

Education At Andover: A Collaborative White Paper
Niswarth 2013

Table of Contents

1. Brief Introduction

2. The Assignment

3. The Proposals

--Katherine Vega

--Thea Rossman

--Thomaia Pamplin

--Ryan Miller

--Iman Masmoudi

--Marion Kudla

--Peter Fanikos

--Hirsh Chitkara

--Djaveneh Bierwirth

4. Resources

A core component of the Niswarth pedagogy is *praxis*: an ongoing cycle of action-reflection-action-reflection. We ask students to use bits of scholarship (articles, theory, discussions with scholars) as one kind of context for this process of discovery and understanding. We visit a number of schools (public, non-profit, independent) and we meet and talk with dozens of educators and students.

As we learn about big questions of education and development in India, we invite the Niswarth students to reflect on their own educations, at Andover and beyond. We asked them to consider the differences between “schooling” and “education,” in a residential setting and beyond. And then we asked them to act on those reflections, by contributing to the strategic planning efforts now underway at Phillips Academy.

This document collects the hopes of several individual students who share much in common and yet remain diverse and distinct in their experiences and voices.

We asked the students to stay focused on larger aspects of vision and principle, rather than on the minutiae of keeping school. We gave them a sample white paper to look at, and compact framework for developing a proposal of their own.

The assignment asks them to use the experiential learning of the Niswarth trip and their experience as students at Andover as their “research,” and to eschew further formal research.

Respectfully submitted,

Rajesh Mundra, Niswarth Program Director
Catherine Tousignant, Niswarth Faculty

August 2013

The Assignment

PART II: LOOKING OUTWARD

Please write a thoughtful, honest, well crafted white paper (6 pages) in which you offer a set of program recommendations to the administration, faculty, and Strategic Planning Committee at Phillips Academy. These recommendations should derive specifically from your learning and experience in the Niswarth Program, focused on changes you would like to see in the education at P.A.

The lens: How has the Niswarth Program shaped your ideas, hopes, expectations, and understanding of education in your own community at Andover?

The structure:

- An introductory paragraph that identifies, explains, and justifies the main theoretical framework that informs your recommendations.
- A list of essential skills students should develop in the 21st century
- A list of three things you would like to see be part of the Strategic Plan, or an Andover education thereafter
- An elaboration of each recommendation: describe and explain each item, offer examples
- A section titled “Why _____ ?”: contextualize, connect, and justify the value and significance of your recommendations. If appropriate, identify and explain core problems.
- A section titled “The Challenge Ahead”: identify and explore the difficulty of making these changes at Andover, and recommend strategies for working through those difficulties. This section may need to address both philosophical and concrete issues.
- Any necessary Appendices, as determined by the content and references in your paper

Key Terms:

White Paper: a research report written and disseminated as part of a policy debate. Note that your “research” in this case is your three-week experience on the Niswarth Program. By its nature, this paper will offer the chance to reflect on experiential education as a form of research in itself.

Education could include schooling (infrastructures, systems, pedagogy), community (people, values, mindsets, relationships), values, language, opportunity, and all aspects of program (on campus and off).

List of Essential Skills for 21st-century Education: do not attempt to write a comprehensive list. Rather, focus on the skills that your Niswarth experience has brought to your attention.

Things you would like to see be part of the Strategic Plan, or an Andover education thereafter: these items could be aspects of core mission to privilege, new ideas or structures that require a change, concepts such as “consciousness” or “gratitude,” pedagogical elements such as “creative transformation” or “dialogue,” specific program components like courses or off-campus travel, etc.

You can find the **Andover Mission Statement** here:

<http://www.andover.edu/About/PAToday/Pages/StatementofPurpose.aspx>

The **2004 Strategic Plan** had one single recommendation: to reaffirm our longstanding commitment to educate youth from every quarter: <http://www.andover.edu/About/PAToday/Pages/StrategicPlan.aspx>

I came to Andover at the tender age of fourteen knowing nothing about elite education, or elite anything, really. Three years later, I have grown to love Andover. It has given me incredible opportunities, and for that I will always be grateful. However, even though my love for my school is great, I am not blind to possible areas of improvement. Recently, I participated in the Niswarth Program, a service-learning program in Mumbai and Ahmedabad, India. The trip focused on education, and as a result of the perspective it gave me, I am no longer able to view Andover in the same way I did a mere two months ago. This is not a bad thing—rather, my experiences in India were beautiful and eye-opening, and have given me both the opportunity and knowledge necessary to write this paper. I believe that Andover as an institution is exceptional, but that it can and should improve every year. Every class, including my own class next June, should leave an Andover better than the one they arrived at, and I believe that in developing the new Strategic Plan with certain ideals in mind, this can be accomplished.

I am a child of the new Millennium. I do not remember the first time I used the Internet, or the last time I mailed a hand-written letter. I grew up in a world where I could reach people, information, and ideas from across the world in a matter of seconds. This is a beautiful world—an imperfect one, but one that I would prefer to live in given any alternative of the past. Some of the skills that students need today might have been unfathomable when some of our teachers were born. Of course, some of these skills are technological—we need to understand the principles behind the technology we use every day, and we need the patience to fix things when they go wrong. But other skills—people skills—are just as important. I think most of all, we need to learn to be more accepting of others in a world where people are slowly, finally realizing that identity is complicated, and no one can fit nicely into a socially-acceptable box. Humans are not binary creatures—we exist on spectrums, and the sooner people start to recognize this, the faster we can stop our prejudices and start to solve all the other problems facing our world. I think that on the whole, Andover is teaching us this lesson very well.

Even since the fall of 2010 when I first arrived, Phillips Academy has already made great strides in improving the quality of the Andover experience. I have seen all the dorms get Wi-Fi, a multitude of new clubs and student groups, and increased effort in attracting youth from every quarter, as the last Strategic Plan stated it would try to do. However, I have also noticed a number of things that I did not see as a ninth grader, perhaps out of naivety, or perhaps because everything was simply so new. I have noticed a disparity between socioeconomic classes, tension over gender equality forty years into co-education, and, above all, an Andover Bubble that will not burst. Of course, none of these things are ideal. But all of them are fixable. In the new strategic plan, I would like to see Phillips Academy reaffirm its commitment to educating youth from every quarter by reducing divisions between the socioeconomic classes, recognize the issue of gender inequality and pledge to combat it, and offer students more ways to bring the theoretical and hypothetical teachings of the classroom into a real-world context.

1.

As a student on full financial-aid, I feel very lucky to be receiving such a good education for free. During my time in India, I saw true poverty—more poverty that very few middle-class Americans like me could probably imagine. I already knew a lot about my fellow students on full financial aid and their opinions on education because of Outliers Book Club, our affinity group. However, I knew very little about how the truly poverty-stricken receive an education. I applied to Andover by using my computer and driving to an interview and mailing in a thick application packet. In India I saw children who had access to neither internet nor car nor printer. Observing their plight really put things into perspective for me. If good people and NGOs were working to provide even the most basic education for children in the worst circumstances, then Andover, already committed to need-blind admission, can work to create a smoother transition for its students receiving full and partial scholarships.

While in India, I met many people who influenced my opinions about access to education. Towards the end of our trip, we visited an NGO called *Akanksha* that provides education, creative outlets, and internship opportunities for underprivileged students all across Mumbai. Rohit, an employee, said the following words, which have really made me think about my Andover education, and education in general: “Imagine an India where education is not for a privileged few but the right of every child.” Of course, the same logic cannot be easily applied to a school with a rigorous application system. However, Andover has already taken the biggest step—making the Andover education theoretically accessible to every student who chooses to apply (I say “theoretically” because of obvious barriers lower income students might face in exploring schools). Another lesson I learned on the Niswarth trip was to be intentional with my language. The phrase “need-blind” connotes that Andover as an institution believes that all students should be treated equally regardless of their family’s income status. However, I firmly believe that Andover should take students’ financial background into account once they matriculate. In other words, Andover should have a “need-blind” admissions process, and a “need-sensitive” educational experience. This could mean many things—a pre-freshman year summer orientation, internship opportunities, and other programs that give students who need it not only generous financial support, as the school already provides, but also cultural and social capital.

2.

Beginning in winter term, the gender equality debate, which often lurks but rarely seems to rear its head, returned as the annual campaigns for student council president began. It was an interesting debate—were there fewer girls in high student council leadership positions because people did not vote for them, or because few girls actually ran? I do not know the answer. It is probably a little bit both. But while the cause of this remains uncertain, it is still important for both the student body and the administration to keep talking.

I met a woman in India named Malvika. In comparison with a lot of other people I met, she had a success story. She was a pre-school teacher—college educated, intelligent, and charming, she was in a love marriage and had two children at the age of 24. She also had a lot to say about the situation her students faced, and it was not a happy one. Why send girls to school if they will marry at 17? Malvika knows the answer. Educating girls helps empower them later in households where their husbands, probably by an arranged marriage, often abuse or do not respect them. An education can give women the tools they need to move to get better jobs, move to better areas, and ultimately, maybe, and hopefully, lead better lives. It is not an easy journey. Women like Malvika are fighting a battle in a country of 1.6 billion with centuries old traditions regarding a proper woman’s behavior. Still, she tries to help in any way she can.

At Andover, an undoubtedly, if unofficially, socially liberal school, it is easy to dismiss our gender inequality problems when so much of the rest of the world presents much more severe and noticeable issues. It is true that Andover’s gender inequality issues pale in comparison with the struggles of women like Malvika. But problems are still problems, and the Andover community should continue to try and fix them. At the very least, we need to keep the conversation going.

3.

The importance of travel abroad experiences is not understated at Andover. In fact, travelling is encouraged. Programs like School Year Abroad and summer travel programs such as Niswarth are frequented by Andover students. The majority of Andover students come from families that can afford these programs, and Financial Aid helps students who cannot afford these programs to go on at least one during their Andover career. The result is a student body that is in generally at least somewhat well-travelled, at that is a very good thing. However, travel is not the only way to promote out-of-classroom learning. Andover students need more experiences that give them real-

world perspective. The town of Andover, while a very nice place to live, learn, and work, does not provide a very diverse backdrop for our education, and the administration could help solve this issue in the new Strategic Plan.

