

# THE UNDERGROUND



# STUDENT HANDBOOK

# **The Underground Student Handbook**

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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. This handbook is meant to educate students about the basic workings of the school, talk about what usually goes on here and provide general information on classes and programs. However, more importantly, it is meant to inform students about the educational possibilities that exist here but that are rarely taken advantage of. The handbook will be successful if it incites people to action, gets people questioning the status quo and makes people think about what's going on around them.

## 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 anyway, 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 Archives in the library, a muddled pile that we suggest somebody organize, perhaps to satisfy the fascist requirements of the National Honor Society. Also, you could probably talk a teacher into letting you do a project for a class on these documents. If you have a few minutes, go check them out. In addition, there are several sources of information right here in our classrooms. Ray Anderson, Mary McBride, Mary Schroeder, Jim Schroeder, Judy Mayeux, Susan Senn, Bobbi Schildt, Ellen Kurcis, and Randy McKnight 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, got together with two kids from W-L and wrote a memorandum to the 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 one half-hour period a 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 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 and Mary 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 lots of 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. On a more recent note, at the end of the 1999-2000 school year, the School Board created a committee to develop criteria for naming schools, and Ray hinted that this could mean the replacement of our thoroughly bourgeois title.

The new school created by the merger is defined in the Merger Report, available in the office and in the Library 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 students 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. Many factors have resulted in this school being drastically different than 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 decades that have passed since Woodlawn was established. Pressures to get into big name colleges have led people to pile on AP courses that have rigid syllabuses and don't allow for educational experimentation. Also, a questionable faculty vote in the mid eighties required full time teachers to teach six classes a day (ensuring smaller classes, but making it nearly impossible to sponsor independent study projects). We don't mean to say that all the changes the school has undergone were 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 many opportunities for an alternative education have dried up, while others are rarely taken advantage of. At the moment, we feel there is a basic failure to live up to the original goals of this school, goals that are not unique to a time period but that stand in their validity on their own. These goals must be addressed to ensure the future viability of this program. The pages that follow describe our school as it is, and as it could be.

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

c.1978 (From the original Handbook)-"H.B.W. has a high-minded, official, intellectual-sounding philosophy that's pure bullshit. We know. We helped write it. Most people don't read statements of philosophy because they're too obscure. We don't. But we thought we should include one as a matter of policy.

"Basically we believe in people. We think they're great. (Some of our best friends are people.) We think kids are people. And so they're OK-even the 7th graders who run and scream in the halls. We also think adults are people--even the little old ladies with blue hair and fur coats. We've been told that teachers are adults, but we're still investigating that rumor and include them here as a third category of people. Anyway, they're all people and they're all neat. Take one to lunch someday.

"People do funny things and one of the funny things they do is set up schools. The rise of schools roughly paralleled the decline of the farm economy. People didn't want kids in the job market (reserved for white males between the ages of 25 and 65) and they didn't want them on the streets, so they set up schools to keep them busy. To a certain extent schools were also set up to give people information.

"Today, schools still do the two things they were set up to do: babysit and teach. However, the babysitting role seems to have become more important in many schools than the

teaching role. At H.B. Woodlawn we try to change that. Less babysitting (see "Verbum Sap Sat") and more learning, creating, and experiencing. We believe that if society is going to give us this time in our lives, we might as well use it to find out about the exciting world we live in. And have a little fun at the same time."

c.1995 (From the second Handbook)-"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 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 moments 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."

c.2000 (From our own brains)-Over the course of the last two decades, little has changed in terms of H-B's written philosophy. But the school itself has changed drastically. Why? Well, we think that the basic premise of our school is that here one can toss off the shackles of traditional, formal education, and come out the better for it. By thinking independently, having the ability to shape the style and substance of one's learning and taking responsibility for one's environment, namely the school, students can figure out what they want from their education and see how they can go about getting it. Unfortunately, many people at H-B fail to realize some or all of this, focusing instead on our enviable but less important position of letting kids run around, drink soda and wear hats. There is no longer a push to utilize the position we have of being able to change the school, to make it as alternative, as experimental, and as individually-driven as we want. Instead, we simply assume that our education is sufficiently alternative as it is, without knowing or caring that so much more can be accomplished.

We don't think that the philosophy has been lost to the winds of time. It's still here, lying dormant until people become frustrated enough and ambitious enough to dig it up and push back the tide of conservative, closed-minded views that is lapping at our doors. That's just it, though. The philosophy relies on students to not only take control of their H-B education, but also to ensure that it is the educational experience that they desire. There is nobody to wave a red flag.

## Verbum Sap Sat

"Verbum Sap Sat", H-B Woodlawn's school motto, is vulgar 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. You understand the consequences of your actions and are taking responsibility for them. It says a lot about how things work and how people think at H-B. We should not have very 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 reflect this idea. For example, 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.

### 2 IMPORTANT NOTES:

1) If a teacher thinks that you are in academic trouble, they 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 an alternative. We worry that students aren't aware of the abilities they possess, even as sixth graders, to affect their education and environment. Rather, they accept busywork and unnecessary assignments as simple facts of life, instead of informing people if something is ineffective or misguided. It's monumentally important that if one has a problem with a particular Middle School rule, policy, or activity, that problem must be voiced in Town Meeting, or talked about with Mary Schroeder or someone else involved with the Middle School.

In fact, a number of years ago, a group of frustrated 8th graders who were being told they had to take Core 8 (basically a study hall) rather than have a free block at the end of the day, took their complaint to Town Meeting. It was determined that this was not a curriculum issue, so TM had jurisdiction over it. Town Meeting decided to release the 8th graders from the hated Core 8 and give them a free block. The lesson being that even H-B's middle schoolers can have power over their educational experiences here as long as they are not afraid to speak up.

