

TODAY'S YOUTH

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program, initiated in 1980 as a cooperative effort between the high school and local trades. As more and more students expressed a desire to become involved with professions, the program evolved in 1996 from School to Work to School to Career. Program director Debbie Dooley explained that students earn grade credit for each academic block they spend interning by learning about positions that interest them, such as becoming lawyers, teachers, photographers, interior designers or hair dressers, as well as in fields including health and mental health care, the restaurant industry and real estate. Students preferring the trades are placed through Construction Technology instructor Chuck Colley.

There are 13 different athletic programs at the high school, including cheerleading. Many sports field both junior varsity and varsity teams. In the fall there is golf, soccer, football, field hockey and cheerleading. During the winter students can choose between swimming and diving, gymnastics, basketball, hockey and cheerleading. Spring selections span baseball, softball, sailing and lacrosse.

Sports are not of interest to everyone, however, so the high school provides a number of clubs and organizations, including an art club. Noting that many mainland schools have eliminated their art programs in favor of teaching mandated tests, Leone believes Nantucket is fortunate to still have an arts curriculum as well as an extra-curricular arts club.

"Art teaches you to be introspective; to think for yourself," he said.

There is also ballroom dancing; band and chorus; chess club; dance club; Dance Dance Revolution club; diversity club; drama club; environmental club; French club; the Gay and Straight Alliance; high school yearbook; Natural Helpers; New England Math League; the Peer Mediation Program; physics club; SADD (Students Against Destructive Decisions); ski club; Spanish club; student council; surf club; and volleyball club.

High school Principal George Kelly said except for possibly adding an auto club, rock band competitions or other choices not yet included among either the community or school rosters, he believes families, the community and the school system have done a good job of trying to present activity options for youth during an era when families are busier outside the home than in previous years, and kids may need extra assistance learning how to cope with life's challenges.

Noting that the overall high school population has not fluctuated tremendously in the last few years — from the mid-to upper 300 mark in 2004-2005 to within 420 in 2007 — and that in most instances class sizes have not ballooned far beyond the system's target goal, Kelly does not include academic demands or an uncomfortable school environment as particularly remarkable stressors for local teens.

According to data included in the report of the visiting committee when Nantucket High School was reaccredited in November 2005 by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, NHS students tended to rank slightly above average in performance on standardized tests. Regarding MCAS tests, NHS students in 2004 as profiled in the most recent statistics at the time of reaccreditation, scored above the state average in proficient and advanced levels in math and just below the state average in advanced-level English but above it in proficiency. SAT scores in that

period came in slightly above national averages.

"It's hard to speak for a whole school. Every kid is an individual," Kelly said of the perception of academic pressure. "But problem solving is an important skill — social problem solving," he continued. "I think we need to deal with how we deal with failure. A [term] we are using in education today is 'developing resilience' in kids so they are able to handle pressure. I don't think that's something that happens automatically. It may have been something that happened outside of school [in the past], but now maybe it is something the school needs to address."


Leone agrees that today's youth seem ill-equipped to face failure, yet it is something he views as vital. He does not mince words with his students, which has earned him

their respect.

"Thirty-five years ago we had backup from parents. Now kids are saying, 'I don't have to do this.' You're not supposed to make the child feel badly because of a bad grade, but I think they have to learn to fail to be a success. You have to know what your failings are to get there," he said. "There is little self-respect these days. We have [a school] adjustment counselor — we never used to need one.

"I don't know what we're missing. The community has so much it's incredible. It's up to the kids to take part. To me, education is the key, plain and simple. It is the key

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What are we doing for school vacation week??


Vacation Destination Days at the NHA!

February 25th – 29th, 1-4 P.M.

Program is free, funding provided by the Nantucket Golf Club Foundation

Look for more information next week!

NANTUCKET HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION



13 Broad Street
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March 15 is the deadline to submit applications for Nantucket Arts Council 2008 Grants & Scholarships!

Application forms are available at the Atheneum and the Nantucket High School office or at www.nantucketartscouncil.org.

For more information, contact info@nantucketartscouncil.org or (508) 325-8588.

Send completed applications to: Nantucket Arts Council, P.O. Box 2176, Nantucket, MA 02584

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