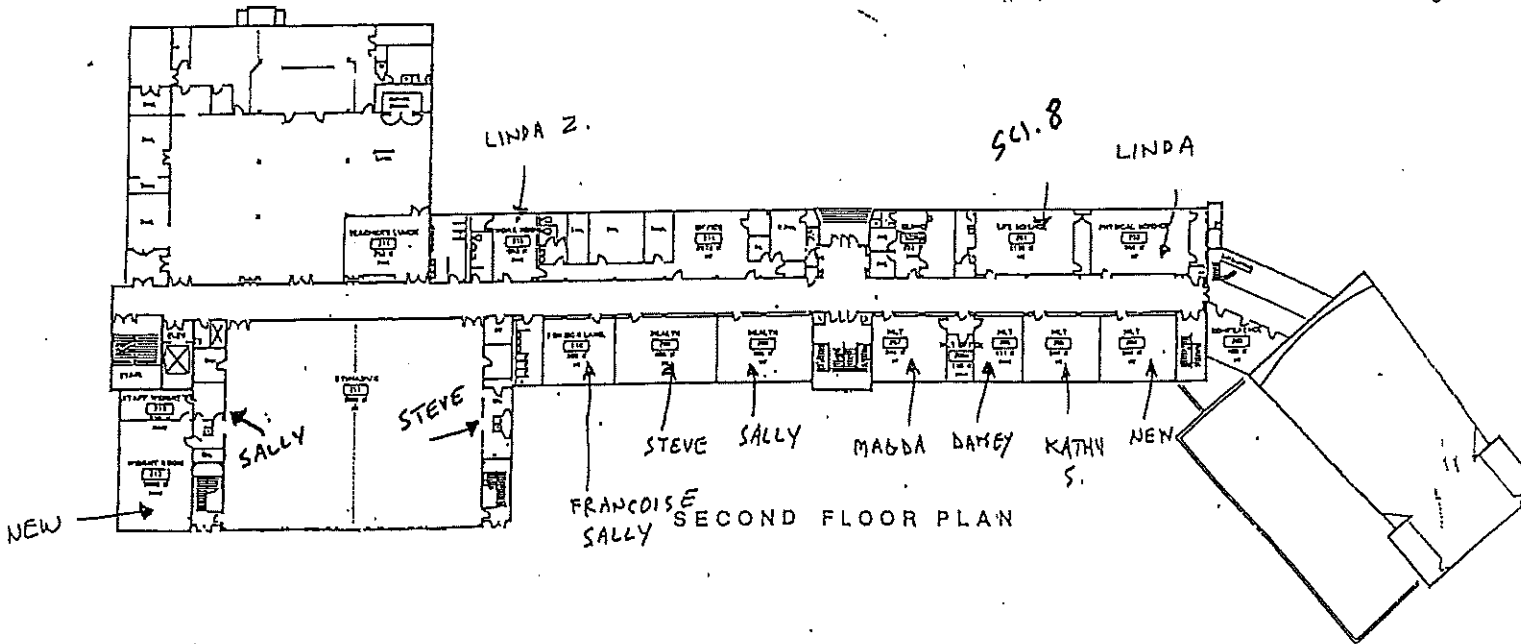
## The New Building Facility

We are unsure what exactly to expect out of the changes that are beginning to happen as this is being finished. Most of us have seen some of the plans, but plans are hard to visualize and we don't know what will happen to the school with the changes that are sure to come. In some ways they will be beneficial, we might actually have air conditioning, but in terms of social dynamics and the idea of an alternative environment, we worry. We are hoping for the best. On the following pages are the most current maps that we could get our hands on at publishing time. We hope that these will be useful in helping you to better understand the physical changes that are to take place.

BASEMENT FLOOR PLAN







## **The Size of H-B Woodlawn**

Put simply, this school is too big. The program houses upwards of 600 students in grades six through twelve. This is absurdly large for an alternative program that is supposed to be a tight-knit, friendly community where everybody knows everybody else.

There are certain advantages to size, however. Public schools are allocated teachers on the basis of how big they are. So if we have more students, we have more teachers, and can have a broader variety of courses. Unfortunately, H-B Woodlawn is big because it has lots of grades, not because the individual grades are large, so we don't really reap the benefit of getting more classes on account of a larger staff. That's why it logically just doesn't make sense to have lots small grades like we do - we have all the disadvantages of a large school, but none of the accompanying advantages.

We think the ideal scenario would be to have two separate schools, one for grades six, seven, and eight, and the other for high school. This way, you could give the middle school about 300 kids, and the high school about 400 kids, making for around 100 kids per class. A lot of people wanted to do this back in 1978 (ask Jim Schroeder), but there was pressure from the county to merge, so we ended up with one large school. Now, however, the situation is completely different. There are oodles of people that want to get into this school, and the program has risen quite a bit in the eyes of the county, so a split might be feasible. Talk to your friendly school board member if you're interested. One idea that might work would be if we could get two school buildings close together so that two separate programs could be instituted, but would be close enough together to allow students to move between schools as necessary for classes.

## **Communication Inside H-B Woodlawn**

There are a number of ways to communicate with others inside H-B Woodlawn.

### **The Message Board**

This is located right outside of the office for high school students and in the middle of the 1st floor hall for middle school students, though both groups can use either. Put your message right below the letter of the last name of whoever the message is intended for. Check the message board once or twice a day, as it's used pretty frequently.

### **Daily Announcements**

These are heard in every classroom except the gym and auditorium at 9:20. Their existence and length as well as the jurisdiction of the morning song is a highly contested matter. To make an announcement, post it on the door that is on the immediate right as you enter the office, or stick around in the morning until the people who do the announcements (usually a couple of sleep-deprived seniors) show up, and they'll let you make it. Word has it that we will have TV's in every room after the construction so will have live video footage of our adorable sleep-deprived seniors.

### **Posters**

Used for dances, plays, other events, and various announcements. Anybody can put up posters anywhere at H-B, as long as they aren't obscene or contain



references to drugs etc. You can either make xeroxes of something and stick them up all over, or make a few really big colorful posters and hang them in conspicuous places.

### **Schedule Books**

To locate a student during school hours, you can check the student's schedule in the big black books in the office. These books contain the schedules that each student writes up at the beginning of the year. Rarely are these updated through the school year, but these books usually give you an idea as to where to start looking for a student. If a student is not there, then hopefully someone can point out where to find a student.

### **Xerox Machines**

Our school has two copy machines. Students are allowed to use the Xerox machine in the center of the office right behind the front counter. It is only for "school related business," but you can generally copy pretty much anything you want, as long as there's no one watching over your back. If you Xerox too much or anything crazy (like body parts), the office staff will object, however. There is also a Xerox machine way back in the back of the office, which you can use only with special permission from a teacher or some other authority figure-type. The copier in the center of the office is usually sufficient for most student needs. The Xerox machines we currently own are newish and have lots of great hi-tech features that will make your life easier if you can figure out how to use them. Linda Zimmermann in the office is a real wizard at these things; refer to her if you're stuck.