## Why People Come to H-B Woodlawn

There is no one thread of consistency as to why students come here. Many people think 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 the educational philosophy. The problem is that their reasons for being here initially do not relate to the educational concepts of the school, and many students remain oblivious to the educational possibilities here. Kids tend to like H-B because it's a more



comfortable place to go to 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. This has been fueled in recent years with H-B's inclusion as one of the top 100 public high schools in America by Newsweek (See Ray's office wall), according to a rating system that is misleading and heavily biased towards wealthy, predominantly white schools. Worse still, there is no mention of the alternative nature of our program in these rankings. 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 parents and kids alike, both before they apply and after they are accepted, to establish at the outset what the object of being at H-B Woodlawn is. In fact, we think that orientation shouldn't end with a dim outline of the school at the beginning of sixth grade. Instead it should continue throughout a student's years at H-B. Rather than relying exclusively on the hope that parents and students would have the correct motivations in coming to H-B, since this is often not the case, a continued orientation to alternative education is necessary throughout a student's years here (see Alt. Ed class).

We also think it's important to remember that as a school, H-B provides different experiences for different students, many of which can be beneficial to that student. There is no right way to be a student. But we think there is a wrong way, something rooted deeply in ignorance and misunderstanding, that taints some students' time here. Milking the freedoms of H-B but ignoring the basis for those freedoms and the intellectual possibilities available beyond simply going to class, does a disservice to students and to our school. The good thing is that this is easily reversible through awareness about the opportunities available here and a willingness to explore and experience new avenues in education and life in general.

## **Admissions**

Once upon a time, getting your child into H-B meant standing, sitting, sleeping, and cooking in a long line for upwards of several days, as the admissions policy was first come, first served. However, this system was unfair to families with parents who could not take time off from work to stand in line. And, even for parents who could stand in line, the situation grew increasingly more stressful as time passed and H-B became more popular. After the parents of students hoping to enter H-B for the 1992-93 school year ended up camping out for three days, an image-tarnishing embarrassment for the County, the policy was changed. Instead of first come, first served, the method of admissions became a lottery. However, to quell the cries that H-B was a "white flight" school, and to foster an environment of cultural diversity, a system of minority preference was used. This meant that some white children were bumped onto a waiting list to allow children of other ethnicities to get in.

Nobody complained about the system until after the lottery for the 1997-98 school year had been completed. At this time, a group of irate white parents who had attempted to get their

students into Arlington Traditional Elementary School, one of Arlington's other alternative programs, sued the county when it was discovered that their children had been denied admission while some minority students were bumped to better lottery positions. After this became public, a parent of a white child in a similar position at H-B joined the lawsuit. An Arlington judge ruled in favor of the plaintiffs, and as a result many students who had been leapfrogged in the lottery were granted admission, creating a class of roughly 17,000 students. Just kidding, it was nearly 100. The judge, in a confusing at best ruling, informed the County that they would have to develop a new admissions policy that didn't discriminate against white children seeking admission.

So once more the admissions policy was changed. This time, a "weighted lottery" was used, meaning that students who were of a lower income bracket or who spoke a second language at home or who were of a non-white ethnicity were given more chances to have their name chosen in the lottery. Naturally, more parents sued, and the judge once again ruled in their favor. Again, more incoming 6th and 9th graders than usual were accepted to pacify the kids and parents who felt they got the short end of the stick, and a new admissions policy was invented. Dramatic indeed.

Today, there is an unweighted lottery used in determining admission. The class that entered for the 1999-2000 school year was the first class to be chosen through the unweighted system. Efforts are currently underway to increase diversity in the school through outreach to minority communities.

## A Word or Two on Alternative Education

Alternative Education is what we're all about. "Alternative" is a word that a lot of people here toss around in reference to this school. 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 it's 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.

But we would be remiss if we were to say that H-B is right for everyone. Many students manage to find their niche in Arlington's more traditional middle and high schools, and feel more comfortable in a more rigidly constructed program. If history has shown anything, it's that our school caters to a specific type of student: one who values an alternative education, but one who can also handle the freedom it affords.

## Assessment

As a part of the process that merged Hoffman-Boston with Woodlawn in 1978, the newly incorporated program underwent an assessment. By assessment we mean that the two programs examined how they had worked prior to the merger and determined how they hoped to work as one program in the future. The result of this was the Merger Report (which can be found in the Library Archives and in the office). For the next twenty or so years no one brought up the idea of having another assessment.

In 1999, the School Board began the process of assessing all of the traditional high schools in Arlington and H-B decided to join in on the fun by conducting its own assessment. During the summer of 1999, a committee met to determine how the H-B assessment process would work. Nine sub-committees were formed to examine specific parts of the school: Philosophy, Town Meeting, TA, Internal Community, External Community, Communication, Assessment of Students, Admission/Outreach and Instruction. The idea was for these committees to meet for the next two years, spending the first year researching, the first semester of the second year writing assessment reports and the final semester passing their findings and suggestions through Town Meeting for approval. The final product would be a document addressing the ideas discussed by the committees that could be given out to the H-B community and the School Board.

As active participants in the assessment process from the beginning and co-chairs of the Town Meeting sub-committee, we think that this is an extremely worthwhile and potentially fruitful endeavor. If there's one thing that characterizes H-B, it's that people here have an utterly unique combination of displeasure about problems that have arisen at H-B, idealism about what H-B could and should be, and apathy that keeps these ideals from becoming reality. Mobilizing dozens of people in a well-organized group with the task of synthesizing all of the issues that concern the school into one cohesive document can only help. If there's an assessment going on when you read this, join it! If it's finished, read the document and help implement change! If it's been a while since the last one, maybe it's time to start a new one! In any case, join the fun.

## 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. THIS IS TREMENDOUSLY IMPORTANT! What it means is that since students make up the vast majority of participants in Town Meeting, they have control over nearly everything in the 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 always talk to them about it (they're pretty good listeners) or, failing that, bring it up at a Town Meeting. The School Board, that group of 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.