Niswarth was a transformative experience. Something about going to another place and learning about the people who live there, people who are simultaneously so unlike me and so the same, made me learn in a way that reading out of a textbook never could. Textbooks cannot convey a woman's smile as she tells you her story. Textbooks cannot accurately describe the smell of a slum where a million people live in absolute poverty. And no teacher, no matter how good, and perfectly describe these experiences as every student would live them his or herself. Students need to be exposed to things that put them out of their comfort zone, as far away as India or as close as Lawrence, Massachusetts.

Why Socio-Economic Equality?

My Andover scholarship has given me everything I have ever wanted or needed and more. For the rest of my life I will be thankful for everything Andover has given me. But I know for a fact that even as a full-financial aid student, I have come from a better financial situation than many of my peers. No two situations are the same. And when we use terms like "need-blind," we lose those distinctions that make us all unique. By recognizing when students may need extra help beyond monetary support, Andover can truly be equal-opportunity without being unfair to any students. Social and cultural capital will be the currency students of the 21st century need moving forward—a good education is no longer enough to be successful. The sooner students are exposed to social and cultural capital, the sooner they will be able to adapt and take advantage of them.

Why a Commitment to Gender Equality?

I will admit that it took me almost two years to realize that there might be gender inequality issues at Andover. When rumors began to swirl that a student presidential candidate lost because she was female, I was not sure what to think. She may have been less qualified, or over-committed, or simply less popular; I did not know her well enough to decide for certain. But the mere idea that the candidate might have lost because of her gender is indicative of something disappointing and very, very real. The gender debate rages on not because of an over-reaction on the part of the girls or blatant sexism on the part of the boys. The debate rages on because we do not live in a post-gender society, and as much as we would love Andover to be a utopian environment, it learns from what it sees. If Andover firmly decides that it will make an effort to create a true meritocracy, then all future Andover students, girls and boys, will no doubt appreciate it.

Why Out-of-Classroom Learning?

I will be the first to admit that my opinion on this matter is biased. In three years, Andover has paid for me to go to Russia, New York, and India. Every Tuesday, I work with children from Lawrence. I know these experiences have positively affected me—I have been a witness to my personal development. While I have learned so much during my hours—years, even—in the classroom, I have learned nearly as much from my short experiences in other places. I do not say this to insult any of my wonderful teachers who have taught me so much; rather, I say this because it emphasizes just how much the outside world can teach us. The Andover Bubble is a commonly accepted phenomenon that does not have to—and should not—exist. If we could take some time—perhaps during a short December term—to explore the rest of the state, or country, or world, we could increase our knowledge tenfold while also continuing to become "good," as our Statement of Purpose asks us to.

The Challenge Ahead

I know that the new Strategic Plan is, well, a strategy, and not a wish list. I know that my suggestions may be idealist, and that Andover could and probably would fulfill the wishes of every person writing a Niswarth paper if it

had the funds. I know that the next ten years will be full of economic ups and downs, and that at many times issues more important than a December term will be up for debate. Still, while monetary issues might be a problem, I think that most people at Andover, the students at least, will approve of the ideals behind these proposals. The challenge, then, will not lie in trying to convince others that these measures would be good for our community. The challenge would lie in making room for them while also trying to improve the school in countless other ways, as I know the administration and trustees will.

Thea Rossman

Andover is approaching a time of change. With a new head of school, a changing administration, and this committee convening to develop a strategic plan for the next decade, the institution is primed for a reexamination of its role in a rapidly developing world. Instead of using this as a time to look forward and out, I would like to encourage the students, faculty, staff, committee, trustees, and administration to use this opportunity to look backwards and in—into ourselves and our bubble. At times during the Niswarth program, I found myself questioning certain aspects of this institution that I always have been and continue to be a strong believer in. I compared the Riverside School's vision of leadership as an action with Andover's club culture, leadership positions, and the empty resume padding that often comes with it; Riverside's view that every kid has the potential to be a Riverside kid with Andover's mantra of exclusivity; Virin-bhai's life path to fulfillment with Andover's unintentionally rigid archetype of success; the astounding humility of Jayesh-bhai with Andover's constant culture of praise; true life through non sibi with our often empty words; and the Cathedral students' acknowledgment of privilege or the Akanksha kids' hard, tireless work with the entitlement of a complaining culture and the blissful ignorance in philosophies of earned privilege. I wondered whether the Andover model was the right educational model for students in the 21st century.

But, as I looked deeper into my school, I realized the unintentionality of many of the aforementioned phenomena. I read in the Statement of Purpose, the Phillips Academy Constitution, and other writings about ideals of awareness, critical thinking, and humility, of shaping adolescents into conscious global citizens and aiding them in their development with the goal of a successful, fulfilling life, of creating conscious global citizens, and giving students the ultimate gift of a remarkable education. As we approach this time of change, Andover must take a moment to stop and reflect, to reexamine the core pedagogies of the school, decide whether they are relevant to an excellent education, and then ensure that the school is doing all in its power to live by them.

Essential 21st century skills

Like any high school, Andover works in coordination with the formation of adolescence to shape its students into the citizens they will become. A Phillips Academy education provides its students with what is less a simple list of skills and more a comprehensive set of qualities, traits, and abilities that will not only impact what we do in life but also how we do it. Thus, to provide only a list of essential *skills* for 21st century education would be simplistic; life requires a certain way of being, a method of navigation through all of its aspects that cannot be explained in a list of learned talents. The skills that are essential to modern education are ways of navigation; a navigation of one's own personal, internal development, and of a complex world.

We are all humans in the process of becoming.

This saying never rings truer than it does during the teenage years. While the external world changes around us, or perhaps more accurately the way we perceive it does, we are simultaneous in a constant state of internal fluctuation, doubt, and discovery. It's a beautiful, natural, and crucial stage of life; one must learn to not only guide her ship in the right direction but also find her way among the complicated maze of its riggings. One must develop a strong sense of self and an ability to examine the external world and also the internal as well. This requires an emphasis on action, reflection, and awareness. Education, in and especially outside the classroom, plays a central role in this process.

Navigation of the world is intrinsically tied to the navigation of one's self, as the processes of understanding the internal and the external are at least fundamentally connected and at most one in the same. Children on the brink of adulthood embark on a journey of finding the relationship between the self and the world, figuring out where they will go and how, and what they will do in the process. An education must nurture the goodness, nobility, passion, understanding, humility, critical thinking, and awareness that are essential to life in a complex, connected world. Rather than only cultivating the skills that will be advantageous in an existing structure, students must know how to question the current state of affairs. Rather than acting as a machine that regurgitates new adults into a system, a school must encourage them to be aware of their environments and live through the praxis: a constant cycle of action and reflection. Andover must strive to encourage students on a journey to become conscious citizens, aware of the subtle workings of their own environments, possessing the skills to think critically, and living through humility and the motto of "non sibi."

Strategic Plan

Young minds—how susceptible and tenacious they are of impressions, evidences that Youth is the important period, on the improvement or neglect of which depend the most important consequences to individuals themselves and the community.

-Phillips Academy Constitution, 1778

The purpose of an Andover education is to teach its students in core academic courses, but "more especially to learn them in the great end and real business of living" (Phillips Academy Constitution, 1778). The school works in a partnership with its students to help them discover and grow, following the liberal model of education: which, ideally, "produces persons who are open-minded and free from provincialism, dogma, preconception, and ideology; conscious of their opinions and judgments; reflective of their actions; and aware of their place in the social and natural worlds" (Wikipedia). Faculty is constantly there to "support students in their personal, social, and intellectual development" (Statement of Purpose, 2000). In its students, the school strives to "promote a balance of leadership, cooperation, and service, together with a deeper awareness of the global community and the natural world" (Statement of Purpose, 2000). The school challenges students to be in a constant cycle of action and reflection, to always look inside themselves and at the world around them, "in mind, body and spirit to see beyond themselves and to go beyond the familiar; to remain committed to developing what is finest in themselves and others, for others and themselves" (Statement of Purpose, 2000).

In order to design a Strategic Plan for Andover, the committee must make an intentional effort to know the school more deeply than by observations and preconceptions. The members must start from zero, building up a foundation that begins with the most basic pedagogy of the school. The approach must rest on three very simple questions: What are the core principles of Andover? Are they relevant to the values, essential skills, and characteristics of the modern world and the community? And, are we doing everything in our power to uphold them? If the answer is no to either of the last two questions, then the current pedagogies must be changed or the community must make an active effort to move closer to whatever Andover ideal is outlined.

In the coming years, Andover must make a commitment to humanization through an active cycle of awareness, critical thinking, and humility. In many ways, the community already embodies these missions, but we can and should make an active effort to move away from the places where we have gotten lost and move further toward these and other core principles.

Andover must make a commitment to help students on the journey to become conscious, mindful, and aware citizens. It is essential for members of the community to know and understand the fundamentals of the world around and inside them, to possess a basic knowledge of current world issues, understand aspects of diversity, and acquire a simple familiarity with the workings of things such as the government and the economy. The school already makes efforts to educate students through the curriculum, PACE, CAMD, the Brace center, P.E., and dorm discussions, but it can do more to give students the basic knowledge they will need to navigate an increasingly diverse and complex world.

In addition to a commitment to awareness, it is the fundamental goal of Andover to provide students with the tools and consciousness to think critically about their environments. This already occurs in the curriculum, particularly through the Philosophy, English, and History departments. But the school should make a more conscious effort to burst the Andover bubble by incorporating critical thinking and awareness as crucial and central elements of its method.

The commitment to consciousness and thought should come through the form of more social education, formal or informal. PACE cannot cover all that it truly needs to in one term, and neither can house counselors, faculty, or student organizations. Efforts should be made to nurture awareness, critical thought, and understanding of complexities surrounding race, gender, sexual orientation, class, religion, personal relationships, health, sex, current events, politics, and anything else that will lead to a more complete and inclusive conception of the community, personal relationships, and the broader world. Faculty and administrators could try to place more of an emphasis on social education through the curriculum with academic classes, PACE, or with the addition of more programs like Niswarth. Or its inclusion could occur more subtly with a promise of dialog. Faculty, students, and on-campus organizations could encourage conversation in and outside of the classroom, in dorms and advising groups, by organizing events, or simply by bringing it up over dinner.

The third commitment that Andover must make in the coming years is one to humility, goodness, and a way of being that more fully embodies the motto of “non sibi.” This could come in the form of systematic changes, such as reflection within community service activities and the deemphasis of leadership as a concrete position as opposed to an action. Or it could simply occur through a change of conversation, through an emphasis of small acts of selflessness, or perhaps a reexamination of cultures that embody praise and superiority. Andover must reaffirm its promise of “non sibi,” making it an integral part of the culture until it seeps naturally into every area of life.

