

# THE PHS EXPERIENCE

## PUTTING THE PEER BACK IN PEER GROUP

HENRY BARTMAN '17

"I'll definitely be a cool Peer Group leader," I remember thinking to myself often over the years. Ever since my time spent in Peer Group during freshman year, I have pondered about the kind of leader I would be and how I would relate to the freshmen and make the entire experience worthwhile. I had so many plans and ideas for how differently I would do things: more games, fewer rules, and maybe even allow the freshmen to do what I had so desperately wanted to do — play on their phones. I was sure that I would never become another cog in the wheel, making freshmen's Wednesday afternoons tortuously laborious. Now that I have spent a year as a Peer Group leader, I have assessed those expectations and learned what kind of leader and person I am capable of being.

Peer Group, like so much else at PHS, has shaped me into who I am today. To have such close contact to seniors as a freshman — something that I otherwise would have lacked — gave me someone to look up to and ask for guidance. The friends I made gave me friendly faces in an otherwise scary hallway. And as a leader, having responsibility over 13 kids for an hour every week is a valuable experience that few other high schoolers get the chance to have. Having this program and all that it entails as a bookend for my high school education has served as a powerful

demonstration of the ways in which I've changed — for I have been very different as a leader than I was as a participant.

The biggest issue I've had with the program — both when I was a freshman and when I was beginning the process of becoming a leader — was the constant babying, verging on belittling, of the freshmen. The notion, which I derived from the simplistic programs that we were supposed to deliver verbatim and the constant fretting over every detail of the group, seemed to be that freshmen were not high schoolers like me, but instead an entirely different subgroup of moody, weak children. The solution to this supposed inequality of maturity was the imposition of rigid, dry, and boring group exercises designed by an outside organization with little ability to customize to fit the needs of the group. When we strictly followed these assignments, the freshmen were bored, apathetic, and inattentive; as was I. But when we decided to go off script, to simply talk and engage with the freshmen not as superiors to subordinates but as genuine peers, what we got out of the session increased exponentially.

As someone who has gone through the program twice, I am fully aware of the need to have some sort of structure and organization within the sessions, but there simply must be room to breathe — to pave our own way.

## AN ODE TO MY LOCKER

MADDIE DEUTSCH '17

2-165. 11, 21, 13.

Nine o'clock on a warm night in September 2013, I lay awake in my bed repeating these numbers to myself. Got any guesses as to what they are? Well, you're probably right. Head to the 160s hallways and try it out. You'll open up a now empty locker. No books, no pencils, no calculators. Nothing, except one thing: my office pillow that lets me comfortably nap on desks at any given moment. If you haven't figured it out yet, I'm a senior. That locker once held five two-inch binders, a lunchbox, a field hockey stick, and a photo of me and my friends at the beach. Not anymore. That was a long time ago.

George Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison.

That's all I really remember about sophomore year, and that's all anyone would find in my locker that year. One BIG binder. APUSH was hard, man. One year of high school is not enough to prepare you for those DBQs. It happened though. It all happened. Goodbye, underclassman me.

26. Then a 28. Then a 31. Then a 31 again.

I never thought I'd ever write these numbers anywhere public, ever. Those numbers haunted me throughout junior year. I thought they meant everything. I let my 600-page ACT prep book sit in my locker and every day during my free period, I would sit outside my locker, 2-165, and I would answer pointless questions and fill in pointless bubbles. Guess what? Those numbers mean nothing. They did mean something once. But not anymore. You know what does mean something? My essay. I am freaking proud of the essay I would go on to type outside that same locker. Words are much more fun than bubbles. ABCDE. ABCDE. No, thank you. Junior year was rough and it was tough and it sucked, a lot of the time, but what else are you going to do? You just gotta take a seat by your locker and do your best. Trust me, you'll understand this in June of your senior year. It's cliché, but everything happens for a reason. It all happened. There's nothing to do about it.

51 points, nothing, and may I please go to the bathroom?

Science classes should only count as one absence on lab days. What is the point of marking one person absent twice? All that does is make my mom think I'm not going to graduate. 51 points means one more absence or three more tardies. How do I decide? I don't. I appeal. And sit outside my locker. This time with friends, not a laptop. During class. Oops. How can you blame me? I don't have work. I don't have anything. Maybe I read a chapter every now and then in a book. Or I complete three derivatives to get one 5/5. But that's it, really. As a consequence, you can always find me in the hallway. Any given period I will be wandering around the square of whichever floor I'm on. I do this because I know I will see at least two of my classmates doing the same. Nothing is fun when you share it with everyone. As in doing nothing is fun. Everything is fun. It's all happening!