### Town Meeting

Town Meeting is a big deal because it is the decision-making body that runs this place. Town Meeting meets on every other Wednesday at 10:15 am and is usually held in the library, although sometimes Town Meeting meets in other, larger locations 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.) On rare occasions, Town Meeting has been held at night when issues are being discussed that have a significant impact on parents as well as students and staff. However, one of the problems with these meetings is that they make it more difficult for non-driving students to attend. Irrespective of when or where it is held, 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 Announcements, Motions and Discussions. 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. It used to be that there were only chairmen in the chairperson's role, but starting in the mid-90s there was a refreshing run of chairpersons

that were of the fairer sex. 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, however, and some rules have been formally altered to facilitate our purposes. The truth is, Town Meeting doesn't have to be run according to the orthodox guidelines of Robert's Rules, which are really meant for running countries. Despite the fact that H-B fancies itself as important as many small countries, and sometimes even large ones, following such rigid guidelines as Robert's Rules is unnecessary for a governing body such as Town Meeting. But really, it's not that hard to grasp the basics of TM, and if you pay attention at a Town Meeting or two, you should get the hang of how it runs. Also, don't hesitate to speak up and ask the chair to explain something if procedure is unclear.

The Town Meeting chairperson used to wear a Town meeting cape and have a gavel, both of which disappeared mysteriously years ago. Although the gavel has been returned to its trusty perch next to the chairperson, the cape remains regrettably vacant from the proceedings. We strongly recommend that someone find a replacement. The Town Meeting is also always announced right before it starts with the ringing of our thoroughly synthetic Windsor chimes. At one time, a group of "Town Meeting Criers" dashed down the hallways with a bell, annoying people into coming to TM.

Everyone's vote counts equally at TM and majority rules. No proxy votes are allowed at the meeting. That means that if you want to vote, you have to go. Voice votes are taken unless there is a close vote, in which case someone can call for a show of hands.

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 a 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 (See Town Meeting Committee Section). 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 the 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.

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 the advice of the TM. TM also decides what is and what isn't a curriculum decision. That's a very big deal because it gives students the power to choose what they want to be able to learn in school, and what they don't.

Town Meeting minutes are posted outside the office, so if by chance you miss a meeting, you can be informed about what happened in your absence.

A lot of people say that the Town Meeting is in decline. In actuality, most teachers who have been here for a while will tell you that TM fluctuates in attendance and importance, and in fact in recent years it has been going through a period of robust health and relevance to students. In the early 90's, many students thought that there weren't enough interesting things going on

at TM, so to try and compensate for this, 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). Although attendance remains low as a percentage of the school as a whole, what most people don't realize is that Town Meetings were never well attended. And low attendance is not necessarily bad. Studies about democracies have shown that voter turnout is always a problem, but it doesn't actually mean that the decisions being made in those votes fail to take non-voter's concerns into account (Talk to Carol Clark about this, she's got a lot of free time and would be happy to share her thousands of pages of blurbs on this subject.)

H-Bers have a unique combination of frustration with how their school works, idealism about how much better it could be, and apathy that keeps these ideals from coming to fruition. Some students just don't realize that they can change anything that isn't curriculum through Town Meeting. 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. If, however, what you want to do affects lots of people, take it to the Town Meeting.

## Town Meeting Committee

Long ago, when H-B and Woodlawn merged, there was a group that was formed to oversee the smooth running of Town Meeting and monitor the implementation of TM decisions. This group was called, inventively enough, the Town Meeting Committee. Over the years, the Town Meeting Committee was lost to the winds of time.

Cut to 2000, when the Town Meeting Assessment sub-committee, during its research, rediscovered TMC. TMC seemed like the perfect way to solve many of the logistical problems plaguing Town Meeting as well as heighten awareness and understanding of Town Meeting and what it hopes to accomplish. In its new incarnation, TMC would be formally established at the first Town Meeting of each year and would be composed of anyone who wished to attend the regular TMC meetings. TMC's duties would be to take over much of the grunt work that had gradually been shoved on the TM chairperson, such as writing down and announcing the agenda. Furthermore, it would advertise TM, act as a liaison between the PAC/Faculty and Town Meeting and become another forum for the discussion of issues and the creation of motions. It was also hoped that TMC would become a place that would educate new or unfamiliar students on how to participate effectively at Town Meeting. Town Meeting would retain full control over the TMC, ensuring that it would remain a helpful offshoot rather than a tyrannical monster.

Town Meeting approved the re-formation of TMC in the spring of 2000, to be formally organized in the beginning of the 2000-01 school year. The only thing that can trip up the success of this new entity is a lack of student participation. If the TMC is around when you read this, go join it! If it's not, start it again!

## 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 leader," 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. They are Jodee Jones (Secretary and Craft Lady), Marianne Leverton (Registrar and Chocolate Supplier), Jean Broadway (Treasurer and Covert Communist Spy) and Linda Zimmerman (Instructional Secretary and Big Bertha Tamer). The Office People live in the Office, and they are very friendly. Just don't make any quick gestures, and remember, no flash photography.

## The Faculty

| <u>Name</u>          | <u>Subject</u>                    | <u>Room#</u> |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------|
| Ray Anderson         | Principal, History                | Office       |
| Jutta (Yoota) Bauman | German, Math                      | 312          |
| Carol Clark          | Government, Psychology            | 304          |
| David Contessa       | History, English                  | 105          |
| Sally Davis          | Latin                             | 210          |
| Mike Demick          | Drama                             | Theater      |
| Joan DeMoss          | Photography                       | 2            |
| Julie Dickson-Brown  | Resource                          | 203          |
| Mark Dodge           | Physics                           | 322          |
| Sharon Elwell        | 6th Grade Science                 | 109          |
| Carol Erion          | Chorus                            | 103          |
| Susan Friedman       | English                           | 316          |
| Steve Garman         | Physical Education, Health        | Gym          |
| Laurie Gilkenson     | Drama                             | Theater      |
| Ginny Graham         | English                           | 325          |
| Linda Hardin         | Resource                          | 308          |
| Beth Hayes           | Orchestra, Band                   | 104          |
| Mignon Kery          | HILT                              | 204          |
| Joe King             | Bond                              | 007          |
| Nancy Kinneman       | Art                               | 3            |
| Elly Kluge           | History                           | 305          |
| Ellen Kurcis         | English                           | 310          |
| Dat Le               | Biology                           | 202          |
| Judy Mayeux          | Librarian, Creative Writing       | Library/326  |
| Mary McBride         | Asst. Principal, History          | Office       |
| Aaron McInturff      | Math                              | 302          |
| Randy McKnight       | English                           | 315          |
| Kathy Molina         | 6th grade Math                    | 107/202      |
| Sally Moss           | Physical Education, Health        | Gym          |
| Nancy Oliver         | Math                              | 303          |
| Daysi Palomeque      | HILT                              | 206          |
| Judy Pendergast      | Math, Science                     | 107          |
| Betsy Powell         | Resource                          | 324          |
| Jeff Ring            | Math                              | 313          |
| Bobbi Schildt        | Social Studies                    | 106          |
| Jim Schroeder        | Math                              | 306          |
| Mary Schroeder       | Middle School Coordinator, French | 210          |
| Jim Senn             | Spanish                           | 301          |
| Susan Senn           | Biology                           | 318          |
| Jack Smith           | Physical Education, Health        | 110          |
| Karen Smith          | 6th grade Social Studies          | Trailer 1    |
| Deneen Snow          | History, CDC                      | 309          |