The school must make a commitment to “bursting the Andover bubble” physically and mentally, perhaps through off-campus community service, work, research, and study abroad opportunities, social education, and other programs that promote civic awareness, critical thinking, and goodness. Andover must remember to never stop at preparing students for professional lives, but continue to dig deeply into all other aspects of life as well.

Why?

To answer this question would be to explore what type of person Andover wishes to create. I would argue that the perfect Andover student is not someone with high grades, varsity letters, and a plump resume, but a student who is aware, thinks for herself, and lives with humility and goodness in all aspects of life.

Awareness:

As global citizens in a diverse, complicated world, we must understand what is around us. The ability to *see* is astonishingly precious and scarce, and is a skill that should be cultivated. We must be in a conscious, constant journey towards understanding ourselves, the world, those around us, and the dialectical relationship between the three. How can we navigate a job market blissfully unaware of unconscious biases such as race discrimination? How can we absorb media without acknowledging its skewed representation of both genders? How can we shop in stores without understanding the complex system of where things come from? How can we blindly enter a structure of inequality, or vote in a coming election, or hold positions of relative power and decision-making without knowing how it all works?

Critical thinking:

But just knowing things is of little use. It is essential to be able to take what one knows and truly think about it, forming new connections rather than piggybacking on someone else's, seeing and thinking through a lens of reason and compassion rather than indoctrination. This is a skill that is fundamental to all aspects of life, professional and personal, internal and external, leading and following.

Humility:

The Phillips Academy Constitution reminds us that "knowledge without goodness is dangerous." But knowledge is dangerous without a lot of things: care, awareness, solidarity, selflessness, understanding, kindness, graciousness, love, and humility, to name a few. The alumni that Andover produces should not be observing, analyzing machines, nor arrogant adults who have lost the ability to listen, nor calculators that can only comprehend numbers. Andover should aid its students in the journey of becoming conscious, compassionate human beings blessed with the privileges of an excellent education, students who use their education and privilege to improve world and themselves. By seeing, thinking, and trying to understand, all through the lens of compassion, love and humility, perhaps we can achieve this dream.

While the committee can and should make efforts toward broader, more systematic changes, the answer does not have to be solely an institutional one. Members of the community could focus on deliberate, subtle, cultural trends that will push our mindset in the right direction. Teachers have nothing to lose by simply holding back a comment about how superior we are to our hometown counterparts, but an environment without the constant showering of praise could make huge differences in humility. Older students could deemphasize the hierarchies of the dining hall, encouraging cross-grade interaction and negating seniority privileges. Small efforts to raise awareness among faculty about student encounters with all facets of adolescence could put them in a better position to help, mentor, or support if the occasion arises. Anyone can bring up a small fact about current events in passing conversation, taking a few seconds of time to puncture a tiny, temporary hole in the bubble surrounding our campus. A lot of small changes under the conscious umbrella of one commitment are easy and can have a lasting impact on the overall, often subtle culture of the school. Just being conscious of what we want to do can impact our behavior in crucial ways, impacting the behavior of those around us, and then impacting the community. It is a simple change of conversation, being the change you want to see in the world in the most local, basic sense.

The Challenge Ahead

The culture of Andover is created unintentionally by the community and facilitated purposefully by adults. This means that, while any assembled committee can attempt to direct the community philosophies, it is ultimately in our

hands to shape. The administration can try to deemphasize resume padding, negative competition, and excessive praise and encourage an environment that fosters discussion, promotes reflection, and works through humility, but the community may not respond genuinely to these efforts. We can participate in required community service and sit through an hour of reflection and discussion time, but no one can guarantee that it will have meaning. We can attend PACE class every week, but it may not be anything more than a nuisance that takes away a free period. We can attend dorm meetings at night that tackle gender issues, but we may spend the whole time thinking about an assignment we have to complete for the next day. The administration can encourage faculty to facilitate discussion in dorms, but it might be hard to know what individual house counselors are saying and how they are saying it. And what about those on campus who don't live in dorms? The school must dig into all aspects of life to spark change, focusing on subtle and drastic alterations at every scale.

Another difficulty comes in the obvious form of money and time. While programs like Niswarth, independent projects, and increased attention to social education could be invaluable for personal and community development, the school may not have the resources for everything. This is where choices must be made. For anything that money is spent on, we must ask ourselves if and how it supports the school's core mission. If it does not apply to the essential principles of the school, then either these principles must be redefined or the funds must be relocated.

Thomaia Pamplin

I will be starting my fourth year at Phillips Academy in less than two months. I have never been more questioned and challenged in my life any place other than Andover. Being there makes me ask questions: questions to myself, my peers, my family, my church, to almost every aspect of my life. Many of my friends back home are going to college next year. I have known Daion Larmond for 16 years and since she is leaving in two weeks she told me, “Thomaia, I feel like my life is truly beginning now.” She is leaving home and comfort. And through Phillips Academy, I left home and comfort at age fourteen and in a way, my independence or ‘beginning’ as Daion said began there. Because Phillips Academy has such a profound influence and effect on its students it is necessary that it is the best school it can be. And on the Niswarth Program, there were many lessons taught and learned but three main ideas stuck with me: intentionality, honor, and redevelopment. For the rest of this paper I will explore these ideas and recommend ways to incorporate them into the ever-changing education Phillips Academy.

Essential skills students should develop for the 21st century:

Decisiveness, Appreciation, and Constant Improvement

- **Intentionality:** I have a few friends who went on the Niswarth program a year before me. No matter what I say my intent was when applying to Niswarth, I think my main motive was to be able join their conversation. I have an open mind. I allow things in, I let things happen, so I decided to apply, and if I got in great, if I didn’t it wasn’t meant to be. The one factor that I forgot in this matter was choice. Even if I did get in I needed to decide whether I would go, but in my head if I got in I was definitely going. That’s how I view things; part of the reason for that is of my religion. I was told from a young age “God makes things happen. And if it is His will then it is written [in stone].” So I let things happen to me, and I would “go with the flow” as some people say. My ideology has changed, now I am aware and try to apply intentionality in my actions. “Be intentional,” something I have heard so often on this trip. In a one-on-one discussion I had with Mr. Raj Mundra, he gave me what I thought to be one of the most powerful pieces of advice I heard on the program. He suggested than rather than letting things happen and “going with the flow,” that I should begin to make conscious decisions with intention. For some people this is an ordinary practice, but for me it’s not. Many people my age are still with parents or in secondary schooling and what happens to us is based on what a parent or teacher decides. I was so used to thinking that things happened for a reason, and what is going to happen will happen and that I have no control over the matter. So this idea of ‘being intentional’ instead of waiting for something to happen was quite revolutionary for me.
- **Broadening the definition of success at Andover:** India is the first country I have ever been to outside of the United States. I have traveled so many different types of places in the U.S from Rocky Mountains and the Teton valley to dense New York City and Boston. But I have never been to another country with another language and non-Americans. Despite the drastic differences between America and India on sanitation, government, religion, and so much more. In a lot of ways America is more advanced, but in one important way I question whether we are. And that way is in spirit. Yes, Americans have lots of patriotic pride. We have won revolutions, been on the winning side of world wars. We have conquered and achieved. We reverence George Washington and Thomas Jefferson and other great thinkers and warriors. While driving on a highway in India we went under an overpass. Underneath, overpasses in Houston are sometimes tiled with vibrant colors, but most are bare or graffiti-stricken. But on these walls was the face of Gandhi and on the currency was his face again. I admire that India gained its independency through peace. I like the idea of honoring peace and non-violence rather than conquering and fighting until you win. A country that puts a man who represents peace and non-violence on their currency and on their street walls seems to be founded on a strong idea. Of course no country is perfect and just because Gandhi is on the

street walls does not mean that there is no crime and no hate, but it is the idea that has so much value. From this I learned the importance of ideas and spirit of communities.

- **Redevelopment: Creating better structures not new structures:** Whenever I think of changing a system for the better I think of new development. I think of completely taking out the old system and putting in a new one. On this trip I have learned the importance of redevelopment, the importance of acknowledging an existing structure and making it better. I think this is so much more useful than creating new things. For example, redevelopment in education would mean going to existing schools and developing new and better ways within the current system rather than competing with them by building new schools.

The Application:

Applying Intentionality—too often we allow things to happen to us, we go with the flow which makes it hard to understand what we really want to do. A way that we get stuck in this type of rut at school is through requirements. Some students by senior year know their interests and can plan their courses accordingly, but there is still a substantial amount of people who do not. Putting an emphasis on passions is needed or at least allowing students to try different things in order to know what they are passionate about. To go three years still confused on where a student's interest lies sets up for more difficult college application process and senior year. At the end of each year students meet with advisors to discuss the courses they wish to take the next year. My recommendation is to have a meeting between student and advisor focusing on the past year, the student's strength and weakness, which class(es) they enjoyed the most, and choosing at least one elective based off that joy or passion from the previous class(es). Advisors may do this already, but I wish I could have started this process earlier, the process of looking deeper into my courses and in order to decide based off of my performance and my passion. This meeting between student and advisor is an example of how effective dialogue is. Instead of an advisor doling out advice or a student just stating what they want to do, this meeting allows discussion and problem solving. In Component 2 of the Final Report of the PA's 2004 Strategic Plan, the first point and action for Curricular Innovation and Program Flexibility was this:

1. *"Revised diploma requirements, giving students significantly more flexibility in the completion of introductory diploma courses."*

The revision of diploma requirements and the flexibility is great, but without awareness and use of that flexibility by students, it does not function. So in order to follow this point more accurately, I think we should make teachers and students more aware of how the flexibility of our courses also requires more intention in our choices.

Applying the Broadening of the Definition of Success: What gets rewarded and why? At the end of the year we have an award ceremony. The awards are for athletics, academics; some are even separated by gender. It is the last all-school meeting and every time I leave the chapel on that Wednesday there is a mixture of joy for our award-winners and a sense of inadequacy or failure for our non-winners. The same people get the same rewards and it's just a cycle of watching the same event each year. Our whole year accumulates to 40 people getting rewards out of school of around 1200 people. We are all rewarded at the end because we all made it. Yet that is lost between all the great awards and certificates. So what do we honor and how? There are not many awards on character, art, or musicianship. The award ceremony at the end of the year is a part of tradition; it comes from a time when awards needed to be given as incentive. But as we grow as a school, it seems that awards no longer need to be the incentive for being a hard worker or a good student.

