

COMMUNITY SCHOOL

“Satisfaction is a Function of Participation”

Founded in 1971 as an alternative to traditional education, the Community School is a highly selective three-year program whose mission is to encourage students to take a more active role in the learning process. Discussion-based classes stress individualism, student participation, and mutual respect. In addition to academic courses, students meet daily to plan events that build leadership skills and a sense of responsibility to a community. Seniors in the program are offered an opportunity to plan a semester of travel or career exploration in a contemplated field of study as a practical “hands-on” experience.

CLASSES

“...a place where you can be a student and a teacher at the same time...”

Small, heterogeneous courses in English and Social Studies bring together sophomores, juniors, and seniors, enabling students to relate to and learn from each other in a much closer way than is possible in the traditional classroom setting. Though the setting is nontraditional, the classes are intellectually rigorous and demanding. The program’s selective application process ensures that sophomores are able to handle 12th grade material and are committed to “learning for learning’s sake.”

Because classes are small, they rely more heavily on student participation than on teacher lecture. Students are encouraged to go beyond the traditional and often suggest topics, books, and ideas for class study. In English, an AP seminar is offered for juniors and seniors who want to supplement their curriculum with college-level material.

Very often a Community School student will receive “P” or a letter grade without a numerical equivalent. The absence of either a letter or number is not a reflection of lack of quality work, but rather a statement of commitment to the spirit of non-competitive participation.

STUDENTS

“...CS has made me become friends with people I would never have met otherwise...”

One of the difficulties in defining the Community School is determining what C.S. students are; they range from athletes to scientists, musicians to scholars, school officers to poets. Perhaps the only characteristics common to all students is a willingness to take chances and to seek alternatives. A C.S. student is a dedicated and committed learner and an active member of the community.

The Community School prides itself on maintaining an open and diverse atmosphere, not only in ideas but in people. Students typically walk out of C.S. having made friends with classmates with whom they would not necessarily have associated.

LEADERSHIP

“...a place where you and your ideas are taken seriously...”

The entire C.S. meets daily for one period to create and coordinate events, activities, and field trips designed to build community and promote teamwork. This planning fosters leadership, as students are given the opportunity to take on responsibilities for projects they have initiated.

For instance, students break into committees to organize a three-day trip to a camp in upstate New York. These students are responsible for a myriad of activities, from assigning rooms that encourage new

friendships, to preparing and running a community-wide talent show. Through this process, students learn to be respectful of diverse ideas within a group while effectively communicating their own convictions. Unity resulting from not only planning these events but participating in them strengthens the student's ability to accept divergent viewpoints.

FIELDMESTER

"...discovering you in the real world..."

One of the unique features of the Community School program is the fieldmester. During the last semester of their senior year, students are given an opportunity to experience the "real world" by interning in a field of their choice. In the past, students have participated in archaeological digs in Spain, helped restore a building in France, assisted in schools and in special education programs, worked on research programs at major hospitals, interned at television and radio programs, apprenticed at theater companies, etc. Each year students are encouraged to develop a unique program geared toward their own interests. Students keep a journal of their activities and return in mid-May to share their experience with the rest of the Community School.