### **What to do during Free blocks:**

- count ceiling tiles, or dots in ceiling tiles
- talk with friends
- play card games / Magic
- wander around the school
- go to the cafeteria, get some food
- take a walk, the river is nice - you can hike 10+ miles upstream
- take a bike ride
- go to Safeway/7-Eleven
- sleep
- go visit the museums
- talk to your teacher about that project you have been putting off for 5 weeks that is due tomorrow
- talk to your TA about your classes
- come up with ways to improve H-B, and implement them
- write letters
- send/check e-mail (if you have it)
- do your homework

### **Allocation**

Allocation is how H-B Woodlawn determines what courses will be offered and how to distribute between departments the number of teacher positions given by the county to the program each year. In principle, allocations works like an election, so that what we want is what we get. Allocation, however, is a rather complex process,

and does not always work as intended. This is compounded by general student ignorance of the process, and the absence of documented procedure for parents and students to consult. In recent years allocation has been misunderstood by many involved. With this in mind, we have summarized the allocation process as it is typically conducted:

### **Numbers:**

The number of staff positions H-B is allocated may be found in the budget for the year which comes from the Superintendent and is approved by the school Board. For 1993-1994, H-B Woodlawn was given 40 full time positions. [note: 1.0 = one full time position, 0.2 = one class]

### **Departments:**

The allocations process begins about January when each department (e.g. English, Math, Science, Social Studies, Fine Arts) meets and the teachers decide which courses the department will attempt to offer the next year. Courses which are required for graduation must be offered every year, but the departments decide which electives to offer (e.g. European History in the Social Studies Department, or AP Physics in the Science Department). The departments also decide which levels of courses to offer. Courses must be in the Arlington County Course Catalog to be offered as full year courses at H-B. (However, courses not listed in the course catalog may be offered through the outside teacher program or you can use some somewhat related name to get credit for your course and get your teacher to write a note about the true topics covered in the course for college.)

### **Course Selection:**

During a TA period sometime in February, students go to their TA's to sign up for the courses that they would like to take the following year. After the course selection sheets have been initialed by each student's parents and appropriate teachers, the office staff tallies up the numbers of students who have signed up for each class, and these numbers are given to the departments, which then make allocation requests.

### **Allocation Committee:**

The Allocation Committee, like most committees at H-B, is open to students and staff as well as faculty. In years past, the Allocation Committee meeting took place after school on an early release day. The result of this has been that in addition to parents not being able to attend in significant numbers because of work commitments, students were not able to come either because of transportation problems. This year, by Town Meeting mandate, the Allocation Committee (as well as every other meeting pertinent to students) will take place during school hours. At the Allocation Committee meeting, each department presents its allocation request in the form of a number (e.g. 4.0, 1.2, 3.4 teachers). Occasionally all the requests added up fit under the number of positions allocated to H-B by the Superintendent, in which case the meeting lasts about five minutes, and the department requests are recommended to Town Meeting intact. Usually, though, the department requests exceed the total county allocation, and bargaining ensues. Some departments will volunteer to decrease their request by .2 on the condition that they will get it the following year. (This generally means the classes for such a department will be

larger, since they will have one less allocated block in which to teach.) Other departments will keep their request as is, on the condition that they will let other departments get their request the following year. These sorts of informal concessions resolve most of the requests. However, anyone at the meeting can make a suggestion, which can then be voted on and added to the Committee's recommendation. The Committee then votes on a recommendation, which is based on all the requests that have been resolved. The recommendation can be amended by anyone before the vote, so if enough students or parents are present, they can exert considerable influence. Those requests which cannot be adjusted to fit under the total allocation are then sent to the Town Meeting along with the recommendation. Typically, there are five to ten such requests.

### **Allocation Town Meeting:**

An all school Town Meeting is called for and held in the gym after the Allocation Committee makes its recommendation. The Town Meeting votes on what the Allocation Committee has recommended. There usually isn't any debate on this; it's simply approved. Thus attending the Committee meeting can be very important because there the actual recommendation, which affects the great majority of departments, can be altered. Then the Town Meeting selects how to allocate what was left undecided by the Allocation Committee.

Generally, a system of negative voting is used. The negative voting system consists of a series of votes, in each of which the body of the Town Meeting votes for the allocation they are least in favor of. After each round of voting, the allocation that has garnered the most votes is discarded. In this way, the allocation requests are ranked, with the "survivor" of all the rounds being number 1. Negative voting was adopted after several years of simply taking one vote in which people would vote for the allocation they were most in favor of. It was discovered that it was possible that a large portion of the vote could go to two different options, leaving what could conceivably be everyone's second choice with almost no votes and no shot at being allocated. Under the negative voting system, this is much less likely.

This year the voting was changed to a paper ballot by the Allocation Committee, with the goal of gaining a more accurate vote count. Then at the last minute the voting was changed from the negative voting system, which would have required 6 rounds of ballots, to a single paper ballot, in which an individual's choices were ranked from 1 to 7, with 1 being the best. This had a number of advantages and disadvantages. The editor of the Handbook spent two frantic hours recounting ballots the night of the meeting. The gain was that Town Meeting itself was much shorter than usual and the results were easy for all, including Ray, our resident Luddite, to see which department had won and should get funding. This method of voting should be used again, but one or two people are needed who understand the system. A small group or one or two individuals rather than a large committee should be used in counting the ballots next year, to reduce the number of errors in counting.

The allocation that is left over from the Allocation Committee's recommendation is then distributed to the allocation requests in order of their ranking as previously determined. For instance, if there is 3.4 left over from the committee meeting, and Computer Science, Japanese, and Instrumental Music (ranked in that order) have, respectively, allocation requests of 2.2, 1.4, and .8, Computer Science receives the full 2.2 they requested, Japanese receives 1.2, and Instrumental Music does not receive any allocation. (Remember that 1.0 = one full time teaching job, and

.2 = one period; Also keep in mind that some teachers cross over into other departments to take up a period or two.)

A problem with the Allocation Town Meeting in the past few years is that the implications of each allocation request have not been made clear, and many students vote rather blindly. This is partly the fault of each department for not explaining in full what the effects of allocating or not allocating their particular request will be. In addition, the number of students attending the Town Meeting has been in decline recently. What tends to happen is that one or two groups of students will come and vote as a bloc for one particular proposal. Because the student body isn't represented very well, these blocs have a powerful influence on the vote, one that would be curbed if more people attended and created a broader electorate.