Applying Redevelopment (Building better structures not new structures): One thing I found most remarkable about some of the corporations we went to in Mumbai and other cities, was the process these places took to better their community. An angwadi is community center for women and children in villages. Setco, near Ahmedabad, went into certain villages and either rebuilt or started to work inside these angwadis. Angwadis are funded by the government and sometimes the minimal effort is given to make these community centers functional. Many

corporations have a responsibility given by the government to help communities around them. Setco was remarkable because of their complete investment into this responsibility and their ability to work with communities, to understand their needs and provide them. Setco did not give a certain amount of money and move on; they rebuilt and created stronger foundations in these communities. The same can be said for another program we worked closely with –The Akansha Program. Akansha began as a separate program but now they implement their teaching styles into a few government schools with plans to spread. Instead of creating a new school they work within existing schools to make them better. Akansha and Setco did not tear down one system to build another one. How can this work at PA? What problems do we have that we look for an outside source instead of an inside solution? I do not know. But that is my next suggestion: to solve problems within current systems, to not make a solution out of nothing.

So what this boils down to is: intentional decision making, the ability to rebuild, and the ability to be motivated without a selfish incentive.

Why Redefinition or Character Building:

Why not external service to the school, solving problems we can fix that deal not with mindset of the community but with physical issues of the school? Well, because internal service is so important to everything external. My recommendations are not completely meant to fix things but they are meant to strengthen us and to better prepare students for the world.

Intentionality: not only makes actions purposeful but also meaningful

Broadening the PA definition of success: Creates a more diverse base for finding those intentional actions

And Building off of Current Structures (redevelopment): Is a process, a “how,” or application for these two things.

The Challenge Ahead:

Changing a mindset always takes time; sometimes it takes generations to actually change. The difficulty with changing a mindset will be identifying what we do to enforce our current mindset and how do we change the goals to create a better one. Since our school is so old and prestigious we have a very traditional way of doing things, the way we think has been enforced for centuries with a few changes along the way. So the physical, concrete challenge is finding a way to bring these things into our curriculum and the philosophical challenge is finding a way to encourage certain thinking without being close minded or forceful. For the physical issue I suggest that towards the end of our first year, every student and academic advisor have a one-on-one meeting focusing completely on what the student thrived in or what the students wish to continue to focus on. Identifying these things or being aware of our standing academically will help students make intentional choices with their studies throughout their years at Andover. For the philosophical challenge ahead, I recommend changing the way the school orients some things especially the goal-set mentality. That may sound slightly hypocritical “be intentional but don’t have goals” but that is not what I am saying. The philosophical challenge is more difficult to tackle because the challenge lies in the reason for doing things rather than the actual things we do. That change will come more slowly than the physical change and it will only change by altering the things that we recognize as success. Why do we not give an award for character? Or art? Or musicianship? Why do we not recognize those things? Why are the awards only about grades and sports? Why do we need to be rewarded in the first place? Can we not do well without a reward or is it that important to recognize a job well done? Maybe it is, but if we recognize a well done job we need to recognize a variety of well-done jobs.

My time at Phillips Academy has been the defining four years of my life so far. On my trip I learned “in order to be the change, we have to be changed,” so change inevitable and I hope that my recommendations will help in Andover’s change.

In a 2009 TED Talk, Kiran Bir Sethi, the founder of the Riverside school in Ahmedabad explained the pedagogy of experiential learning and service: “if learning is embedded in real world context, that is if you blur the boundaries between school and life, then children go through a journey: ‘aware’ *see the change*, ‘enable’ *be changed*, and ‘empower’ *lead the change*.” This paper appeals for the integration of learning at Andover with real world experiences, to foster learning that is embedded in meaningful personal experience. This report builds on three weeks of experience with the Phillips Academy Niswarth program in Ahmedabad and Mumbai, meeting with a diverse array of students, teachers, and leaders at schools and Non-Government Organizations (NGOs). Experiences with the Riverside School, Akanksha Service Learning Program, and the work of educational theorist Paulo Freire inform this report’s three recommendations for the upcoming plan: *reflect*, *experience*, and *connect*. Increasingly, while technological competencies function as a necessary tool, the skills we need to educate for the 21st century are skills of problem solving, critical thinking, and connection. These skills support the Niswarth program’s mission to, “bring people and ideas together.”ⁱⁱⁱ Through elements of experiential learning and reflection this report seeks to encourage elements of Freire’s, “creative transformation.”ⁱⁱⁱⁱ Through the following recommendation this report hopes to shift the student conversation at Andover about education from one of achievement to one of personal, intellectual, and cultural growth.

Essential Skills for the 21st Century

Connection- the ability to introduce oneself, network, and build relationships through conversation and face to face interaction

Critique- the ability to give and receive critical feedback in educational and professional settings

Presentation- the ability to engage in dynamic public speaking with comfort in order to present ideas, places, or projects to a wide variety of audiences

Praxis- the ability to pair the cycle of action and reflection with the process of educational inquiry

Observation- the ability to form observations with impeccable attention to detail, without judgment, and without jumping to interpretation

Teaching- the ability for students to in turn express, impart, and share acquired knowledge effectively and comfortably at home and abroad

Awareness- the ability to critically observe and reflect on the systems and the social, economic, political, etc. structures surrounding a given community

Expression- the ability to reflect, communicate, and share personal experience with honesty and sincerity through writing and conversation

Reflect- Design new structures within Andover's academic and residential programming to reflect on intellectual and personal growth.

Praxis, a continuous cycle of action and reflection should be integrated into the daily life of academics at Andover. After completing a project or before beginning a paper, teachers and students in dialogue should contemplate the 'why' and 'so what' of their educational endeavors. A cycle of action involving presentation, lecture, and discussion, followed by reflection helps students grow with the meaningful process of praxis in their academic routine.

As it exists today, the advising system functions more as an administrative necessity rather than a meaningful faculty-student relationship. To help guide personal and intellectual growth, Andover should establish a system of faculty-student mentorship to reflect on learning and personal experience in informal conversation at least twice a month. In order to truly reflect on a term's worth of intellectual growth, every term's report card at Andover should include teacher feedback, not simply a number grade.

Experience- Establish new avenues for learning to take place outside the immediate Andover campus.

In order for students to apply and gain knowledge beyond the context of an Andover classroom, Phillips Academy should establish off-campus relationships. With the wealth of creative establishments, scientific institutions, and businesses that surround the Boston area, Andover should explore opportunities for experiential and service learning through a network of partnerships, internships, and work opportunities. These opportunities should not remain isolated to summer experiences but instead integrated into the weekly academic schedule. These new partnerships could be treated as a sixth course or seminar that meets once weekly for an extended period on a given afternoon.

Andover should embark on a pilot exchange program with select international schools with transferable tuition so that Andover students have access to learn in a variety of settings. The existing experiential and service-based Niswarth and HUACA programs offer unparalleled educational experiences at a High School level; along with academic exchanges, these programs should be further developed as a model for new national and international travel programs at Andover. Finally, every student should be required to engage in a community service program every term. This requirement does not intend to force Andover's students to engage in service unwillingly, dedicated service cannot be forced. This requirement endeavors to be remove Andover students from the isolation of campus life and to engage in relationships outside the immediate Andover community.

Connect - Establish new connections within the Andover community among departments, students, faculty, staff, and between academics and extracurricular activities.

To foster fractal thinking, thinking at, "several scales at once," Andover must forge new ties between academics and extracurricular activities, along with new connections among different academic departments.^{iv} Andover should seek to expand its interdisciplinary course offerings, broaden the range of existing symposium style courses like the Abbot Global Seminar, and encourage students and faculty to seek the intersections between different subjects in everyday teaching.

Andover must construct a stronger framework for teachers to connect their classes to real world experience and to the vast array of incredible guest speakers and presentations already hosted on campus. The community partnerships of the 'Experience' recommendations will also help to encourage fractal thinking. Finally, the framework for a required independent project for all Andover students should be developed in the coming years. Andover students should design and engage in a personal project developed with their mentor throughout their time at Andover.

Why reflect?

In an airy first grade classroom, instead of merely recapping the day, the Riverside teacher posed an all-important question after reviewing each activity: “why?” When one student first explained that they had painted their classroom windows to make their classroom pretty from the outside, the teacher quickly retorted, “Did we do it for them or did we do it for ourselves?” Eventually, all thirty-five six year olds agreed they needed to do it for themselves. With reflection as a core principal, the Riverside school cultivates students who approach learning with passion and critical thinking.

With Riverside as a model, time must be set aside in academics and extracurricular activities to reflect on the ‘why’ of our endeavors at Andover. Why learn a full year of United States history? Why write a biology research paper? Why fulfill an arts requirement? Time must be allotted for intellectual reflection in our in order to build a complex understanding of the meaning of our education and to process the learning that has just taken place. Additionally, reforms must be made to the term grading system. Simply providing a number in response to a whole term’s work only encourages students to mindlessly seek grades. Andover students must reflect on education itself in order to personally invest more of themselves into their own education.

The Riverside school reminds, “when educating the minds of our youth, we should not forget to educate their hearts.”^v Andover’s 1778 charter seeks to bond goodness and knowledge in an exceptional education.^{vi} Reflection and mentorship will move towards truly fulfilling the personal and social responsibilities of Andover to, “support students in their personal, social, and intellectual development.”^{vii}

Why experience?

Educational theorist Paulo Freire writes, “authentic thinking, thinking that is concerned about reality does not take place in ivory tower isolation but only in through communication.”^{viii} According to Freire, education, “denies that man is abstract, isolated, independent and unattached to the world.”^{ix} The Riverside School incorporated geometry, design, and entrepreneurship into a term-long project for its second grade students that culminated in the display and sale of student-made jewelry in one of Ahmedabad’s most famous jewelers. With exchange programs, creative partnerships, and internship programs integrated into their curriculum the Riverside school believes, “exposure to an authentic setting and professional expertise will enable them to learn how their skills apply in the real world.”^x Experiential and service learning provide opportunities to expand upon the rigorous academic foundation Andover supplies. Engaging service and experiential learning cultivates a world of skills difficult to encounter through an education confined to a campus.

Why connect?