|                |                              |     |
|----------------|------------------------------|-----|
| Dave Soles     | Chemistry                    | 314 |
| Kathy Sypula   | HILT                         | 205 |
| Bill Van Evera | Physical/Earth Space Science | 201 |
| Magda Vargas   | HILT                         | 207 |
| Jari Walsh     | Spanish                      | 205 |
| Caroline Young | French                       | 307 |

### The Staff

| <u>Name</u>             | <u>Job</u>                |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| Patricia Anderson       | Distance Learning         |
| Luciano Baez            | Head Custodian            |
| Jean Broadway           | School Finance Officer    |
| Cathy Brosius           | Computer Guru             |
| Janet Burrow            | Coordinator               |
| Carlos Cisneros         | Custodian                 |
| Suzanne Clark           | School Nurse              |
| Daniel Degracia         | Custodian                 |
| Rafaela Flores          | Custodian                 |
| Nigle Fones             | Cafeteria Manager         |
| Peggy Gaines            | Clinic Aide               |
| Ana Granados            | Cafeteria Worker          |
| Christina Herrera       | Middle School Secretary   |
| Angela Hillman          | Cafeteria Worker          |
| Jodee Jones             | Secretary                 |
| Michael Lee             | Custodian                 |
| Marianne Leverton       | Registrar                 |
| Sue Nachmanoff          | Library Aide              |
| Mary Porter             | Cafeteria Worker          |
| George Sarpong          | Custodian                 |
| Robin Smith             | Substance Abuse Counselor |
| Elaine Waite            | Library Aide              |
| Martiniano Xicohtencatl | Custodian                 |
| Linda Zimmerman         | Instructional Secretary   |

### 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 announced at the beginning of each Town Meeting, but if it isn't for some strange reason, 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, and parents 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.

When interviewing is about to occur, the Head Teacher always posts sign-up sheets for these committees either in the office or on the bulletin board outside the office, but the sign-up sheets can sometimes be hard to spot, so keep your eyes open. Since the committees often meet during the summer, it can be difficult for students to be informed about them and participate.



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.

## Teacher Retirements

The biggest reason why the Teacher Hiring Committee is extremely important right now is the impending crush of teacher retirements that will see between 50 percent and 75 percent of H-B's faculty leave. Many of our current teachers have been here since the beginning of Woodlawn and Hoffman-Boston, and some have already put in over 30 years of service, the traditional amount of time before retirement. Having a faculty so experienced not only in teaching but also in teaching at an alternative program is an advantage that we've enjoyed for decades. As we hire new teachers, it's vitally important that we find people who will enthusiastically support the philosophy and alternative environment of H-B.

Our ever-vigilant head teacher, Ray, has begun the search to find new teachers, looking for those most familiar with the program, especially former students. He managed to lure back Dave Soles. But Ray can't do it on his own. As sad and potentially disastrous as this mass retirement could be, this is a wonderful opportunity for you, the students, faculty, parents and staff that are reading this and will be here, to find a new group of teachers who will embrace H-B, delight in its opportunities, work to eliminate its problems and continue the work started by so many dedicated teachers so many years ago.

Perhaps even more frightening than the retirement of H-B's faculty is the departure of H-B's top three administrators. Yes, we know that Ray, Mary McBride and Mary Schroeder don't look a day older than 30, but surprisingly, we've heard from unnamed sources that in fact the triumvirate is already past retirement age. All three of these administrators have been at H-B since day one, and their loss will make the fragile state of our staff all the more perilous. This is especially true with Ray, who can't find a replacement for himself within H-B's administrative ranks because everybody in it is retiring too. Therefore, hiring a new head teacher will mean a county-wide search and a decision by the School Board, who are advised by Ray and H-B as a whole but who make decisions on their own. So it's essential that the H-B community find replacements for Ray and the Marys, replacements who understand H-B--and that we lobby the Ed. Center for our picks.

## 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 a couple of extra teachers. This system has the major advantage of giving H-B smaller classes while also 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.

Toward the end of each 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, your TA is also the person to help you initiate individualized projects and programs of study in your classes. Our experience though, has been that some teachers here are not entirely aware of all the alternative options available here. They're also often preoccupied with other things. We believe, however, that TAs, if approached by their students to help organize individual projects or studies, will enthusiastically help them or find someone better qualified to help. This is part of what it means to be a TA at H-B. If your TA isn't helping you, talk to someone else, or switch TAs.

## 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 lead 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. For example, at one point, 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 neither group is oblivious to the actions of the other.

We really like parents. After all, they brought us into the world. But they don't exactly fit into the philosophy of a school where students have most of the responsibility and control over their education. While the PAC does many great things (\$\$\$), we believe that they would best serve H-B in an advisory, not authoritative, role.