## **Scheduling**

Scheduling occurs during a set-aside time period at the end of each school year. The first step, as mentioned in the previous section, consists of each student figuring out what courses the student wants to take, and giving their choices to the office on a form. This is usually done with your TA. Read through the Program of Studies for Arlington County, and if there's something you want to learn that isn't offered, consider whether an independent study class might meet your needs. In addition, this is a good time to act on ideas you might have for outside teacher classes. If you have an idea for a class, make it into a proposal, and take it to the Allocation Committee. If they approve it, you're set, assuming that you've got a teacher. (See the relevant sections in the Tutelage portion of this handbook)

Each department figures out how many students want to take their classes, and the allocation process determines what classes will be offered. The administration then uses a county computer program to determine, given what classes you selected, how to arrange classes so that the least number of people possible have conflicts. Then, on the day of Arena Scheduling, you meet with your TA to try to fit your classes into the nine blocks in some reasonably acceptable way. This is sometimes difficult in the upper grades because people who do sports cannot use G or H blocks and others will find little offered then. You will then go down to the cafeteria sometime before your Arena Scheduling period starts. A big line will probably start up to an hour before arena scheduling actually begins. (Don't worry, though, teachers and administration will make every effort to make sure you get the classes you want) During Arena Scheduling, you go to the sign up sheet for each course (marked by signs) and write your name on the sheet in the right block. There are always certain classes that everyone wants to take, so it's generally good to go to these classes first so that you'll get in. Then you fill in a sheet telling the office on a single form what you have signed up for, keeping a duplicate for yourself.

## **Graduating**

Graduating from high school is a big deal for most people since it entails getting a diploma. A diploma is nothing more than a piece of paper that can be useful when attempting to get a job, but it's also seen as a cultural rite of passage. You don't get a diploma simply by sitting in high school for four years; there are distribution requirements that you have to fulfill in order to graduate. Keep track of these, as you don't want to find out second semester of your senior year that you're going to have to take typing in summer school in order to graduate. Mary McBride does her best to help keep this from happening, but don't rely on her to save you. The requirements

for a regular diploma are as follows:

21 total credits:

- 4 years of English
- 2 math credits algebra 1 and above
- 2 years of science
- 1 additional math or science course (have to have one in junior or senior year)
- 2 PE
- 3 social studies
- 1 fine or practical art
- 6 electives

and for the Advanced Studies Diploma:

- 4 years of English
- 3 years or 2 and 2 of a language
- 3 math credits algebra 1 and above
- 3 years of laboratory science
- 1 fine or practical art
- 2 PE
- 3 social studies
- 4 electives

## Early Graduation

High school does not necessarily have to take a full four years to complete. If you plan things right, it's entirely possible to graduate in three years. It seems like about one person per year does this at H-B. The fourth year can be used to enter college early, to work, to travel abroad, or anything else your heart desires and that your parents will consent to. It's best to have this option in mind when you enter high school, if you're going to do it, since in order to graduate, you need to complete the same requirements as everyone else does in four years. Talk to your TA about this if you think you might want to do it. The other option is to have a very light schedule senior year, leaving you time to spend on other interests or work while still sticking around H-B for the full ride. You should also keep in mind that it's not essential to get the diploma. Many colleges will accept qualified students in their junior year of high school, and don't require you to get the diploma to enroll. A small handful of colleges have programs designed for students finishing 10th grade but the general consensus is that these colleges are for students who come from school districts with dramatically fewer options than Arlington offers for students.

## College

Most people don't realize that the area in which we live currently has the second highest percentage in the country of high school students who go to college. Furthermore, H-B Woodlawn's percentage is typically much higher than the rest of the county. That having been said, most people at H-B seem to take it for granted that they will go to college. This is both good and bad, as we see it. It's good in that students at H-B are continuing their education. It's not so good, however, because the thought of college admissions tends to dominate what choices people make in high school. We're talking about AP Classes (see the tutelage section), making sure you have the requisite number of extracurricular activities, etc. instead of pursuing

individual interests and taking advantage of all the possibilities that exist here at H-B Woodlawn. In short, students here try to make themselves look as much as possible like students at traditional high schools. Not only does this severely cramp your education here at H-B, it also doesn't seem like a great strategy for getting into schools. Colleges like to see students with initiative, who take risks and are not afraid to follow their interests and play a primary role in shaping their education. Coming from a school like H-B Woodlawn, you have a chance to make yourself stand out, while actually doing what is in your educational best interests as well. So, don't feel obligated to take loads of AP classes and participate in tons of activities that you might not normally be thrilled to do. Try to do what meets your individual needs. It never hurts to keep an eye on what lies ahead, but it doesn't make sense to sacrifice the present for what you think you want to do four years down the road, particularly when you don't have to.

### **Educational Activity Period**

The Educational Activity Period (EAP) is an approximately three hour period every other Wednesday that is used for alternative educational experiences. It was created last year for the purpose of having a time period when field trips and outside speakers could be held and people (parents, teachers, or students) could teach mini-workshops on subjects that aren't normally taught. The EAP is also the ideal time for trying out ideas for possible outside teacher courses.

EAP is run by the EAP Committee (which is open to any interested students, teachers, or parents), which takes ideas for activities and tries to find sponsors. Technically, everyone should be doing an approved activity in the EAP, and theoretically, everyone should want to, since you can do anything that is approved by the EAP Committee, and there are tons of great things to do. The EAP Committee prints up a list of activities before each EAP, and will mount it on the bulletin board that's in front of the main office, so take a look, and attend something.

Many of the details concerning the EAP - e.g. how to ensure that people don't skip en masse - were left open last year on purpose. Hopefully there will be lots of things that people want to do, and skipping won't be a problem. The EAP is yet another unique facet of H-B Woodlawn that allows for innovative educational activities. We hope that it will be used and appreciated.

### **On The Combined Effects of Sports and our Starting Time**

You may have noticed that for the most part, high schoolers here basically go to school a couple hours less every day than do students at other schools. There are a couple of influences at work here that we'd like to mention because of their considerable impact on the school.

As you are aware, H-B Woodlawn officially opens at 9:20, two hours later than do the regular high schools. The result of this is that H-B students have to leave school two hours early, at 2:00 or so, in order to participate in sports at the home schools. A hefty percentage of high schoolers leave for sports, which makes it nearly impossible to have classes in G and H blocks. So effectively, those in grades 9-12 don't have classes after 2:15. We think this is awful, because it places a limit on what can be done in school academically. Officially, the school explains the fact that we don't spend as much time in class as do students at other schools by saying that we have "independent study and intensive private conference sessions." We wholeheartedly are for this, except for the fact that this simply doesn't occur on any kind of

a large scale. Many teachers leave in the afternoon, and so are not available for conferencing. Additionally, it's extremely difficult to take extra classes and explore new areas of study, because group academic activity effectively ceases after 2:00, taking two hours out of every day. This also severely handicaps the outside teacher and elective programs because although people on paper have two free blocks in which to take classes at their fancy, in reality they have very little flexibility in their schedules, and not much time to take or create a class simply because it interests them.