In a 2011 commencement address to Georgetown students, anthropologist and physician Paul Farmer urged the next generation of thinkers to, “think fractal, at several scales at once, in order to get our arms around the most vexing problems of our day and in order to innovate in all realms.”^{xi} The need for fractal thinking abounded in India from the holistic design of pre-school education in Aganwadis to the Harvard Business School’s case study for slum redevelopment. Inter-disciplinary course offerings, and the integration of real-world experience into curricula will provide an opportunity to engage in fractal thinking and move Andover towards problem-based learning. A required keystone project will create an opportunity for meaningful personal learning, encourage fractal thinking, and connect learning across disciplines and school years at Andover.

The Challenge Ahead

The first challenge of implementing a mentorship program and integrating reflection into coursework at Andover is one of faculty support. New committees will have to find a standardized and concrete modes of reflection in the

classroom environment of different subjects. With their current course load and administrative obligations, many teachers could not add the responsibility of a mentee relationship. While it will require the restructuring of certain faculty responsibilities through the Dean of Students and the Dean of Faculties office, what is the value of boasting a five to one teacher-student ratio if we cannot create these meaningful relationships?^{xii}

The integration of service and experiential learning will require the restructuring of time in the school week and reductions from existing syllabi. Teachers will likely have to be convinced that time for reflection and experiential learning will, in the future, move towards producing more engaged and focused students. The cultural implications of encouraging reflections will hopefully make the offset of classroom time a worthy investment. With the implementation of accessible exchange programs, Andover might consider accepting exchange students onto its campus in order to maintain a stable flow of tuition and income and a stable number of students on campus.

Perhaps the biggest challenge implementing the three recommendations of experience, reflect, and connect, is a problem of image. Many assume that new connections outside of the classroom come at the cost of traditional learning. Confronting fears of losing challenging bookwork, Ms. Sethi of the Riverside school explains, “when children are empowered they not only do good, they do well, in fact very well.”^{xiii} The Riverside school shows that experiential learning it doesn’t mean undermining the well-known rigor of an, “Andover education.” While gaining national and international attention for its creative forms of experiential and service learning, Riverside students managed to still outperform the top ten schools in Math, English, and Science in the national benchmark testing of two thousand Indian schools. Facing these challenges, Andover must not rest on its laurels but instead take the first steps forward towards further engaging and empowering its students.

Phillips Academy's annual budget is 100 million USD. This amount of money can feed 1.4 million children one wholesome midday meal everyday for over three years; the free meal can raise school attendance and thus improve the lives of an entire generation for years. Instead this money is spent on improving the lives of just 1,200 students for only one year. The only way this can be justified is by viewing the 100 million dollars as an investment. By investing entirely in the lives and development of these thousand students, Andover has the potential to exponentially increase its positive impact. The Buddha once said that if you want to draw water, you do not dig six one-foot wells; you dig one six-foot well. Each Andover student, if taught not only to succeed academically, but to give back to the world which gave them so much, could have the capacity to improve the lives of another thousand people. A graduate from Phillips Academy could do on to lead an organization like Akshaya Patra which feeds 1.4 million children every year using only \$30 million. This is the reasoning behind such a large investment in so few students; they are the six-foot well. But for this logic to hold up to its intention, we must ensure that those 1,100 students have ingrained in them an understanding of their responsibility to give back. This must be the nature and purpose of their education. They must be given not only the capacity to succeed academically and financially, as I believe they are now, but also the capacity and the desire to use their success for the betterment of others.

An Andover education prepares students to succeed academically. Faculty and staff work tirelessly to provide students with the necessary skills. But there is a crucial skill set left out of our Andover educations, skills that will become increasingly necessary in the 21st century:

Gratitude: the ability to be thankful for all opportunities granted.

Public Speaking: Our world today is a fast-paced one. In their futures, andover students may only be given a brief moment in time to present themselves and their ideas. They must be well equipped to do so concisely and effectively.

Global citizenship: a sense of responsibility and duty to be an active agent for change, in any capacity, around the world.

Andover should always move towards improving its pedagogy. With such a large endowment, the school has a responsibility to use its funds as efficiently and positively as possible. To that end, and for the purpose of truly making Andover's students a six-foot well capable of nourishing millions of others, this paper proposes three goals to be adopted into Phillips Academy's next strategic plan:

Creating admissions preference for students who show passion and a willingness to question structures.

Cultivating a culture and a curriculum of gratitude and service.

Adjusting graduation requirements to include a course on public speaking, and incorporating presentation skills into all required courses.

For the past several years, it has been stressed that the only students who are admitted to Andover are those who are "nice." While kindness and niceness matter, they are sometimes assumed to mean the same thing as passivity or an aversion to confrontation. To be leaders and world changers, Andover students must not be afraid to challenge preexisting ideas and institutions.

All too often, students fall victim to the complaining culture. They complain about exhaustion, heavy work loads, or any number of inconveniences. This perpetuates an unhappy environment, which not only affects students, it

affects their work as well. Students at Andover are blessed with incredible opportunities. They should be immersed in a community which constantly expresses gratitude for the privileges that others do not have, so that they can understand their crucial role in changing unjust social and political orders.

There are several extracurricular activities which may improve students public speaking abilities, but it is imperative that such a skill actually becomes an integral part of Andover's curriculum.

Why Gratitude?

Changing Andover for the better must begin before future students even step foot on campus. Our admission preferences project what matters to us as a community. We should ensure that we project our desire to educate future active citizens. PA graduates should be among the first to revolutionize structures and redesign the world for the better.

Gandhi once said, "gratitude is not only the greatest of all the virtues, but the parent of all the others." Gratitude begets patience, love, and kindness. Isn't it clear then, that this is the virtue Andover should focus most heavily on if we want to teach not only academic machines, but full human beings? In addition, gratitude will beget a desire to serve, something which is sorely lacking as an integral part of our community. On the Niswarth trip, I saw and experienced school conditions that were immensely difficult to work or succeed in. Yet those students show up everyday and dedicate themselves to their education. If we could remind ourselves of our advantages everyday, we would be far more inclined to dedicate time and energy to the service of others. Phillips Academy must focus on the framing of a different mindset around service and the integration of service more fully into the fabric of Andover. As it stands, we are not fully honoring our motto of "Non Sibi."

This integration can and should happen on a smaller day-to-day scale in classrooms across campus. It can also be implemented through large-scale endeavors which would compliment classroom and athletic instruction. An example of such an endeavor could be the creation of a two or three week December term focused solely on service and service learning. Students can collaborate with faculty to design projects, initiatives, courses, etc. which are centered on service.

Andover students are bright and creative. Yet too often they are hindered by their own inabilities to articulate clearly and concisely. It is often seen as a mark of intellectual humility to second guess one's own ideas while in the process of expressing them. This lack of public speaking skills will be an enormous hindrance in our futures. Taking Mr. Heelan's Public Speaking course has made me much more comfortable in that environment. I only wish I had taken it sooner and for longer. Although it may seem to be an insignificant change to include in the Strategic Plan, such a change would equip students with one of the most necessary skills of this century: the ability to persuade and move people with the power of our word.

These three recommendations together will do wonders for furthering the nature and purpose of education at Andover discussed in the introduction to this paper. Admitted students who are eager to explore, question, and justify rather than simply accept blindly in an effort to avoid confrontation and project niceness are more likely to apply those revolutionary tendencies in their future paths. Their gratitude and desire for service will drive them to fulfill their obligation of "Non Sibi" no matter what they choose to do with their lives. And a focus on honing their oratory skills will aid them in such endeavors, allowing them to truly be impeccable with their word, both written and spoken. They will need such skills to be persuasive in any role.

The Challenge Ahead

Changing an institution so steeped in tradition may seem at first to pose some difficulties, but I believe that not only are the recommendations of this paper in line with Andover's traditions (such as "Non Sibi") and its mission, but they are also entirely compatible with Andover's practice of adapting to the needs of its world.

Focusing the admissions process on demonstrated inquisitiveness may require more careful analysis of applicants, but it is surely the simplest recommendation to establish at Andover. One extra question in an interview or on the application could suffice to bring such qualities to light in the admissions process.

Such endeavors as requiring public speaking courses or establishing a term for the design and/or execution of service and service learning projects should not be seen as taking time away from scholarship or academic instruction. Indeed teaching students presentation skills will only make them more comfortable contributing to and furthering classroom discussions. They will be far more likely to voice their questions and engage with their teachers, a practice which I have too often experienced solely in upper level classes. In addition, it is time we ended the notion that service and scholarship are separate entities. This is a false dichotomy. A choice between the two is unnecessary. Service is complemented by knowledge and the ability to gauge the needs of a community and carry out projects effectively. Scholarship is enhanced by the application of learned subjects and the achievement real-world positive impact.

It will be a difficult and long, drawn out task to transform the culture surrounding gratitude (or lack thereof) at Phillips Academy. But this is the most essential recommendation made by this paper. Such a transformation must be made at all levels. In the classrooms, teachers can raise discussions on these issues and cultivate consciousness around gratitude. Students and faculty together can be watchful of the language they use around their experiences at Andover to ensure that criticisms and complaints are constructive or few and far apart. One speech at All School Meeting is all it would take to begin the conversation; Andover students and faculty are sure to continue the dialogue.

I arrived at Andover as a new lower and sailed through my first year here utterly convinced that the School was *the* best preparatory institute for high schoolers, so convinced was I of its prestige and glamour. After three weeks with Niswarth examining education and redevelopment, however, my school pride did not decrease, but rather, it simply made me realize that the School has its own flaws. Mental health is a crucial part to any student's educational experience, and without a strong emphasis on mental health, the individual's capacity and eagerness to learn and be challenged diminishes. Mental health is defined as the emotional, psychological, and social well-being; self-confidence and a sense of security with family and friends are often aspects of mental health, however, the balance between imagination and logical thinking, global outlooks and awareness, and a meditative, peaceful mind should also be emphasized aspects of mental health as well.

Essential Skills of the 21st Century

- **Praxis**—Action and reflection are skills that should be addressed more often. Whether the action has a positive or negative effect on the environment or community, reflection should always accompany any action. Students and adults should have the ability to perform an action and reflect on it afterward with considerable thought and to learn from it.
- **Global awareness**—I often find that though some people are aware of events or situations halfway across the globe, they have never witnessed them first hand and believe that it has nothing to do with them. I had never seen true poverty before India and never realized how connected I am to events all over the world, but three weeks with Niswarth made me aware globally.
- **Imagination and creativity**—In a world that is running out of natural resources, suffering from overcrowding, and dependent on materials that trash and ruin the earth, imagination is the only key that will help us extend the existence of humanity on Earth. If the next generation is to take over the responsibilities of the world and its well-being, it is vital that we have the imagination and creativity to create a future that will support and protect our globe yet still satisfy our growing population.
- **Leadership**— Though leadership is a skill that is emphasized quite a bit in schools across the nation, the definition of leadership should be altered. At the Riverside School in Ahmedabad, a phrase struck me with its novelty: leadership is action, not position. Few people consider leadership as action, but if we emphasize that leaders do not have to occupy positions of power in order to be changers in the community, we will create a generation of leaders equipped with the ability to change the world.