## 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 and 7 run the risk of earning a mild lecture from their TA, as well as a friendly phone call home from Ray if they are 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 as much as possible. 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 teachers are fairly reasonable and understanding should you have to show up late for class--just don't abuse their 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 them 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 they have not shown up, you can usually consider it safe to assume that your class has been canceled. If the door is unlocked, you may want to write a note to your teacher on the board. 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 of cigarettes 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. Even the upper parking lot. That is the domain of H-B's smokers, who puff away largely undisturbed. Every once in a while though, Ray or a health-conscious teacher will deliver a stern lecture to the smokers, and sometimes the neighborhood police officer will stop by and issue rather expensive citations. 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. If you feel that it is absolutely necessary to your existence to use drugs, then that is your decision. But please spare yourselves and all of us the problems that occur when these substances are brought or used at our school. VSS.

**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 taking a school-sponsored, Town Meeting approved field trip.

**Class Attendance Policy:** Teachers have 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!

**Visitor's Policy:** This has 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 the visitors book in the main office.

**Skateboard/Rollerblade Policy:** Skateboards are prohibited by County law at H-B Woodlawn. Recently rollerblading has become popular again, and there is nothing prohibiting the activity on school property. However, it can be assumed that if you damage some part of the school because of your rollerblading, you will have to pay for it. Furthermore, in the interest of protecting the health and safety of H-Bers and to ensure that young students' brains are not scattered haphazardly on the sidewalk, we recommend that you use a helmet whenever possible. VSS.

**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, we feel that one should feel free to express openly their love of others. Limited public displays of affection are generally tolerated, but aggressive behavior and make-out parties in the hall are somewhat disruptive. Please use common sense, and above all be safe.

**Various Other Rules:** A full listing of all 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. Carolyn Abbate and Eliza Ycas, two former students, have organized the Town Meeting minutes from the last two decades, which should help if a rule comes into question. Other rules, which apply to individual classrooms, are made up and enforced by the teacher that uses that room. There is a perennial debate over whether the library 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, and has matches against local schools on Wednesday afternoons. There are always 5 people (plus alternates) on the team, but they welcome anyone who just wants to come occasionally to play for fun. They can usually be found in Dave Soles' room. If you are interested, contact Aaron McInturff (Room 302) or a member of the chess team.

**Plays And Other Dramatic Events:** The drama program at H-B is extremely active, putting on 8-12 plays per year. One of the best parts of this program is that, except for the Middle School play, the Musical and usually one other production, dramatic endeavors are student initiated and run, with Mike Demick as a very hands-off advisor. This program is a major part of H-B. There are very few schools in the nation that give as much power over their drama program to students as we do here. If you have found a show you'd like to direct, or if you are looking for one, talk to Mike Demick--he'll give you all the information you need. If you are interested in acting in or being a "techie" for a production, or if you simply want to attend a performance, watch the hallways for signs announcing auditions and performances.

**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 35 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 NHSs!. 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. In recent years there has been some grumbling from various students who feel that NHS doesn't fit in with the philosophy of H-B, and some have even proposed starting counter-organizations that would still help H-B and the community through service projects, but would do away with the pomp and circumstance that characterizes the NHS and is generally unnecessary. If you would like to learn more about NHS, talk to Elly Kluge or your TA.

**Recycling Program:** Many years ago, the hallways of H-B were scattered with recycling bins that would be emptied periodically. Their contents were then taken to a recycling center and (we assume) recycled. However, a number of years ago these recycling bins mysteriously vanished. During the 1998-99 school year, recycling at H-B resumed and a handful of very dedicated individuals washed soda cans and plastic bottles every week so that they could be taken to a recycling center. However, the lonely drudgery of washing recyclable items took its toll and the recycling leaders during the 1999-2000 school year discovered that a far more effective method of getting people involved in recycling was the concept of recycling parties. At recycling parties large groups of students gather to wash recyclable items, eat food, listen to music and have a great time saving the planet. If you want to join the excitement, attend a recycling party. If it seems like there hasn't been a recycling party in a while, organize one. Just remember, Recycling is FUN!

**Big Brother/Big Sister Program:** The purpose of the Big Brother/Big Sister Program is to provide each incoming sixth grader with a mentor in one of the upper grades (usually 10th - 12th). Big siblings meet with their sixth graders on an individual basis to help introduce them to life at H-B. Occasional large group activities are also planned and suggestions are always

welcome. For more information talk to Deneen Snow.

**The Gay/Straight Alliance:** The Gay/Straight Alliance was formed during the 1999-2000 school year to help foster an environment of awareness and respect regarding sexual orientation throughout the H-B community. GSA meets on a regular basis to discuss issues and plan events. For more information talk to Laurie Gilkenson.

**Tuesday Society:** The Tuesday Society is devoted to performing community service, although as of this writing it doesn't exist. It was started years ago, thrived for a while, and then dissolved; attempts to resurrect it have been unsuccessful so far. Nevertheless, we think that the Tuesday Society should be reorganized. If it exists when you read this, join it! If it doesn't and you'd like to start it again, go for it!

**Yearbook:** At the beginning of the year, the Town Meeting will endorse one yearbook proposal. Usually the yearbook is organized by a couple of seniors who were involved with it the year before. Most of the time there isn't any question about who will organize 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 meetings when they are 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. Of course, there's the pre-winter-break volleyball tournament, which pits grades against grades and alumni against teachers. Also, a group of students has begun an ultimate-frisbee squad which competes with teams from the home schools, and they frequently participate in more informal games that are open to anyone.

**On Starting New Clubs:** Anybody can start any club or activity that they want. If you're going to be using the school's space, money, time or name, 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. Starting in 1987, each graduating class painted a wall in the cafeteria, but of course walls ran out and classes had to start painting walls elsewhere. 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 and the overwhelming smell of lunches gone by.

The cafeteria used to have a student lounge, which acted as a place for kids to sleep, hang out and play music in, and it was fully equipped with old furniture and a coffee machine.

Unfortunately, the mushrooming population of H-B has meant that space is at a premium, and so the student lounge went the way of many other neat rooms (like the "living room" and cooking area). But if the interest is there, and someone is creative enough, with TM approval, a new student lounge could be found or built. We'd like to see it happen.