We don't really know what to do about this. H-B Woodlawn has the option to switch to starting at 7:20, a change that would be great in that it would add two more hours to our day. There are problems with starting early, though, because during winter you end up walking to the bus stop in the dark, a concern for some parents of younger students. In 1990 there was a school-wide referendum to decide the starting time, and the 9:20 slot won by a small margin. Starting at 8:20 is out of the question because buses aren't available then. The other option is to encourage H-B students to forgo traditional high school athletics for a more enriching academic experience and/or a less organized system of athletics here (we can't have teams that compete against other schools, but we can have club teams). We also think that the issue should be emphasized to prospective students.

## **Celebrations**

Celebrations are a very happy part of H-B Woodlawn. H-B usually has a lot of dances during the school year, featuring various bands and stuff. Interestingly enough, H-B had dances featuring several semi-well known bands. Black Flag, The Teen Idles, Faith; they all played here before they were big.

H-B also has a Prom. Wow, imagine that, an alternative high school with a prom...In the early days of H-B, the prom was not nearly the serious social function it is today, in fact, it initially didn't even exist. The first prom was more a parody of the tradition of Prom than anything else. Tickets were three dollars, and dancing was in a big tent out on the grass in back of the school. Sadly, this did not become the paradigm for the proms of recent years. Conventionally-minded class leaders have made the H-B Prom the typically tradition-imbued rite-of-passage that you'd find at other high schools around the country.

As for other celebrations, there was a time when TA Specials occurred pretty frequently. These were TM-approved three hour periods at the end of each quarter when TA's would organize activities. They haven't happened for a couple of years, but there's no reason why they couldn't be resurrected. Other celebrations, if appropriate, are good ideas as well, since all involved seem to enjoy these. Go to Town Meeting if you have ideas.

## **The Student Advisory Board**

The SAB is a board of student representatives from each of the home schools and H-B Woodlawn that makes recommendations to the School Board on issues of their choice. They meet biweekly, generally at the Ed. Center (that white building over by W-L), and meet with the School Board about four times a year. Elections are held at the end of each year to elect representatives for the following year. Each grade from each school elects two representatives, making for a 24-person board. The board then elects a Chair, Vice-Chair, and a Secretary. The representatives exist to give the School Board student perspectives. Find out who your

representatives are, and ask them about what issues are being addressed. Make sure they're going to the meetings, above all, as attendance is sometimes weak. If there's something that concerns you that has relevance with the School Board, get your representative to bring it up at a meeting. That's what the representative is there for. Also look for a non-voting student member on the School Board in the next year or so. The SAB made a recommendation last year that the School Board add to its ranks a student member. As of last year, the School Board was very receptive to this notion. Give them a call if you think it's a good idea.



## Outside H-B Woodlawn (The Real World)

### Home Schools

Since H-B Woodlawn isn't officially a school, you are technically a student of the Arlington high school or middle school you would be attending if you hadn't opted for H-B. This school is referred to as your home school. Home schools, while bastions of fascism, are useful in a number of ways.

- There are usually classes at the home schools that aren't offered here, which you can take if you can work them into your schedule.
- Driver's Ed. Learn to drive for \$100, and avoid paying \$200+ for an equally or more worthless private class. Plus the County Drivers Ed Teachers are required to be somewhat sane, while the private ones are not. One person has reported that during the summer the county class is \$155.
- Sports. Lots of H-B students go over to the home schools to play field hockey, tennis, or any of the other athletic diversions organized over there. If you don't mind having your education here be 2/7 to 2/8 shorter as a result of missing the last two blocks of the day, go for it.
- the libraries, which are larger than the H-B library
- if you want to officially graduate, keep in contact with your home school to participate in their graduation ceremony

Just keep in mind that you're expected to behave like the other inmates while you're at the home schools. Do what the men with walkie-talkies tell you to do, don't look to suspicious, and you shouldn't run into any problems.

### Communication with the Outside World

**SCHOOL MAIL-** To communicate with someone at another school, you can use School Mail. Just enclose your message in an envelope you can get from the drawer in the office (if you don't know which drawer, just ask someone there) and put it in the bag on the wall. Some of us have found that adding a name and building where the person can be found speeds up the process.

**REGULAR MAIL-** There are millions of interesting people and organizations outside of the sometimes insular H-B Woodlawn community. One of the best ways to find out about some of these millions of resources is to write a letter. When writing letters to those outside of H-B, it's often convenient to temporarily assume a title. In the past, students have used titles like "Secretary of the Town Meeting" or "Ambassador of H-B Woodlawn" to write to companies, organizations, or governments about one thing or another. If you write a nice letter, you should get a dignified reply, which is always fun. Plus, you might make a valuable contact.

**E-MAIL-** More and more people are becoming attuned to this painless form of communication. The trouble is, H-B Woodlawn doesn't have Internet access as of now. Wait a couple of years, pick your higher power of choice to pray to, and this may become a viable option. There are a number of commercial providers that you can give lots of money to for access, or find a friend with access to send a quick note. Virginia supposedly has VAPEN available for all students and teachers to use e-mail, but it has been closed to students for close to a year. If you really need to send some

e-mail, ask around in the computer lab some of the knowledgeable people tend to have e-mail accounts and might let you use them to send a quick message.

**OFFICE PHONES**-Office phones may be used for serious calls if they're free.

**PAY PHONES**-There is a pay phone just outside the main office, as well as in the lobby of the auditorium. A quarter gives you unlimited time for a local call. Not a bad deal. Use the pay phones for social calls.

## **Community Resources**

The DC area is a great place to live for learning opportunities. A lot of these can (and should) be linked up to classes, but also simply pursued for their own sake. Here are some places to look:

- the "Weekend" section of the Washington Post, especially on the last Friday of every month, when the Smithsonian publishes a calendar of all its upcoming activities. Get the low-down on festivals and gatherings, etc. here.
- the front section of the Post on weekdays. This has the schedules for Congress and the Supreme Court. Congressional hearings can be great to watch, especially if you know something about the issue or bill being discussed. The same goes for Supreme Court cases. Government occurs 10 minutes away! Kind of neat, when you think about it.
- The CAS coordinator. Even if you don't want to do an apprenticeship, the resources that the CAS coordinator knows about might still be of use.
- phone books
- ask teachers

Try to go downtown. There's a lot to see and do.

## **Transportation**

In our busy world, you often have to get to and from school from all sorts of places. School buses, Metro buses, cars, bikes, and feet are the primary ways to get around our local corner of the Universe. The regular school buses usually get everybody to school between 9:00 am and 9:20 am and leave here around 4:05 PM, which is all you need to know if you don't have an 8:20 class, do sports, take a class at the Career Center, or ever for any other reason want to leave this school. The problem is that 90% of high school H-Bers do at least one of those things every week.