Three Recommendations

1. Reduce the amount of “due” homework
 2. Require one term or one vacation away from Andover to go to a place abroad
 3. Add a mandatory class (similar to PACE) to incorporate the ideas of praxis and leadership according to experiences abroad
-
1. Reduce the amount of “due” homework: This recommendation takes a number of factors into mind. Firstly, it allows the student to get to bed earlier rather than staying up working, thus fostering mental health; secondly, according to the assignment, it inspires the freedom to imagine and create. Rather than assigning “due” homework, assignments could be to choose a book to read for fun, take a walk in the sanctuary, recommend to watch thoughtful and challenging movies, or require a trip into Boston to see a show. Although these activities may seem only “fun,” they are educational as well. These kinds of activities rest the

student's mind from the logical thinking that often takes place during class or with "due" homework, but these sorts of activities can allow a student to discover new things by experiencing them and encourage the juices of his or her imagination.

2. Require one term or one vacation away from Andover to go to a place abroad: Visiting and seeing such issues as poverty, malnourishment, sanitation, education, and redevelopment can be a more meaningful educational experience than learning about these issues in a classroom halfway around the world. For one term or one vacation of three weeks, students will have the chance to visit places that physically and mentally challenge them. For Niswarth, this place was India, and for Huaca, it was Peru. A few weeks away from Phillips Academy allows students to learn about the history of the place visited, connect with the community, and discover how those connections are directly linked to issues back home, thus encouraging global awareness and global perspectives.
3. Add a mandatory class (similar to PACE) to incorporate the ideas of praxis and leadership according to experiences abroad: After the experience abroad and gaining knowledge on the community there and the issues it faces, students should return to Phillips Academy and continue addressing what they learned abroad. By putting in a place a mandatory class that could meet once a week during a free period (like PACE), students can imagine and talk about ideas that could help solve the issues they witnessed. Students can dive deep into these world issues with the prior experience of talking to the people who live their lives in it and challenge themselves to think outside-the-box and view issues from all perspectives, including corporate, government, small communities, and families. For example, while on Niswarth, we looked at the redevelopment of Dharavi and the numerous challenges this process has faced. Rather than just looking at the matter from the Dharavi community's point of view, we also looked at it from the corporations' and government's point of views. Although the redevelopment of Dharavi seemed simple and mindless at first glance, by looking at it from these different perspectives and diving deeply into the issue, we discovered that it is in fact extremely complex. By doing similar things with other issues around the world, students can gain a better global understanding and find the inspiration to address these issues even from their own communities.

Why Mental Health?

Mental health, not just physical health, is extremely important to any growing person's education. With a healthy mind, the experience of learning becomes more enjoyable and less of a struggle; however, self-confidence and a good balance of social life and studies are not the only things that contribute to a healthy mind. As was mentioned earlier, imagination, creativity, and global awareness are all over-looked aspects of a healthy mind.

At Andover, physical health is stressed with mandatory after-school sports or exercise, but I find that mental health is less emphasized, and may be taking its toll on students. By reducing the amount of "due" homework, students' stress levels diminish, but the amount of learning does not. In fact, the amount of information that is absorbed by the student may actually increase, for students have the mental capacity and strength to learn more as well as the eagerness and willingness to be challenged. Giving out assignments that are not "due" can help the student explore his or her passions, get to bed earlier, discover new things through experience, and imagine and create more rather than simply thinking analytically all the time. At the Riverside School in Ahmedabad, India, we talked to a student there and discovered that the students (even twelfth graders) received little after-school work. Instead, the teachers encourage students to explore their communities and if they are interested in what they are studying during school hours, to research and explore more on that topic. In this way, students there are more

willing to be challenged in school, can explore their passions, and come to school excited to learn because their mental health is not dented by lack of sleep.

Students at Andover think very analytically and logically, skills that are highly valued in life; however, students should also be encouraged to think outside the box in imaginative and creative ways. By mandating the term abroad program and the class, students will have the opportunity to not only think analytically and objectively, but also to imagine and create ideas that will help reshape communities, governments, and corporations around the globe.

The Challenge Ahead

Financially and culturally, these kinds of changes may be met with some difficulty. For example, the act of reducing “due” homework may face the issue of trust. These kinds of activities, in order to be educational experiences, require trust of the students to perform them without providing proof to the teacher; however, one way to ensure that students are doing the activities with thought is to provide each student with a notebook. When the student has time, he or she can write their thoughts on the activity or anything they experienced and at the end of each month, the teacher can briefly look over it. This is not “due” homework because it is not stressful and the writing will not be graded, but merely a way for the teacher to make sure the student is doing the activities. While on Niswarth, each of us had a small notebook that we carried with us everywhere. When we heard something interesting or when we had an innovating thought, we wrote in our notebooks. It was a casual way of expressing our creativity, imagination, and thoughtfulness. Perhaps this kind of notebook for every student at Andover would benefit as much as it did for the students on Niswarth.

Another issue we may face is the financial part of providing for each student’s travels and how to set up the program. If we break up each grade into small groups assigned to a few teachers, these groups can visit different parts of the world at any time of the year. Some students can explore a community for a term, a spring break, or a few weeks over the summer. In this way, an entire grade will have the opportunity to visit another country for a few weeks at any point during their four or three years here. For those coming in as new uppers, seniors, and PGs, the program can be optional.

I Introduction:

The 21st century is characterized by international communication and cooperation. To be successful in this changing world, students will need a new set of skills to give them access to opportunities. In the past it was easy to live in solidarity without the necessity to cooperate with people from foreign countries. Now, as countries are relying heavily on international business and trade, it is almost impossible to live without interacting with people from other countries. As a model of education it is the responsibility of Phillips Academy to prepare its students for this new and changing world. In order to properly prepare students PA needs to adjust their graduation requirements. The new graduation requirements should focus more on language, international affairs/politics, and soft skills.

II. Essential 21st Century Skills:

- Leadership abilities.
- Linguistic abilities.
- Problem solving abilities.
- Presentation.
- Public speaking.
- Communication.
- Adaptability.
- Strong work ethic.
- Confidence.

III. Strategic Plan Essentials:

1. In order for PA graduates to compete in a world that is becoming more internationally oriented it is imperative for students to gain first hand experience in foreign countries. There are many programs that focus on community service; however these programs generally do not educate the volunteers on the issues that lead to the need of their service. Moreover, many of these programs are created by third party companies and not by PA. Since PA is supposed to be the model of education it is important to first develop trips to foreign countries, and second focus these trips not on volunteering but learning.

Volunteering has its place in the 21st century; however these trips do not focus on the fundamental issues that cause problems. Instead these programs focus on treating the symptoms of a countries problem. Trips that focus on the actual problems are in many ways more beneficial to both the students and the target country. The students on these trips are forced to think about what causes problems instead of fixing them. It is not realistic to visit a country and expect to solve and over arching problem like poverty, or lack of education. A more valuable experience would be one that exposes students to the factors that lead these problems to be prevalent, and theoretical solutions.

Programs that encourage learning rather than service are also beneficial to the target country. Volunteering can have positive affects on foreign communities, but it can also make the country reliant on foreign aid. Trips that focus on teaching students by interacting with communities creates a more powerful product. It gives students the knowledge to create their own opinions and to take their own actions.

2. Second, PA needs to encourage students to master foreign languages by creating more immersion programs. Currently the Russian department is the only language at PA that has created its own immersion program. Other departments either do not have any immersion programs, or rely on programs created by third party companies. If PA created their own language programs then they would be better regulated, and would be better incorporated into the curriculum.

Mastering a second language will be essential if PA graduates want to succeed in the 21st century. In general the citizens of the USA are behind the rest of the world when it comes to learning other languages. This puts Americans at an automatic disadvantage when it comes to international affairs. To combat this we need to improve our language programs and PA can do this by creating immersion programs that are easily accessible to students and cost effective.

3. Lastly, PA needs to incorporate more classes that focus on developing soft skills. In the 21st century presentation and public speaking will be imperative. Presenting oneself effectively is not only a helpful skill, but an imperative tool when trying to explain ones ideas. PA currently has limited classes that teach these essential skills; moreover these classes are not part of the core curriculum. As a result many PA students do not take these classes seriously, and fail to put in the necessary effort for success. If PA made these classes part of it's core curriculum then students would put more effort into mastering these skills.

IV. Why Change?

Even though Phillips Academy is consistently rated as one of the top boarding schools year in and year out there is still a need for change and improvement. One of the overarching problems with PA is the "Andover Bubble". Students often get obsessed with perfection, college admission, academics, athletics, community service, clubs, and other school related activities that they can seclude themselves and lose sight of issues that face the world and even their own communities. In order to transform the student body at PA it is necessary to refocus the core curriculum, create more programs like Niswarth.

To make students question and ponder their place at Andover students need to realize that there is more to life than making the honor roll, or varsity sports. The effect of visiting foreign countries that have a very different culture is unparalleled to anything that can be taught in a class. Living in a different culture exposes students not only to different customs, but completely different lifestyles. This exposure should not only be supplementary, but crucial to a PA education.

Even though the core curriculum may prepare students for college it does not prepare them for life. By focusing the core curriculum on language and world events students will be much better prepared to interact with foreign countries, and improve their understanding of international affairs.

V. The Challenge Ahead

Changing the focus of PA and the core curriculum will not be easy; however it is necessary in order to give students a more thorough education. The first and most important step is to create programs similar to Niswarth, in which students are exposed to a foreign culture. It is important that these programs are not from third party companies but instead from PA. This way PA will have total control over the objectives of the program, and make necessary changes. The next step is not to require students to go on these trips, but

instead to give them an incentive and encourage them. To do this PA needs to set aside all school meetings to present these programs, and teach students of their importance. Further more credits should be given to students who participate in these programs. Students should get credit for one of their core curriculum classes that deals with international affairs.

