Why PHS is So Special, and How It Can Stay That Way
A former Tower editor’s take on Princeton High

by Rafe Kinsey, Editor-in-Chief ‘03

Princeton High School is a unique and wonderful place. Few other high schools in the country can claim to face the challenge PHS for its combination of an amazingly talented and diverse student body, a community with fantastic resources, a tradition of strong academics, a slew of exciting extracurriculars, and a unique, unconventional atmosphere. Students enter PHS as young, starry-eyed freshmen, full of promise and exuberance, and leave as independent young adults ready to thrive in the real world and pursue their dreams.

For all of these qualities, though, PHS faces many challenges in the years to come. The most obvious might be the consequences of the new school. Younger, deeper, more important challenges about not where but how we learn should concern us more. The first step toward facing these challenges is understanding what it is that makes PHS so strong.

The phrase live to learn and learn to live lies written above the entrance to the school. This phrase epitomizes the best of what PHS has to offer: the combination of intellectual passion with the experience and independence needed to live in our world.

It’s no surprise where the living to learn part comes from. Princeton is a community of scholars, with one of the finest universities in the world, Princeton University, as well as the Institute for Advanced Study, Westminster Choir College, and Princeton Theological Seminary. Many students’ parents work or are affiliated with these institutions, naturally connecting the high school with the best of academia. Simply having a great university downtown serves as enrichment for the intellectual atmosphere of the high school.

Furthermore, the tremendous strength of student body makes learning from peers easy. PHS has some of the brightest students in the state — as seen from standardized tests such as the SATs show — and sends students off to the best colleges in the nation. This tradition of excellence within the school helps to establish an atmosphere where learning and intellectual activity is encouraged.

Finally, PHS has some of the best teachers in the business, teachers who love teaching and are dedicated to helping their students learn. At any public school, the quality of teaching is a mixed bag, and for every capable and knowledgeable teacher there are mediocres at PHS, but having one or two of the truly inspiring teachers can make all the difference.

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