If you don't mind putting up with crazy schedules and high fares, you can use the Metrobus system to get around Arlington. There's a stop right down at the intersection of Vacation Lane and Military Road. Buses come by regularly. Call the Metro number (202-637-7000) if you want to know routes and times.

It is often much simpler to get around via car (if you're 16 or have a 16-year old friend with some free time) or bike (if you don't mind freezing in the winter, cooking in the summer, and getting sweaty year round), or by walking (if you don't mind going very, very, very slowly or have lots of time).

The school buses do visit our wonderful little school at other times besides 9:20 and 4:00. They travel to and from the Career Center a couple times every day, just as they travel to the other high schools (W-L, Wakefield, and Yorktown, if you didn't already know what they are) at around 2:10 for students who want to do sports at the

other schools. Usually, you can survive at H-B just using the 9:20, 2:10, and 4:00 Arlington County school buses, and a car or bike in an emergency.

### **The School Board**

The School Board is the governing body in charge of running the Arlington County school system. Whether or not they do a good job is debatable, but regardless, they have a lot of power. There are five members, and they collectively appoint the Superintendent, who as long as we can remember has been Dr. Gosling. The School Board has a long history of trying to shrink, expand, or close H-B Woodlawn and its predecessors. In fact, just last year, there was a proposal to significantly increase the student body size of H-B. This upsets us, mainly because we don't think that anyone over at the Ed. Center, particularly the School Board members, have an idea of what our school is and how it works. (Dr. Gosling, however, has been increasingly supportive of our program, for what we think are the right reasons. ) The scariest part to us is that the School Board doesn't seem to make their decisions along rational lines. They tend to sway before sob stories and touching anecdotes that students get up and tell at their meetings, instead of well-constructed arguments. It's generally smart to keep a low profile and be as nice as possible to the School Board whenever you come into contact with them.

# Tutelage

## Academic Performance

There are several ways to measure and evaluate academic performance. Ideally, your academic performance is equivalent to how much you are learning. The extent to which this is the case depends on the type of assessment that is used. At H-B, we use the same ABCDE grading system most other Arlington schools do. When people first invented schools, they thought, "Hey, maybe we should invent a system by which students' effort and progress in learning is rated effectively and fairly." Then they said, "Nah, let's just invent letter grades." Almost everybody in the galaxy agrees that letter grades have more to do with whether you did your homework than whether you tried hard or improved over your previous knowledge in a subject.

There are a few ways to fix that, if you want to. The first is to sit down with your teacher at the beginning of the quarter and determine individually what you would like your grade to reflect (see also the section on contracts). Ideally, since this school is supposed to be a place for self-directed learners, you should determine what assignments and methods of assessment should be used, in addition to simply how they will be scored.

Another option may be to talk to your teacher at the end of the quarter about what grade you will be getting. Explain what you have learned and what effort you have made in that subject, and ask the teacher to explain why the teacher is giving you the grade. This method of getting an official chance to figure out your grade with your input was used very heavily at the old Woodlawn School. While it was in heavy use then, a lot of teachers may regard this as a cheap method of raising your grade, so make sure you have a legitimate case. It might be a good idea to ask your teacher at the beginning of the quarter if you can do this.

If you don't want to receive a letter grade in a class, you can ask the teachers to rate you on a pass-fail/credit-no credit system. This is rarely done (don't ask us why), so the teacher may not be familiar with what you are talking about. Explain to the teacher what the system is, though, and they'll generally go along. (As far as we know, they don't have a say in which method of grading is used, but it never hurts to be tactful about these things.)

The most important idea that we'd like to emphasize here is not that the means of assessment and evaluation should be individualized, or that grades in themselves are bad. The crucial point here is that assessment is just that: one aspect of the student-teacher relationship. Good assessment is great and useful, and grades are necessary for college. Neither of them, however, is more important than the actual content of a course. We've seen all too many teachers who won't allow a student to pursue individualized curricula or assignments because they won't be able to grade them in the same manner that they grade the other students in a class. This is the most screwed up way to go about teaching that we've ever heard of. Don't let a teacher tell you this. Grades and other forms of assessment are to be shaped for the content and objectives of a course, not the other way around. If education is directed toward being able to objectively grade, both the education and the assessment have failed. Most of the teachers here seem to realize this, but if you run into any problems, don't hesitate to complain.

## Teachers

Everybody knows what teachers are, right? They were those big grown-ups in elementary school that gave you homework and made you write "I will not hit my fellow students with my math book" twenty times over during recess. Our teachers here at H-B do bear a vague resemblance to the teachers who you knew at elementary school, but fortunately not that much. They are (in body, at least) all grown-ups. They do give homework, but hopefully they don't give you as much busywork as you would be receiving at another school. Better yet, if you think that your homework is meaningless and that you understand what you are doing, you can try to convince the teacher to give you something more interesting or nothing at all. If they catch you breaking one of our more serious rules, they won't hesitate to refer you to Ray or Mary for disciplining. Mostly though, instead of keeping you busy and enforcing rules, they do what their name implies: they "teach."

So how do they teach? Good question. Some will tell you to read something out of a book. Some will just lecture you. Some will do both. All of them will give you a grade of some sort to rate whether or not you have learned what they think you should or "at least could regurgitate what they wanted you to learn. A lot of choice on what should be done in class is up to the teacher. In fact, a quick glance at the Merger Report reveals that the Faculty decides all curriculum matters. However, the Town Meeting, in a 1986 decision, voted to give themselves the power to determine what constitutes a curriculum decision, and can always advise the Faculty on a curriculum matter. The bottom line, though, is that a teacher should value your suggestions for improvement. If you think the teacher is teaching you something pointless or doing something wrong, you should talk to the teacher about it. Do not tolerate anything that could be better! Be nice about this kind of stuff, though, and it'll go smoother for all involved.

An extremely wonderful thing about our school is the fact that the teachers generally do not look down on students as subordinates. We'd like to think that most of our teachers came to this school knowing that they were coming to a place where they would deal with students as individuals, and do so with flexibility. So, if there is a problem with a class, talk to the teacher. As I said earlier, teachers have lots of power inside their individual classes. They can change anything, and should hear you out if you talk to them and give good reasons why you think it will improve their class and your education. After all, they're paid to make your education as good as possible.

What happens when things don't get better? What if a teacher ignores you? The easiest way to deal with the problem is to grin and bear it and never take a class from that teacher in the future. More effective strategies include getting your TA or even Ray to talk to the teacher for you. Always find out if other people have the same problem. That will lend weight to your argument. Hopefully things can be worked out. Beware, though. We feel pretty strongly that the commitment of the school to individualizing each student's education to meet his/her needs is not as serious as it should be. This is partly because the faculty and administration have lots and lots to do already. Be patient, but stay assertive and try to gather support from fellow students. Numbers are often more persuasive than the most justified arguments.

