



# The High School View

The High School View is staffed and prepared entirely by students from the Martha's Vineyard Regional High School, and published on their behalf by The Martha's Vineyard Times, with the generous assistance of the sponsors whose names appear below.

## Student bridges demolished



PHOTO BY BRAD ANASTACIO

Freshmen Michelle De Geofroy and Margaret Joba-Woodruff put 270 pounds onto their bridge in the PAC.

BY ADDISON GEIGER

Before exploding under the weight of a tall pile of steel plates, this year's winning entry in the high school's Linguini Bridge contest, a one-pound pasta bridge, held 990 pounds.

Ninth-graders Mya Houston and Benjamin Davey built the first place bridge for Ken DeBettencourt's freshman math class. Students construct the bridges from a one-pound box of Prince linguini and a bottle of Elmer's glue. Before the day of the contest, the bridges are individually tested with a 25-pound weight. If the bridge holds this, the bridge has earned a grade of a B on the project. Later, during the contest in the school's Performing Arts Center, more weight is

added in a series of rounds until the bridge breaks.

Mya said, "It took an insane amount of patience. Sportsmanship was a big part of it too." Mya and Ben worked for 40 hours on their bridge.

The bridges had only a few building restrictions. They must weigh a pound or less and fit basic structure guidelines. Otherwise, bridges can incorporate any building techniques. From honeycombs to triangles to arbitrary placement, bridges varied drastically in style and shape.

Second place was awarded to Connor Downing and Anders Nelson, whose bridge held 945 lbs. Two groups, Courtney Howell and Olivia Jacobs, and Jack Reagan and Mason Jeffers tied for third place. Both bridges held 675 lbs. **MSV**

## Teacher studies teaching

BY OLIVIA JACOBS AND KRISTINA WARD

Student teacher Jason Neago joined the school's science

department staff recently. Mr. Neago said, "I was in the military and read a book called 3 Cups of Tea by Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin. The book talked about education in the Middle East. Instead of focusing on education there, I focused it here. My mom was a teacher for 35 years. Seeing her impact on her students made me want to become a teacher."

Those students and teachers at the school who have met Mr. Neago seem to agree that he is an asset to the school. Sophomore

Katrina Lakis said, "I like him. He's nice and has a good teaching style. He's very easy to learn from. And he makes things easy to understand."

Sophomore Hanna Kim said, "He changes the class by including everyone and making it fun."

In Elliott Bennett's Biology class, Mr. Neago sometimes takes over to teach a lesson as part of his student teaching responsibilities.

Sophomore Noah Kleinhenz said, "He's enthusiastic. He makes me enjoy going to Biology class."

Biology teacher John Nelson, who also has had opportunities to interact with Mr. Neago, said, "He's a great guy with a great heart and a great mind." **MSV**

## Commentary

### AP course limit questioned

BY JULIA COOPER

Putting a limit on the number of Advanced Placement (AP) classes that students can take puts a limit on the potential for students to grow intellectually. The regional high school administration aims to restrict the number of AP courses that a student can take to three per year beginning with the incoming class of 2017. This decision will have a negative effect on the students.

Students who graduate from the high school have a record of attending prestigious institutions. Countless MVRHS graduates have attended Ivy League schools or schools of similar prestige. These applicants were accepted into these universities because of the competitive nature of their transcripts, a nature that would have been significantly hindered had limits been placed on the number of AP classes they could select.

Applying to college today is harder than it has been in

the past as acquiring a college degree has become integral to entering the American, and global, workforce. And, thanks to the process of globalization, students are now competing with the entire world for admission into America's top colleges and universities. In the application process, students are able to set themselves apart by undertaking the rigorous workload of several AP classes.

This past summer, I attended an information session at Williams College, at which the speaking admissions officer asked a student in the audience this question: "How many AP classes are you taking your senior year?" The student responded that he was taking the maximum allowed by his school -- two. The admissions officer said that even though the student was taking his school's maximum number of AP classes, there are students applying to Williams who take three, four, five, six or even seven AP classes in their senior year, and they are better can-

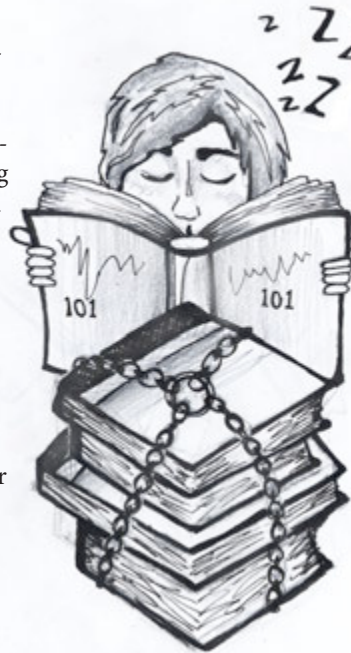
didates for admission than someone taking two.

To say that colleges only look at how competitive one is in one's own class and community, and not with respect to all other applicants, is a flawed concept given the globalization of education. And to argue that there is zero correlation between the number of AP classes a graduating student has succeeded in and the caliber of the institution they attend for college appears equally problematic.

Having said this, it is necessary to emphasize my phrasing in the previous statement. Students need to succeed in AP classes in order to dramatically bolster the competitiveness of their applications. To be successful in an AP class requires a strong work ethic and a powerful mind. Students with these attributes thrive in such an environment, while others may struggle.

While some students find themselves overwhelmed with work when engaged in several AP classes, other students are able to learn and achieve high marks with ease. These students can thrive in a college-level envi-

ronment. Also, the school's accelerated math, science, and language programs often direct students into AP level courses. Further, the school



ARTWORK BY SAMANTHA VALLEY

has no difficulty-based divisions of classes within the history program, so students seeking the challenge of a college-level course head into the AP program.

Another argument put forward in favor of capping AP classes is that students

stack their grade point averages (GPAs) by taking many AP classes. But the same arguments are not heard about students who stack honors classes, outranking students taking CI-level courses. And while students may fill their schedules with AP classes with the intent to boost their GPA, many students are enrolled in AP classes because they enjoy the subject matter or wish to study a subject with the rigor of a college-level course.

Also, it's not as if students in AP classes all gain instantly-higher GPAs. It is not an unusual case that a student taking more AP classes sees his or her GPA go down as he or she has difficulty balancing the demanding courses. Additionally, achieving a higher GPA as a result of taking an AP class can serve as an incentive for a student to challenge him or herself.

The administration wants to restrict the number of AP classes a student is allowed to take because students who load up on AP classes are often under a great deal of stress. But who else is under a lot of stress? Multi-sport athletes and students who engage

in several extracurricular activities. Is the school aiming to restrict the athletic or musical potential of students? No, only their academic potential. This is unfair. There are ways of relieving stress that do not involve limiting course availability.

Additionally, students are made aware by the school's guidance counselors of the work that AP courses require. It is not the school's fault that students are deciding, of their own free will and with full knowledge of the potential for accompanying stress, to take difficult courses. In fact, no one should be found at fault; the school is creating a range of learning opportunities by leaving courses unrestricted. Students are making their own decisions and they are learning from the results.

A key aspect of our school's mission statement is that students should "Aspire, collaborate and engage." Imposing limits on AP classes will render these terms meaningless. **MSV**

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