The cafeteria also serves food, although its role as meal provider has been in many ways usurped by local restaurants. Originally, the Woodlawn program didn't have a cafeteria, due to a lack of cash. Luckily, H-Bers can now dine upon the same delectable treats students from other schools can. There are soda, fruit juice, and snack machines in the cafeteria that are on all day except for designated meal times. The cafeteria serves breakfast starting at 9 am and lunch starting at 11:30 am. Come prepared, though, as the sight of these prepared foods running across the floor can be quite disarming. Just kidding. In fact, there is generally a nice variety of food available, and from what we're told you can fashion a rather nutritious lunch if you try.

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, Arrowine, Caribbean Grill, Crisp & Juicy, Subway, and Safeway are healthy alternatives that are very close by. 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. There is also a sufficiently equipped weight room (at least that's what the musclebound students who walk out of there indicate) with a few aerobic exercise machines as well. Steve's office, located at the end of the gym nearest to the Cafeteria parking lot, has become a social gathering place in recent years, and you can usually find a sizable group of students lounging, conversing, doing homework and surfing the internet 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. This is also where the person in charge of college guidance and standardized test sign-ups works, so often you'll find frantic, overly stressed juniors and seniors here as well. We recommend being extra kind to Marianne, the registrar, as she is always stocked with an abundance of chocolate. Hang a right as you come through the Main Entrance and you'll see the office.

#### **The Computer Labs:**

One pleasant thing came out of the construction debacle of '95: two computer labs. One, in the sixth grade hallway, has been devoted to middle schoolers, while the original lab on the third floor next to Susan Senn's room has been earmarked for high schoolers. Both places have very nice Dell computers that can easily service student's needs, and the entire school is hooked up to a network, which means that a student can use their personal, password-protected account on any computer in the school. A third, smaller computer lab stocked with Macs is located next to Susan Friedman's room.

Although the high school computer lab was always a place of strong personalities and

rather heated arguments, in recent years there has been a rash of physical violence in the lab, which has caused many of the computer game privileges and other perks to be taken away. Currently there must be an administrator watching the lab at all times, and some disruptive students have been kicked out of the lab for days and even for good. If you enjoy computers and patronize the computer lab often, just remember it's your responsibility to uphold the few rules of the lab and respect the students in it. VSS.

### **The Library:**

The library, located on the third floor, is another popular gathering spot for students. Besides serving as a resource for school projects and a link to the County library system, it also houses a ton of amusingly outdated biographies and an extensive collection of entertaining magazines. The library is also often host to lively debates and animated conversation, which sometimes ends 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 function 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 the Library Staff, who decide what books are ordered. But naturally, 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 several years ago to play classical music in the library at a low volume in order 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 a 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
- The Roof
- Picnic Tables
- Grassy Areas
- Trees
- Empty Classrooms
- Stairwells
- The Gazebo

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

Put simply, this school is way 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. The problem is not new, and has only been getting worse; in the 1979 handbook, it was noted that at 400 students, the school was twice as large as alternative education experts recommended as a maximum.

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. How to fix the problem of a large population has been the subject of much debate ever since the merger, and there are as many different opinions as there are people who will comment on the subject.

The following are the concerns of the '95 handbook authors:

"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. 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."

Now, for our opinion circa 2000:

As far as devolving into two separate schools is concerned, we feel it would cause more harm than good. Having the Middle School and High School together promotes a community among students young and old, and eases what can be an extremely difficult transition from 8th grade to 9th grade. Furthermore, while splitting the schools up would reduce total enrollment, adding 25 students per grade might be as detrimental to preserving the philosophy and fostering alternative educational opportunities as allowing enrollment to increase by the same amount in the current program.

Instead, we recommend that the enrollment of each grade be lowered to around 50 students, something that would require an intense lobbying effort directed at the school board. As long as H-B remains the only alternative secondary program in the County, lowering enrollment will be difficult to accomplish. But there seems to be a tremendous interest in H-B and alternative programs in general, so we think it would be beneficial to create more alternative programs in the County, which would either run along the same lines as H-B or cater to different philosophies. This is the only way that we can satisfy the demands of parents wishing to enroll their students in the program and a School Board that has historically been less than chummy with us, while maintaining the size necessary to the effective implementation of H-B's philosophy.

## 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 either group can use either board. Put your message right below the first 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 at 9:20 am in every classroom except the library, auditorium and stubborn old Eilly Kluge's room. Their existence and length, as well as the jurisdiction of the morning song, are highly contested. To make an announcement, post it on the door of the announcement room, 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.

**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 and don't 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 their 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 throughout 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 you in the right direction.

**E-Mail:** It may not be the easiest way to communicate immediately, but e-mail can be accessed at school by anyone, and less time-sensitive subjects can be explored on the H-B web site or through H-B Talk, a sort of electronic newsletter.

## **Xerox Machines**

Our school has two large, expensive and fickle copy machines. The one with the face taped to it is affectionately named Big Bertha, and the other is her clone. Students are allowed to use these machines, located in Linda Zimmerman's room at the end of the main office hallway, as long as Linda or a teacher isn't using them. Theoretically the machines should be used only for "school related business," but there's nobody looking over your shoulder so you can copy pretty much anything you want. However, if you Xerox too much or anything crazy (like body parts), Linda will object. The Xerox machines we currently own are new, and have lots of great hi-tech features that will make your life easier if you can figure out how to use them. Linda 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
- 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/7-11
- 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
- Do your homework (ha!)

## 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, allocation 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 can be found in the yearly budget which comes from the Superintendent and is approved by the School Board. For the 2000-01 school year, H-B Woodlawn was given 43 full time positions. [note: 1.0 = one full time position, .2 = one class]

**Departments:** The allocations process begins in January or so 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 that 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.)

**Course Selection:** During a TA period sometime in February, students go to their TAs 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 faculty. In years past, the allocation committee meeting took place after school on an early release day. The result of this was that in addition to parents not being able to attend in significant numbers because of work commitments, many students were not able to come either, mostly because of transportation problems. A few years back, by Town Meeting mandate, the allocation committee took place during school hours, but we have regressed back to the early release meeting time. We strongly believe that having the allocation committee meet during a school day is a wise choice, since the decisions made at that meeting have an impact on nearly every student.