## Getting Help

Your teachers are there to help you. If you need help for any reason, just arrange a time that is mutually convenient and they should be happy to help you. If you are in a particular class, then that teacher will probably have some "lab" time, or the equivalent during which the teacher is free and will be able to clear up anything you don't understand. If you need to talk about something else, just find a time that the teacher is not doing anything and ask.

H-B Woodlawn students also have the luxury of having a great tutoring program at their service. If you think a regular tutor might be of use to you, talk to the tutoring coordinator, who can find you a tutor that you can meet with once or twice a week.

## Advanced Placement Classes

Advanced Placement (AP) classes are offered at the high school level for students who are in English (Grades 11 and 12), History (US, European), Government, second-year Science (Physics, Chemistry, Biology, and Computer Science), Math (Calculus AB and BC), and all of the foreign languages. Their expressed purpose is to give students an opportunity to do college level work. Because of the greater level of effort that supposedly is required in these classes, they are weighted in the calculation of the all-important grade-point-average (GPA). AP classes culminate with the AP Exams held in the middle of May. The AP test-makers give out the syllabus for each course, and the Exam tests for all the material on the syllabus, which is generally packed with a ton of topics.

It's debatable whether AP classes have drifted away from their intended goal of offering more challenging work to a select group of students, but it is widely acknowledged that students no longer take AP classes for the intellectual rigor involved. Most of the big-name colleges these days openly say that they expect students to have taken AP classes. This pressure combined with the added incentive of a higher GPA has resulted in many students taking AP classes for reasons unrelated to their intellectual needs or interests. Many teachers, especially those in the English department, bemoan this.

AP classes have been around for a long time. They were gradually introduced at H-B Woodlawn. However, it used to be (at schools all over the country) that teachers didn't feel obligated to obsessively follow the syllabi given by the AP test people, and AP classes were (to a far greater degree than they are now) taken by those more interested in the subject matter who wanted to pursue it with greater intensity than would be found in a regular class. Students also didn't feel as obligated to take the AP exams, and so teachers were not as pressured to achieve high test scores. Nowadays, though, teachers (some more than others) often teach exclusively toward the Exam and have to rush through material in order to have it all done before the exam. In addition, virtually all classes meet four blocks a week, leaving less time for independent work. This results in shallow depth of study, few electives, minimal field trips, and very little variety. Not very appropriate for an "Alternative Program" now, in our opinion.

AP classes have also dealt a severe blow to the once thriving elective program. Many of the motivated students who propel classes along are sucked into the AP class syndrome, leaving the electives floundering. Furthermore, many of the AP students are those who would otherwise thrive in the elective program, and would in fact rather be taking *Cults and Subcults* or *The Beat Generation* (H-B Woodlawn

electives) than a standard survey course on American history or literature. In addition, some say that AP classes are unfair because they give you an extra point for GPA and class ranking purposes. That means that on official records, a student who gets a B in AP English 11 is just as well off as a student who gets an A in regular English 11. Some claim that a lot of AP classes aren't that much harder than the regular ones, so AP students should not get extra credit.

So why do we have them at all, since they are so contradictory to our ideals? Well, colleges love them, and since all but about a half-dozen H-B seniors go to college, there is a lot of demand from students who need (or at least THINK that they need) that extra bonus GPA point to get to go to "the right college". Just as a historical note, the English department was dead set against adding AP English, for all the reasons cited above. However, after a couple of years of pressure from students and parents, the English faculty bowed, and now we have AP English classes. The standards for getting in to the classes have also changed, so that now, almost anyone who wants to can join an AP class, thus making it easy for people to take an AP class simply for the extra grade point and with no regard for the content of the class.

AP classes are not nearly as criticized in the subject areas of math and science, where the syllabi provide background necessary for future work in the subjects. Many people still have problems with the fact that there isn't the flexibility for them to spend more time on a particular topic that they want to pursue in greater depth.

Wondering how to remedy the problem (at least in the areas of history and English)? There are ways. There is no reason why there couldn't be AP electives. These would add some much needed variety to the curriculum. They could be placed at the beginning of the year, so that the latter portion of the year could be devoted to preparing for the test. But this wouldn't really confront the largest issue at hand. We favor not having AP classes in the humanities, period. Under this solution, as we envision it, all English, history, and government classes would formally be listed as regular classes. Informally, however, it would be declared that some classes were going to intensively cover American lit, some would be year round topics courses, etc. It would be similar to the way that English electives vary in content, but appear identical on transcripts. Advanced classes would exist, and students would still be allowed to take AP exams for college credit, but the bonus point on GPAs and our current year-long cram courses would disappear (unless students wanted them for educational purposes). The school could, in its description, state that we, as a matter of policy, do not have AP classes, and the type of courses you selected could be clarified in your recommendations when applying to colleges, thus making up for the possibly lower GPAs that might ensue and the absence of the AP title on transcripts. Talk to your local Town Meeting if you like this idea. It would involve a risk on the part of the student body, but could improve the quality of education here immeasurably.

### **The Elective Program**

The elective program allows students to design and propose classes about things that they want to learn. It is based on the idea (like many other programs at H-B Woodlawn) that students are capable of understanding what they need to know.

People write proposals for courses they would like to take, and submit them to teachers, who do an initial screening for feasibility. Outside teacher courses are also part of this. (see below) Then the class proposals are voted on by the students, and

the teachers decide which of the winners they would like to teach and when they will be scheduled.

Students are encouraged to help teachers run courses. The elective program requires a lot more work from teachers, as they have to do far more preparatory work than they would with a standard class load, in which many of the classes are repeated. Put some of your ideas into the class. Suggest books, field trips, movies, etc.

The elective program is not what it used to be. At Woodlawn, all Social Studies and English classes were quarter-long electives under this program. The psychology program also worked this way. The elective program now is restricted to the latter two quarters of the regular English classes, and the last quarter of regular social studies classes. Teachers still request elective proposals, but students rarely submit them, resulting in many of the same classes being held year after year, defeating the purpose of the elective program. The teachers don't seem to be able to pinpoint why the elective program is received with so little enthusiasm, but we claim it's the same thing that plagues the school as a whole - an absence of critical thinking on the part of students about their education. Propose electives! **You don't even get to do this in college!**

## **The Outside Teacher Program**

The Outside Teacher Program comes from the Woodlawn program, and is potentially a great way to learn about unconventional or highly specific topics. The idea behind the Outside Teacher program is that if there's something you want to learn that isn't offered in a regular course and that a teacher at H-B isn't knowledgeable in, you can find a teacher and start a class in the subject. Courses are typically 9 weeks long, although they can theoretically be as long as a whole year (or longer, we suppose) if you want. At Woodlawn, the outside teacher program was utilized to hold classes in Chinese history, dance, woodcarving, economics, and religion, to mention a few. Unfortunately, most students now are not aware that they can propose an outside teacher class, and so this program is rarely used.