The phase of the change is adjusting the core curriculum. Instead of cutting out subjects such as math and science in order to make room for international affairs and soft skills, PA needs to create different tracks of education. Like most colleges students should have the freedom to explore different academic subjects and then declare their “major” or focus after their sophomore year. PA should adopt this system and allow students to hone in their passions on one or two subjects. Not only would students be given more flexibility to choose their academic paths, but they would also be more satisfied with their work. When students study subjects they are interested in instead of subjects they are required to take, they work harder and ultimately accomplish more.

As the issues the world faces become increasingly multi-faceted, those who will succeed will be those who lend themselves to a broad perspective. Due to the contained nature of the Phillips Academy community, it is relatively easy for students to develop a narrow perspective. This phenomenon, which students have increasingly become aware of, has been dubbed the Andover bubble. While Andover strives to foster a sense of "deeper awareness of global community"¹ within students, the proliferation of the Andover bubble represents the feeling of isolation and containment within the community. The contained nature of Phillips Academy leads students to view the world with a distorted lens. As long as the Andover community remains distanced from the realities of the world, an Andover education will fail in providing students with a complete education.

Essential Skills of 21st Century Learning:

Collaboration: the ability for an individual to work with others to accomplish a collective goal. This places particular emphasis on the notion of collective understanding and seeing individual skillsets as parts of a whole.

Intellectual Humility: the ability to approach problems with a sense of patience and modesty. Intellectual humility explores the realization that most issues are multi-faceted and require broad perspective.

Networking: the ability to make connections with a diverse range of people and connect them in a way that best utilizes their collective skill set. Note a particular emphasis on networking through the technology medium.

Broad Social Skills: the ability to work, learn, and connect with people of various backgrounds, often varying in race, culture, and economic class.

Cause and Effect Reasoning: the ability to stipulate the influence of any particular action far in advance.

Empathy: the ability to make decisions that are in the best interest of another party, even when no personal benefit is foreseeable. Corporate empathy continues to gain momentum as consumers grow more conscience of negative policy.

Adaptability: the ability to let go of personal stake in an idea and view all potential solutions equivalently.

Core Aspects Essential for Future Learning

Social Grounding

Though Andover prides itself on educating students from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, in reality there is still quite a way to go before these barriers disappear. In the State of the Academy 2013 survey conducted by the Phillipian, 65.8% of all students indicated that they feel there is still a divide between socioeconomic class and races at Andover. The divide indicates a greater issue - students at Andover often live in a bubble within a bubble. In other words, many students socialize within their social precincts whether that means within socioeconomic, racial, or cultural boundaries.

¹ Phillips Academy Andover Mission Statement

A socioeconomic grounding is of particular importance because without it students tend to carry a heavily distorted perception. Grounding refers to an understanding of privilege. The term privilege is thrown around a lot at Andover and perhaps it has come to have a negative connotation. Even so, students at Andover should understand the rarity of the education and opportunity they have been afforded. After breaking down these barriers the community can rebuild as a unified whole.

Early Access to Electives and Hands On Learning

Each new student at Andover is sent a copy of the course offerings the summer before their first year. Students can browse through courses including African Percussion, Eastern Religion, and Irish Literature. The reality, however, is that most students will take the same general courses with variations only in language and level of math or science. It is only during the upper and senior year that students begin to enjoy the wide variety of elective offerings Andover offers.

Electives allow students to explore subjects that interest them. Often they encourage students to approach material with creative methodologies. Allowing Andover students to take electives earlier in their high school career would foster this creative pedagogy from the start. When students study a far off topic that they are often unfamiliar with, they often gain a broader perspective.

Electives allow for unorthodox methods of learning. A varied sense of learning tends to yield adaptable students who are capable of taking on the multi-faceted problems of the future. The London IP elective currently offered at Andover allows students to study literature relating to the London and then travel to England at the end of the term. This applied fusion of hands-on and theoretical learning is precisely what Andover needs - it encourages students to take what they learn inside the bubble and apply, or at least see its importance, outside in the real world. At the Miami Valley School in Dayton, Ohio, students participate in a yearly immersion week. Essentially students are offered a course selection of different immersions. For a three-week time frame, small groups of student and faculty embark on an academic project. Andover could adopt a similar program but also require students to enroll in a class to supplement the immersion project.

Dialogue

Andover students come from all sorts of backgrounds and therefore offer all sorts of perspectives. Friendships, of course, encourage students to learn from each other, but students often also feel pressure to assimilate to a cohesive identity at the school. Individual backgrounds often become collateral damage in a student's effort to find his or her new self within the school. For this reason an official venue of dialogue creation should exist within the school.

There are programs within Andover that encourage dialogue, but they still have room to grow. PACE has led the way in developing this dialogue, however, the course is short. Also, the class often takes on a banking system of learning rather than the approach of learning through the perspective of fellow students. CAMD clubs have encouraged thoughtful dialogue throughout the community but discussion reaches a relatively small group of students, typically of the same background. For example, the Andover Korean Society is almost completely made up of Korean students and therefore the vast majority of the Phillips Academy community would not benefit from discussion. Though clubs are open to any student, it can be intimidating to approach a club that has a cohesive identity of which you are not a part.

Many boarding schools have a weekly formal dinner in which students and faculty are assigned seats at random. This type of informal but formal discussion can be very enriching. I call the discussion formal because it is

planned and organized to occur. It is informal because the discussion does not have a forced direction and often takes spontaneous routes.

The Challenge Ahead

Andover had changed significantly in the last year. Most notably, Mr. Palfrey has taken over as head of school. Several other key positions at the school have been shifted and the school year schedule change will take effect in the coming year. While this time of change presents the usual setbacks of necessary acclimation, it also presents the school with an opportunity to enact great change.

Many aspects to the changes that initially seemed negative are also opportunities for positive modification. For example, the new schedule change features an awkward time period of two weeks between Thanksgiving and Christmas. This time is too short for many international students to justify returning home. The time change would, however, be ideal for an immersion week in which students can gain perspective from field research and global study.

As we have seen with the schedule change and English curriculum adjustment, most big changes to the Andover education system are met with torrid opposition. In order to successfully integrate a sense of greater perspective into the Andover pedagogy, the school must be able to convince students, parents, and alumni that such changes are essential to a complete education.

Some may think that Andover's mission resides solely in providing students with the academic skillset to take on the world's issues later in life. While an Andover education has historically resided in theoretical learning rather than hands on work, this does not mean students will not benefit from the change. Such reasoning is known as appeal to tradition and is one of many logical fallacies. Though tradition is a great aspect of Andover, in order to succeed in the future the school must adapt. Come to think of it, the school actually has a tradition of adaptation - the integration of technology serves as a prime example.

Others may object to such changes because they feel as though students should seek opportunity to gain perspective on their own rather than have it be forced upon them through curriculum change. This argument fails to take into account the fact that every student at Andover chose to apply with knowledge of the school's mission. In essence, every student showed interest in gaining global perspective by choosing to become an Andover student.

If not properly enacted, Andover could very easily sanction changes that simply adjust the bubble without popping it. Even if a group of ten Andover students is sent to the jungle of Guatemala, the Andover bubble may still be intact. This is where Andover faculty comes into play - teachers will be able to culture the proper learning environment through facilitated discussion and adaptation of global thinking pedagogy.

Djaveneh Bierwirth

Since the start of the 21st century the necessary components of an exemplary education have evolved radically. Aside from new tools such as the rapid emergence of the Internet as a means of communication, and the increased usage of technologies as a learning tool in the classroom, the world seems to have become more globalized and well connected. Hence, in order to retain its position as a leading secondary institution, it is important for Andover to consider a more wholesome and globalized approach to education, taking into account a new set of skills that become mandatory for the 21st century's working sphere.

This is by no means an appeal to Andover to radically reform the framework of its already established education system, but rather a push towards evolution with the social and geographical change of the last decade. A push for "connected learning" to stand for values beyond simply the use of information technologies.

India and the Niswarth Program

On the streets of Mumbai, millions of children struggle to maintain a basic level of subsistence everyday. Many are left to fend for themselves without having access to an education and are thrown into the working life from an early age. Just one example of such a teenager is Salman. We met Salman through the NGO Akanksha, where he is part of the organization's Service Learning Program. Salman is an orphan, who despite growing up on the streets made a life for himself by buying and selling religious paraphernalia and literature at a major intersection in Mumbai.

Through his years of work on the streets, Salman developed an uncanny ability to learn from strangers, reflect and learn from his own actions, and develop real-life applications of the concepts he'd learned through sheer observation. Through his ability to apply a set of skills I'd like to label "street smarts" to almost every situation, Salman eventually worked his way into Junior College, earning a spot at a college in the competitive commerce stream without ever having attended high school. On the street, he learned to speak English fluently, read the public's gestures, and build partnerships, and it was these abilities that ultimately allowed him to thrive in Akanksha's program.

At the same time, Salman, as well as the collective youth that we met on the Niswarth trip possessed an unparalleled ability to interact with persons and instantly connect. More than anywhere else, this became evident at the Riverside School. An experiment in learning through methods applied in design, the school provides a unique and colorful environment thriving with positive energy. Students were eager to share and present their school, which possesses a vigorous and challenging curriculum, but were quick to accentuate the importance of teamwork, partnership and group reflection in their own learning processes. One of the core elements of their education rested on a mentorship program between High School students and their middle school counterparts. Placing a great emphasis on collaborative learning, praxis, partnership and compassion, the Riverside School nurtures what I'd like to term "people smarts".

Increasingly we thus see in the world the importance of nurturing proficiencies in areas beyond simply the academic. We've moved past a time period when raw skill was enough to strive. Hence, the capabilities taught at a secondary institution such as Phillips Academy must be expanded beyond academia to include "people learning" as well as "street learning". Below I list the set of essential skills for students in the 21st century that the subsequent suggestions aim to develop:

List of Essential Skills Students should develop in the 21st Century:

- Adaptability
- Compassion
- Self-awareness
- Teamwork and Collaborative work
- Global citizenship

Humility
Networking Skills
Reflection
Partnerships

Building through Andover's Strategic Plan

Naturally, it is not possible for Andover to emulate the situations and lifestyles that were the breeding grounds for the above skills in the examples used from the Niswarth trip. Nevertheless, I strongly urge the Strategic Planning Committee, the administration and the faculty at Phillips Academy to take into account the following three guideposts in the crafting of Andover's strategic plan and education. All three of these suggestions emerged through observations in India or beforehand in the school community.