So here I am. But not for long. Goodbye, Princeton High. Thanks for teaching me postulates and theorems. And el subjuntivo y el indicativo. And the anatomy of a cat along with what you find inside of its stomach. Actually, no thank you for that. Thanks for teaching me how to write a rhetorical analysis and that the United Kingdom is a parliamentary system, and how to serve a volleyball, and that traveling is the only way to ever really learn world history.

I won't be back anytime soon so feel free to give my locker to the next scared freshman. It's about time that locker got a makeover again.

## HALLWAYS

NINA SACHDEV '17

My first experience walking through the halls of PHS was like attempting to solve a Rubik's cube on my first try: utterly complex. I found myself struggling to locate the mysterious 200s hall and the old gym amidst a sea of backpacks and unfamiliar faces. After frantically making my way through the main intersection of the first floor, I discovered the library, or the "Learning Commons," named for its role as a rather unconventional space for lunchtime conversation and collaborative working. As a sophomore new to PHS, I really had no idea about the depth of passion, intellect, and drive that was present around me. It was liberating and exciting, and yet, overwhelming; I often felt like I'd never be able to catch a breath as I sped through the hallways each day, constantly forcing myself to figure out what it is that I'm "good" at.

Now that I'm a senior about to venture off into a world of the unknown, I occasionally reflect on my once-puzzling hallway experiences at PHS. These hallways are still full of noise, but I can now put names to the voices — the voices of the people who have allowed me to develop conviction in my opinions and ideas. These hallways are what connect the classrooms — the powerhouses of my inspiration and creativity. These hallways are now an outlet for frustration as I walk

my way through a seemingly-unsolvable homework question. These hallways are the home of my friends and me during break as we exchange and recount our latest stories of the day. These hallways were my witnesses when I discovered my passions and what I value the most. These hallways will be the first and last places at PHS that my feet touch as a high schooler — the last space to shelter me before I attempt to find my way through even more intricate and maze-like hallways in college.

It's only a matter of time before I become an alumna of PHS, which sounds so foreign as I repeat the word over and over again in my mind. So, I'm going to take my time and admire the hallway decor while I still can: club interest meeting posters, murals and paintings, signs in foreign languages, student council campaign posters, glass cases of trophies, and rows and rows of deceptively uniform lockers, each one belonging to a student whose personal lessons learned and memories made from PHS are just as important and valuable as my own. The simplest details of these iconic hallways might mean nothing to many, but to me, they represent the passage of time throughout my years at PHS — a time spent learning, laughing, wondering, and appreciating this school and the person it has allowed me to become.

## SENIORS:

WRITE AN EIGHT-WORD-OR-FEWER DESCRIPTION OF YOUR TIME AT PHS.



"The exhilarating feeling of running through the halls to the library to print a paper you really should have printed last night is the epitome of the organized PHS student's lifestyle."  
- Noah Danieck '17



FINISH READING THE ODYSSEY

DROP A CLASS



TAKE U.S. HISTORY... TWICE!

graphic: Caroline Tan

APPRECIATE THE SMALL PLEASURES

FINALLY FINISH YOUR FIFTY HOURS

LOUDLY IN THE LIBRARY

FALL IN LOVE WITH THE GREAT GATSBY

GET A JOB!

SUFFER THROUGH A WAVE OF STANDARDIZED TESTING

FINALIZE PLANS FOR NEXT YEAR

PROM! AND ANYTHING AFTER

PONDER HOW SMALL THE FRESHMEN ARE

FINISH YOUR LAST ATTENDANCE APPEAL

FINISH GRADUATION

"I think there's a fear that you have as an underclassman of skipping class, but when you become an upperclassman you realize [the threats are] all just a myth."  
- Zoe Staggs '17



"[Eating on the lawn] makes you feel hopeful again, because it reminds you that the school year is almost over and that nice weather [actually] exists."  
- Darya Tahvildar-Zadeh '17



"When you commit to a college, it's terrifying because you know you're going to a certain school for four years, but it's liberating because it's the culmination of all of your success[es] in high school."  
- Hannah Davies '17



"The Great Gatsby was one of the more awesome books I've read, and studying it in the classroom added a lot to my understanding of it. That's one of the things that's really cool about high school and education in general — they give people the ability to understand beauty."  
- Marc Roberge-Pike '17



photos: Aaron Wu



photo illustration: Caroline Tan

IF YOU'RE WONDERING WHY THERE'S NO COLLEGE SPREAD THIS YEAR, CHECK OUT PAGE 8 FOR AN EXPLANATION FROM THE EDITORS!



SIGN UP FOR 10,000 CLUBS (BUT ONLY JOIN A FEW)

START PEER GROUP

MAKE YOUR WAY TO CLASS WITHOUT GETTING LOST

FRESHMAN ORIENTATION START

PROCRASTINATE

# PHS MILESTONES