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 without being changed. 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 that 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 seven such requests.

**Allocation Town Meeting:** An all school Town Meeting is called for, and held in a large location (the gym or cafeteria) after the allocation committee makes its recommendation. 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 for 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 could never happen.

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.

## Arena Scheduling

Arena 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 figuring out what courses you want to take, and giving your 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 kids 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. On the day before arena scheduling, you meet with your TA to try to fit your classes into the nine possible blocks in some reasonably acceptable way. This is sometimes difficult in the upper grades because people who take sports cannot use G or H blocks and others will find little offered then. On the day of arena scheduling you go down to the cafeteria sometime before your arena scheduling period starts. Here a lottery occurs to determine your place in line for entering the gym, where teachers await with sign-up sheets for every class. This lottery is all about luck, and sometimes you'll see those who got the first place in line cheering and those who got #72 crying (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 sheets for the courses you want and write your name on them under 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.

## SOL's

While we try to explain situations and give opinions in a non-partisan manner, there is no getting around a little politics when it comes to the SOL's, affectionately nick-named the "Shit-Outta-Luck's." We sometimes forget, in the oasis of Democratic values that is Arlington, that we live in Virginia, where toothless old men still whistle Dixie and the state government is very Republican. In keeping with GOP doctrine that advocates more standardized testing and "back-to-basics" education, Governors George Allen and Jim Gilmore instituted a system of "Standards of Learning" tests that students would be required to pass a percentage of in order to graduate from high school. The only problem was that these tests were written by mentally deficient, constituent-pandering politicians who overlooked the fact that many teachers and students like to participate in educational exercises that don't include excessive fact-memorization at the loss of actual discussion and intellectual interpretation. Many opportunities for alternative learning experiences have been lost because teachers are increasingly forced to teach towards these tests. In addition, because these "end of the year" tests are given in May rather than in June when school actually ends, teachers must cram curriculum into preceding months at the expense of other, more interesting and in-depth topics.

In case you haven't figured it out, we don't like the SOL's. Unfortunately, there is little that we can do about them. So, we must be ever more vigilant in promoting the ideas of individualized learning and alternative educational experiences at H-B.

## 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 its also seen as a sort of cultural right 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. Thanks to the SOL's and several other new and ridiculous standardized tests, there are several different sets of graduation requirements, depending on what year you will graduate. This will hopefully iron itself out by 2005. If you have a question about your graduation requirements, talk to somebody in the office or your TA.

## **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 a few people per year do this at H-B. The fourth year can be used to enter college early, to work, to travel abroad, or to do 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 in three years that 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 a diploma. Many colleges will accept qualified students in their junior year of high school, and don't require you to get a 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 currently live 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. As we see it, this is both good and bad. It's good in that students at H-B are continuing their education. It's not 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, it also doesn't seem like a great strategy for getting into a school. 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 best educational 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) was an approximately three hour period every other Wednesday that was used for alternative educational experiences. It was created several years ago for the purpose of having a time period when field trips could be held, outside

speakers could be brought in and people (parents, teachers, or students) could teach mini-workshops on subjects that aren't normally taught. The EAP was also the ideal time for trying out ideas for possible outside teacher courses.

EAP was run by the EAP Committee (open to any interested students, teachers, or parents), which took ideas for activities and tried to find sponsors. Technically, everyone was supposed to do an approved activity during the EAP, and theoretically, everyone should have wanted to, since they could do anything that was approved by the EAP Committee, and there were tons of great things to do. The EAP Committee printed up a list of activities before each EAP, and mounted it on the bulletin board that's in front of the main office.

As long as we have been at H-B we have never heard of this EAP actually happening. However it seems like a wonderful opportunity for exploring ideas that you don't usually get to dive into in regular classes. It would be yet another unique facet of H-B and would provide another outlet for creative ideas and alternative thinking. We'd love to see it started up again.

### **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 during G and H blocks. So those in grades 9-12 effectively 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 students at other schools do 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 conferencing 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. The issue of H-B's starting time will probably change at some point, as the school board has been studying whether to start the high schools at a later time (somewhere around 8:30) because of research that shows teenagers have sleep patterns which cause them to drool excessively and nod off during the wee hours of the morning, when most schools begin. If the home schools' starting times are changed, then our start time will probably be affected also. One option may be to move H-B's start time to 8:30 as well, eliminating the sports time problem.

But in the more immediate future, the most sensible option to reclaim some class time 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).

## Celebrations

Celebrations are a very happy part of H-B Woodlawn. H-B usually has a lot of dances during the school year, sometimes featuring various bands. Interestingly enough, H-B had dances featuring several formerly semi-well known bands. Black Flag, The Teen Idles, The Toasters, Faith; they all played here before they were big (?). In recent years, H-B has also had ska dances, swing dances, poetry slams and talent shows.

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 farce of the traditional prom than anything else. Tickets were three dollars, and dancing was in a big tent out on the grass in back of the school. 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. A newer tradition has been an all-school festival in the early spring, complete with moon bounce and face painters. 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 Student Advisory Board 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 10-12 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. One member of the SAB is picked by the other members to sit in on School Board meetings.

Naturally, there is some debate over how much the School Board actually listens to the SAB. Furthermore, there is some animosity towards the entire process, as the elections seem like a popularity contest and sometimes those who win don't necessarily attend meetings. Actually, from what we've heard anybody who shows up to the SAB meetings and calls themselves an "alternate" can participate with no problem.



## 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 (\$315 in summer) and avoid paying lots more for an equally or more worthless private class. Plus the county Driver's Ed teachers are required to be somewhat sane, while the private ones can fall asleep during your driving test (we know).

**Sports:** Lots of H-B students go over to the home schools to play field hockey, tennis, run track or do any of the other athletic diversions organized over there. If you don't mind having your education here be 2/7 or 1/4 shorter as a result of missing the last one or two blocks of the day, go for it.