Increasing Student Travel Opportunities
Increasing Mental Wellness
Course offerings or Seminars on Unconventional and Soft Skills

How to Implement the Suggestions

1

Student Travel could encompass anything from domestic trips to major cities, historically significant landmarks, or particular environments and could be seamlessly integrated into the curriculum of courses at Andover. To propose just a few examples: Students in the History 300 curriculum could travel to Washington; students in certain Biology courses could travel to Yellowstone; International Relations students could travel to the UN HQ's in NYC. These opportunities are expanded when considering international travel. Seniors taking a winter elective on Shakespeare could use Thanksgiving break to travel to England, Advanced physics students could travel to Switzerland to visit CERN. Students in the class on the Holocaust could travel to Germany, and students in a class on Brazilian Culture could travel to Brazil.

Of course these are just a handful of readily proposed examples that cannot be realized within a short period of time, nor can they realistically coexist; yet I would like to urge the committee to take the possibilities for hands-on learning into consideration. In whatever form travel opportunities through PA are ultimately provided, the bottom line is that with every new opportunity, a new set of students is given the chance to expand their horizons.

2

Encouraging more mental wellness could happen through a number of different means. Here are just some suggestions for strategies towards improving mental wellness: Establishing a more structured and organized mentorship program with bi-weekly meetings (similar to the work duty program), starting a student Advisor program which pairs underclassmen with an additional student resource for academic questions, reforming leadership opportunities at PA towards a more wholesome and less competitive approach, actively working to change the reputation of Graham House, teaching students fundamental learning skills in the early years (see seminars in section three).

3

Examples of new course offerings could include Application Writing, Advanced Public Speaking, Junior and Lower Journalism, Rhetoric and Logic, Sign Language, or even basic Sociology, where as seminar topics could include self-discipline, time management, efficient organization, collaboration, networking and even critical reading and the news. The seminar topics also have the potential of being taught collectively in a class.

Why Invest in Courses, Student Travel and Mental Wellness?

Student Travel

A large part of Andover students participate in Summer Travel opportunities or even travel opportunities during other breaks during the year. Although the demand is already there, only a handful of travel programs are being offered at PA. The possibilities are scarce and students turn to alternative excursions. Even the school's programs are in danger of being discontinued. Yet student travel could be the occasion for some of the most stimulating and formative learning periods in Andover students' lives.

Travelling within the United States, or particularly travelling abroad allows young adults the chance to build many of the skills I have exemplified above. Not only does travelling through Andover give students a chance to learn about foreign cultures and systems in a well-organized and academic environment, it also teaches students to act respectfully towards unfamiliar cultures, adapt to foreign environments, connect with strangers and become more aware of their own presence within a global community. International travel in particular is perhaps the single most powerful tool in teaching students what it means to be a global citizen of the 21st century and to empathize with people who seemingly live a world away.

For a student who has never left the United States, as was the case with numerous Niswarth participants this year, travel abroad offers entirely new perspectives and can play a decisive factor in their world view. To offer just one example, learning about redevelopment in lesser economically developed countries and brainstorming solutions is radically different from the reality of a situation abroad. The same holds true for poverty in South America, or even the fiscal crisis in Greece or Spain.

Granted, cost plays a large part in determining whether or not to offer more travel opportunities, and more and more departments are turning to the Abbot Academy Association for support in their endeavors. Yet funding (if provided by the AAA, is not a solution and does not encourage well-established travel opportunities to exist in the long term.

Yet the school already assists many of its students in financing the costs of summer travel, and even the already offered travel opportunities through Andover such as the Niswarth program calculate travel costs based on the student's financial background. Establishing new travel programs may be difficult in the first stages, but may not differ greatly as far as financing is concerned from external summer programs that PA students chose to attend.

The 2004 Strategic Plan had a single recommendation: "To reaffirm our longstanding commitment to education youth from every quarter" but consider this: It is not enough to bring the youth of the world to Andover. Andover must also strive to bring its youth to every quarter of the world.

Mental Wellness

Part of Phillips Academy's compelling package is its unique sports requirement, instituted among other reasons to promote the long-term physical well being of students in a well-enforced and controlled manner. Yet while physical wellness is not only encouraged but enforced through mandatory sports, mental wellness often falls short: visits to Graham House are stigmatized and classes such as Yoga and Meditation are dismissed by students and teachers as slacker spots and alternative sport options.

In addition, the many of the Academy's systems and locations designed to help maintain mental wellness more often than not fall short of their promises on paper. To highlight just a few such instances: Members of yearlong mentorship programs such as the Blue Key Society frequently fail to maintain their relationship with their mentee beyond the first month of school, and the counseling center Graham House is heavily stigmatized by students in all grades. Leadership opportunities are not distributed fairly, but rather dominated by a small group of students while a different group of students find themselves continuously rejected by many opportunities over the course of the Spring term ("Application Season").

Although many students develop organic relationships with Upperclassmen, this is not always the case, and it is in such cases in particular that a regulated mentorship program becomes of importance. Even when well-meaning adults on campus surround such students, it can become difficult for adults to become aware of emotional or mental struggles at an earlier stage. Plus, students can frequently provide more accurate insight into certain aspects of Andover life such as socializing or relationships.

Since even Graham House counseling holds a bad stigma in the eyes of many, finding somebody accessible and impartial to speak to can often become a bottomless task, and subsequently manifest itself in the academic performance of a student. By that stage, it is often too late, and the damage on the student and his/her surroundings is done.

A lot can be learned from models such as the Riverside school's where the motto is that "leadership is about action, not position" and collaboration is seen as the key to success. In the past year, teachers and counselors debated wellness during faculty meeting, yet no clear consensus was reached and no course of action was taken. Regardless of how Andover chooses to go about addressing the psychological wellness of students, there is a pressing need for the emergence of new and effortlessly implemented support systems or the reform of outdated and stigmatized institutions.

Courses

While Andover already possesses a large amount of courses, the available classes concentrate on traditional fields of study and only offer a sparse selection of courses that develop the soft skills that are a part of the people smarts and street smarts concepts I introduced previously.

Students are expected to develop soft skills through interactions with their classmates and through their extracurricular interests, yet even in those realms they are rarely offered the chance to learn a trait from the ground up. Instead, students are expected to be skilled public speakers and natural leaders before even becoming involved in many of Andover's offerings. From debate to journalism to language clubs and other leadership positions, preference is often given to those who already possess the necessary confidence, logic, charisma, vocabulary or writing skills in order to succeed.

To give just one example: Phillipian editors do not wish to spend anymore time teaching their underclassmen the basics of their trade than absolutely necessary – and they shouldn't be expected to when they already spend a good 20+ hours per week holed up working on their publication – thus naturally they will show preference to Freshmen and Lowers who are already skilled writers or photographers.

Unfortunately, this prior knowledge is more often than not linked to the student's educational background as well as their socio-economic circumstances, a sad reality that paves the way for an unjust system of leadership distribution and opportunity.

The Challenge Ahead

Although Andover is a school built on over 200 years of tradition and excellence, it must strive to provide the best possible education available here and now. All of the suggestions made throughout this paper aim to suggest methods of improving the school in a way that will help guide Phillips Academy on the path of an exceptional 21st century institution from the perspective of an Andover student and through the lens of the Niswarth Service Learning trip.

I concede that a number of my propositions require anything from large amounts of funding to uprooting the entire current system of student leadership distribution. The latter questions the Andover's very philosophy of healthy

competition and a highly selective institution. Nonetheless I urge the Strategic Planning Committee to delve deeper into the issues and suggestions I have presented.

Conduct research into student leadership, question students about their psychological wellness, determine the correlation between socio-economic backgrounds and soft skills, find out how many students would be interested in greater travel opportunities, ask teachers how they could fit travel into their curriculum survey students on their knowledge of foreign cultures or basic geography, determine if yoga and meditation have a distinct reputation, but by no means leave these issues unexplored. None of the changes or new additions I propose is tied to their representation in this document; they are simply examples of how to address three increasingly pressing issues within the Andover community and stand open to further exploration and more detailed analysis. If my proposed answers do not suffice, seek alternative answers. Find a middle ground, develop a new framework for the consideration of these problems at Andover, but take into account what Andover as an institution can learn from every quarter of the world.

Resources

A Sample Occasional Paper: Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century [October 19, 2006, Henry Jenkins]

<http://digitallearning.macfound.org/site/c.enJLKQNIiG/b.2029291/>

The Niswarth Blog:

<http://niswarthprogram.wordpress.com>

The Riverside School:

<http://www.schoolriverside.com>

The Akanksah Foundation:

<http://www.akanksha.org>

Teach for India:

<http://teachforindia.org>

Ryan Miller Endnotes

- ⁱ TEDIndia, "Kiran Sethi: Kids, take charge," TED: Ideas worth Spreading, video file, January 2010, accessed July 31, 2013,
- ⁱⁱ Raj Mundra, "Niswarth: Connecting Goodness + Knowledge + Action + Reflection," Niswarth: Andover's Service-Learning Program in Mumbai, India, last modified December 17, 2012, accessed July 31, 2013, <http://niswarthprogram.wordpress.com/tag/knowledge/>.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York, NY: Continuum Books, 1993), 8.
- ^{iv} Paul Farmer, "Exploring the Adjacent Possible: Georgetown University, Commencement," in *Health, Human Rights, and Unnatural Disasters* (n.p.: n.p., 2011), 165.
- ^v . "Our Approach," Riverside, accessed July 31, 2013, <http://www.schoolriverside.com/node.aspx?nodeId=26&siteID=2>.
- ^{vi} "Statement of Purpose," Andover.edu, accessed July 31, 2013, <http://www.andover.edu/About/PAToday/Pages/StatementofPurpose.aspx>.
- ^{vii} "Statement of Purpose," Andover.edu.
- ^{viii} Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 4.
- ^{ix} Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 6.
- ^x "Enrichment Programs," Riverside School, accessed July 31, 2013, <http://www.schoolriverside.com/node.aspx?nodeId=49&siteID=6>.
- ^{xi} Farmer, "Exploring the Adjacent Possible," in *Health, Human Rights, and Unnatural*, 165.
- ^{xii} "Fast Facts," Andover.edu, accessed July 31, 2013, <http://www.andover.edu/About/Pages/FastFacts.aspx>.
- ^{xiii} TEDIndia, "Kiran Sethi: Kids, take."