There are several steps one must go through in order to have a class taught by an outside teacher, as described in the Merger Report.

- A person proposes an outside teacher and/or course.
- A list is put up in a central place on which students sign their names if they are interested in taking the course.
- A time is agreed upon as to when the course is to be offered.
- At least five students must sign up to indicate that they will commit themselves to take the course if approved. At least five students must be enrolled in the course after the second week of classes or the course is canceled.
- There must also be a teacher who will sponsor the outside teacher.
- The teacher sponsor decides in what subject area credit will be granted for the course.
- A small Outside Teacher Committee consisting of students and teachers will meet with and interview the prospective teacher and set up a salary arrangement.
- The recommendation of the committee is brought before the Town Meeting, which has the power of approval.

If your proposal is passed by Town Meeting, you have the course! Money for the outside teacher program is set aside in a fund by the Allocation Committee each year. By attending the Allocation Committee meeting, you can determine how much



money is available. In addition, if you have a specific course all ready to go for the following year, you can take a proposal to the Allocation Committee meeting, and get the committee to approve your course then and there, to insure that it will be held the following year.

Although the outside teacher program has for the past ten years been used almost exclusively by the English and Social Studies elective programs during the last half of the year, there is no reason it couldn't be used year round and in other subject areas.

We've found that local graduate students make good outside teachers, but parents and neighbors can work equally well. All you have to do is think about what you want to learn. Historical note: Jeff Arch, a Hollywood screenwriter who wrote the screenplay for *Sleepless in Seattle*, was an outside teacher at H-B who years ago taught Screenwriting and Tai Kwon Do.

Some past Outside Teacher Courses include: Philosophy, Sculpture, Irish History, History of Music, Religion, Women's History, Contemporary Poetry, Dream Studies, Cult Movies, Documentary Videos, Taoism, Cooking, Modern Dance, History of Vietnam, Drugs in America, Screenwriting, Feminist Literature, Existentialism, Essay Writing, Global Poetry, Film Reviewing, and Martial Arts.

## **Independent Study & Contracts**

If there is something you want to learn that is not covered in a standard course, and that you are unable to get as an elective or outside teacher course, you can try to do an independent study. Doing this entails figuring out what you want to do and then taking it to a teacher and getting the teacher to work with you. If they're willing to put in the time to meet with you once a week and assess the work that you're doing, you're in business. Set up a meeting time and get to work.

Independent study requires a lot of motivation, because you're only meeting once a week, and there's no daily homework or class discussion to make you do your work regularly. Plan out your time so that you can get your work done. Independent studies are well-worth the extra effort. Instead of studying the standard curriculum, you will be studying things specific to what your interests are.

Unfortunately, it has become more and more difficult for teachers to sponsor independent work. A faculty vote circa 1986 forced teachers to teach six classes in order to receive full-time salary, making it more difficult for teachers to sponsor independent work with students. Because of this, teachers may be reluctant to sponsor your work. We think this is awful, but there's not much you can do about it. Try to convince the teacher that you have a well thought-out program for what you want to study, and hopefully the teacher will agree to sponsor you. If not try another teacher.

Another option is to try to fit your idea for independent work within the structure of an existing class. Tell the teacher that you want to do contract based work, in which you sit down with the teacher and enumerate the things you would like to do to learn the ideas or skills covered by the class. The contract can be for any length of time, and is limited only by what you can think of. There are many different ways of learning things, particularly in classes in English and Social Studies, where you may have more flexibility than you would in something like a math class. Even then, though, there are many different things to do. Use your imagination. And don't let a teacher tell you that contract-based work won't be possible for the teacher's class. If necessary, employ your parents to politely request that you be allowed to

create a contract. Teachers should encourage your initiative, not hinder it. As long as you can learn the information and concepts that are the goals of the class and teacher, there shouldn't be any problem with not doing quite the same thing as the rest of the class. (see the above section on Academic Performance and the next section as well)

Just for the record, the county thinks that this is such a good idea that they recently added an independent studies program to the official curriculum, while we have had it since the founding of Woodlawn. This means that we have had the program for 22 years more than they.

## **Educational Options and Limits**

The extent to which you can do alternative educational things is determined by the county and state requirements for doling out credit. Assuming you want to earn credit for your academic work, you need to meet the goals for a particular subject or course. This isn't really relevant for electives, since it's mainly up to the teacher that supervises your work to give you credit. It mainly applies to required courses, like English 9, 10, 11, and 12, US History, Math, etc. There is a surprising amount of flexibility in the ways to meet these requirements for graduation, something that even teachers aren't that conscious of. Each required course has certain state and county guidelines that govern what skills are emphasized in the course, what topics are dealt with, etc. For example, it is standard that American Literature is covered in 11th grade English. It is not, however, specified that you have to read Huckleberry Finn.

How you fulfill the basic goals of the class is up to the teacher, since the faculty has control over curriculum. If you are aware of the requirements for a class, though, you can present them to the teacher along with your ideas for how to meet them while pursuing things that are more to your interests. Hopefully, a teacher would be receptive to this type of thing. The booklets that will be useful in figuring out what the basic requirements of a class are can be found to a great extent in the "Standards of Learning Objectives for Virginia Public Schools" booklets that exist for each subject. Call the Ed Center and ask around. You'll probably need to talk with the County Coordinator for whichever subject you're interested in. These people are happy to send you the booklet.

## **Community As School**

At first, this quaint little title seems paradoxical in nature. What C.A.S. accomplishes for the motivated student is actually pretty amazing. C.A.S. allows you to be in a real-world work setting while receiving school credit for your toil and slaving. This idea was originally used in New York, where the City As School program allows students to get their high school diploma almost entirely through apprenticeships.

To become involved with C.A.S., you need to contact the C.A.S. Coordinator, Ginny Graham, and let her know you're interested. You can work almost anywhere for example: a congressman's office, the Smithsonian, a radio or TV station, a theater, a hospital, a scientific lab, etc. etc. Keep in mind that this is for educational credit so you don't get paid for it, therefor set aside all of your capitalistic notions. You can do nearly anything. Once you have an idea, you will design a LEAP (Learning Experience Activity Package), find a sponsoring teacher in the subject that you want credit for, and get an interview at your proposed site. If all goes well, you will soon be

working out the details of your scholastic/business adventure. The LEAP is a great way of organizing your leap from the boring classroom to the work world. You organize what you hope to learn from the project so that you and your sponsoring teacher know what you hope to accomplish. You need to work at least four hours each week at your work site, but these hours can be whenever you or your employer are available. Weekends, after school, whenever. Also, if your employer feels that you need to work more hours to truly understand the job, or whatever, you can do that as well. There's lot of flexibility. You will meet occasionally with your sponsor to let them know what you're doing, so that they will be able to approve the credit that you will have earned by the end of your apprenticeship.