**Libraries:** They're much larger than the H-B library, but you probably have to be quiet in theirs

If you want to graduate traditionally, keep in contact with your home school to participate in their 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 too 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 attached to the big Office counter. 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:** As stated before, everybody is given a name and a password to gain network and internet access. Of course, by now if you don't have an e-mail address, then you are banished to the thoroughly teased group of luddites that includes Ray Anderson and Elly Kluge.

**OFFICE PHONES:** If you don't abuse the privilege, and you remember to be nice to the vicious Office Staff, then you can probably use the office phones for serious local calls.

**PAY PHONES:** There is a pay phone just outside the main office, as well as one in the lobby of the auditorium. Gone are the good ol' days when "Saved by the Bell" wasn't in permanent reruns and pay calls were only 25 cents, so today you must fork over a quarter and a dime to place a call. This price gives you unlimited time on a local call, so go ahead and use it for purely social phoning.

## 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 they should also be 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. National government occurs 10 minutes away! Kind of neat, when you think about it.

The CAS coordinator, Janet Burrow. Even if you don't want to do an apprenticeship, the resources she 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 9:00am and 9:20am and leave here around 4:05pm, 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 and 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 is currently the amiable southern gentleman, Dr. Robert Smith. If you see him walking around our school or in Arlington, say hello. He doesn't bite. Invite him to participate in our activities and programs. and you might just create another ally for H-B.

The School Board has a long history of trying to shrink, expand, or close H-B Woodlawn and its predecessors. In fact, in 1994 there was a proposal to significantly increase the student body size of H-B. This upset oodles of folks, mainly because they didn't think anyone over at the Ed. Center, particularly the School Board, had an idea of what our school is and how it works. Now there are a couple of current and former H-B parents on the Board, which makes us feel much more comfortable with our relationship to the Board. However, because the School Board acts as a unit, rather than individually, and because it still tends to sway before the wishes of the rest of Arlington, we worry about the power it wields over the fate of our school.

# 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 rather than whether you tried hard or increased your knowledge in a subject.

There are a few ways to fix this, 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 they are 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 or credit/no credit system. This is done often in independent-study classes or when students have to schedule two classes in the same block and can only attend one class occasionally. However, pass/fail or credit/no credit can be used in any class, regardless of the subject. If you're interested in these systems, talk with your teachers or your TA (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, are 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 focused solely on 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" ten 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. 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 they are teaching you something pointless or doing something wrong, you should talk to them 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 we 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. Unfortunately, doing this simply perpetuates the problems that the teacher has and makes future classes have to bear the same ineffective or bothersome teaching style. 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 assist you with assignments and projects. In many classes, teachers will probably have some "lab" time, or the equivalent, during which they are 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 they are 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 or someone involved with the National Honor Society. They should be able to find someone who will

help you 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 all the material on the syllabi, which are 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 some 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 lots of kids 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. 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 test date. In addition, virtually all classes meet four blocks a week (Calculus meets five and the AP Sciences often meet eight blocks per 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," 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 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. We like it that, unlike most other schools in the nation, at H-B we have no GPA

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 that 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 much credit will appear 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 a department other than the one you want credit in. Go for it!

## Classes Outside H-B

If 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 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 real 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 than 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: \$39.45.

George Mason has a far better range of challenging classes, but is a long commute, and has a hefty price tag: \$469.50 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 feature cutting edge topics in science or history, though, and often have famous people come and talk on some of the nights.

There's also a free Carnegie Science Lecture series, which is accessible by the Dupont Circle Metro station if you don't mind taking a long walk. Talk to Dave Soles for more information on this.

## Senior Projects

Once upon a time, English students not taking AP English in their senior year could have the choice of taking a regular elective or doing an independent project during the fourth quarter. These were called senior projects, another snappy title. After awhile, the English department decided to have AP students do senior projects as well, after the AP exam. Senior projects generally consisted of art, writing, movies or anything else anyone wanted to do as long as they could tie it in some way to English. Some past senior projects have been directing a play, doing a presentation on rape, planning graduation, writing a guide to running the prom, creating

original artwork relating to specific pieces of literature and creating murals around the school.

During the 1999-2000 school year, a student by the name of John Mortenson came up with an alternative senior project that could supplant all of a student's classes for the last six weeks of their senior year. Basically, students would design a project that they would focus on for five hours a day, or 25 hours a week. Each student would have a faculty advisor to help organize the project and monitor their progress. Of course, the worries of AP tests were taken care of, as the first few weeks of the project period could be spent studying for AP exams. Some of these alternative senior projects have included visiting D.C.'s landmarks and doing creative writing about them, writing a children's book on U.S. government, learning how to fly, learning Italian and revising/updating the Underground Student Handbook (wink!).

### **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 to 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 the next year. Unfortunately, the next year it again did not occur, and since then it has never materialized. We would like to see this class be formed, either in the form it was designed in or in another, it really doesn't matter. What does matter is that students gain an understanding of the background behind H-B and what it means to have an alternative education.

The two biggest issues in forming the class are finding a teacher and finding a time for the class to take place. Preferably, the teacher would be someone with an extensive background in alternative education who would be able to conduct a fairly broad survey of the subject. One idea would be to have seniors teach this course, or possibly use a teacher that is already here. Besides that, finding a way to cram a required course into the school's ninth grade schedule will be the real challenge. One possibility would be to hold it during the one P.E. block that students have free each week, but that would mean that students would only be able to meet nine times in one quarter. Another idea is to create ninth grade English electives, and make this class one of them. The class could also be spread out among several grades, but it would have to be tailored for the other age groups. Despite the class's troubles and obstacles, we think it's a great idea. Someone just has to have the drive to implement it.



## In Closing...

### The State of H-B Woodlawn (We're not talking about Virginia)

At the moment, we're not terribly pleased with the state of our school. There are some things that make it indubitably better than traditional schools, but many of these have little 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 begin to function as it was initially envisioned, and as we think a school should function.

### Where To Go From Here

Well, for starters, you've read this handbook, and we'd like to think that 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 self-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 to 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. *Good luck.*