C.A.S. is a good chance to get out of your classroom and do some hands-on learning, and it beats sitting at a desk for hours on end. Of course, if you like sitting at a desk, there is already an abundance of such classes for you and your friends.

Some current and previous sites include:

- County Board Assistant
- Arlington Journal/ Arlington Courier Newspaper Reporter
- WAVA Radio Station
- Nursing Homes
- Potomac Overlook Regional Park
- Drew Elementary School
- Arlington County Shelter for Women and Children
- Worldnet (Voice of America) Television Studio
- Theater Production Assistant for Bob Brown Puppets
- Art Gallery Assistant

### **Interdepartmental Credit**

If you really want to take a certain class, but need credit in another subject, it is sometimes possible to work things out so that you get the credit you need for a class that is not usually counted towards that kind of credit. This is easiest to do within the humanities, where, as mentioned in the Independent Study section, there are more flexible requirements. To do this you need to talk to a teacher in the department you want credit in and explain to him/her why you feel that the course you want to take is satisfactory for whatever credit you want. You may need to change some of the assignments or redirect the emphasis of some parts of the course in order to get the appropriate credit. If the teacher agrees that it will be OK, you should talk to the teacher teaching the course to make sure it's OK with that teacher too.

If both teachers agree that what you're doing is legitimate, do it. Your TA or someone else will need to work out how the credit will appear and be recorded on your transcript.

You can also use this technique to get a certain kind of credit for an independent study that you're doing with a teacher in department other than the one you want credit in. Go for it.

### **Classes Outside H-B**

If the all the options available here at H-B do not meet your educational needs, you might want to consider taking a class at another institution of learning.

If there's a course that's in the Arlington program of studies but that isn't offered at H-B, you can take it at one of the prisons (oops, we mean home schools).

(Remember that you can try to do any course as an independent study, but a teacher may be reluctant to sponsor you, or you may simply want to be in a class.) To take a course at a home school, just sign up for it on the course selection form that you fill out after arena scheduling. Somewhat surprisingly, classes at the home schools (at least the ones we've been in) aren't all that different from the standard classes here. What you'll probably notice is the difference in atmosphere, and that there are guys with walkie-talkies marching around, accosting you as soon as you enter. Ask around before you sign up for a course at a home school. Just like here, some are good, some are bad. The other down side to going over to a home school is that it can sometimes split up your day here.

The Alexandria campus of NOVA has a fair range of classes, although the difficulty level of courses is often below what you would find in a good high school class. However, if your heart is set on taking Russian, Differential Equations, or some other topic that you can't get the funding for or enough other kids interested in to have as an outside teacher course, then it may be the way to go. Cost per semester course: \$150.

George Mason has a far better range of challenging classes, but is a long commute, and has a hefty price tag: \$400 for one semester. As of now, the county doesn't pay for these courses (we think they should), but write your friendly School Board a letter, and maybe this policy will be changed.

The Smithsonian Resident Associate Program offers great weekly lecture series in D.C. on a variety of interesting and esoteric subjects, which feature specialists in the given field. These are held on weeknights, and run around \$100 for 8 lectures. They often feature cutting edge topics in science or history, though, and often have famous people come and talk on some of the nights.

There is also a Carnegie Science Lecture Series, but it is somewhat inconvenient to get to. Talk to Liz McNerney to get some information.

### **The 9th Grade Alternative Education Class**

The 9th grade Alternative Education Class was the brainchild of Steven Gardner, a graduate of H-B Woodlawn who designed the class as his Senior Project in 1993. The class was designed to give students at H-B Woodlawn a general introduction to alternative education as well as an orientation the specific alternative educational options at H-B Woodlawn. The class was proposed and approved by the Town Meeting to be mandatory for one quarter for all 9th graders. The class was supposed to be offered during the 93-94 school year, but no one saw to the matter of getting a teacher, and so it was put off until this year. As of when we went to press, we were in the process of finding a teacher. Hopefully the person will be found and a class can be created. The class goal is to provide a launch point to further educate students about our program in addition to this Handbook to begin the process of raising student awareness.

## In Closing...

At the moment, we're not terribly pleased with the state of our school. There are some things that make it an indubitably better place to go to school than traditional schools, but none of these have to do with the type of education we are receiving here. H-B Woodlawn is a traditional education housed in a quasi-alternative school environment. Much more is possible. We realized this after spending a lot of time thinking about education and various types of schools. The trouble is, most of the students and teachers here haven't had the opportunity to do this. The frequent forums for reflection that are mentioned in the Merger Report do not occur, nor are people encouraged to think critically about their education on their own, and as a result most people seem to take their education here for granted. This is the worst way to go about getting an alternative education. The minimum requirement for true success here, is not achieving a minimum GPA or turning in a set number of homework assignments. The bare minimum is that **YOU** think about what your goals are and in some sense how you want to meet these goals. Once students begin to do this, and once teachers begin to be receptive towards the results of the introspection of each student, H-B Woodlawn can function as it was initially envisioned, and as a school should function.

### Where To Go From Here

Well, for starters, you've read this handbook; and we'd like to think that was a good first step. Hopefully some of the things we talked about were informative, alarming, interesting, and/or motivating. From here, though, everything is up to you, the individual student. If you think the ideas expressed herein are valid, we urge you to attempt to implement them. The biggest problem plaguing H-B and large institutions in general is that someone has to carry things out. This can often be a burden, but can be remarkably fruitful. But many things aren't difficult at all, or undesirable to do. They just require a small bit of initiative. Organize a class. Suggest a field trip or activity for the EAP. Go to Town Meeting, and make a proposal for something that needs to be changed. Watch to see that the things passed in Town Meeting are, in fact, carried out in the day-to-day life of H-B Woodlawn. Form a coalition with other students who also feel strongly about something, and go to a faculty meeting and express your views. To reiterate, think critically constantly. There is no reason why you should be dissatisfied with any major element of your experience here.

### Who to talk to:

The first place to start with an idea is your friends and classmates. Try to hammer out some sort of concept with them to present. Hopefully starting to discuss with them will organize your thoughts into a meaningful and coherent idea. Next, try to find Ray and see what he thinks of your idea. If Ray does not seem to be available or you need to hammer out your idea with someone else try to talk to Randy, Ginny Graham, the Alt. Ed teacher, or some students who are involved and familiar with H-B. Others are also. If you feel that you aren't receiving the help that you need from other sources, contact one of us and we will do our best to help you get your idea moving in the right direction. Do **not** be afraid that you are proposing a lousy idea, if you are willing to spend the energy thinking about and carrying out your ideas then take a shot and hope for the best. *Good luck.*