

THE VOICE

The Official Student Newspaper of St. Stephen's and St. Agnes School

June 2017

27 Years in the Books

By Afua Nyantakyi '18



During her 27 years at SSSAS, Ms. Vascott previously served as the science department chair and ninth grade class dean. She became the Associate Director of the Upper School in 2005 and continued teaching wetlands biology and adaptations biology. She has also been a part of the Upper School Admissions Committee, the Environmental Stewardship Committee, and the Professional Growth Committee and has served as the faculty representative on the Honor Council.

Head of School Mrs. Adams describes her as “the heart and soul of the Upper School” who is always willing to “go above and beyond to help a student succeed at SSSAS. Senior Miller DeLancey completely agreed, stating “Ms. Vascott wanted us to succeed. She would always ask us for our opinion when assigning a test or quiz. She would try and do what’s best for the students to help us.”

The Voice sat down with Ms. Vascott and asked her a few questions about her time at SSSAS:

Q: How would you compare your very first year working here to this past year?

A: Well, the very first year that I came here was before the merger, so it was just boys. So it was a long time ago, but the changes that I’ve seen as time goes on is that I think that the classes have gotten more innovative and so has the way that we teach. There isn’t just lecture now, we have a few more interesting things. And the students have become more stressed than they used to be so that’s something that gets added into the equation for keeping the stress level down. And I think that having more than one way of teaching helps that because different people have different styles of learning, so I think we’re moving in the right direction.

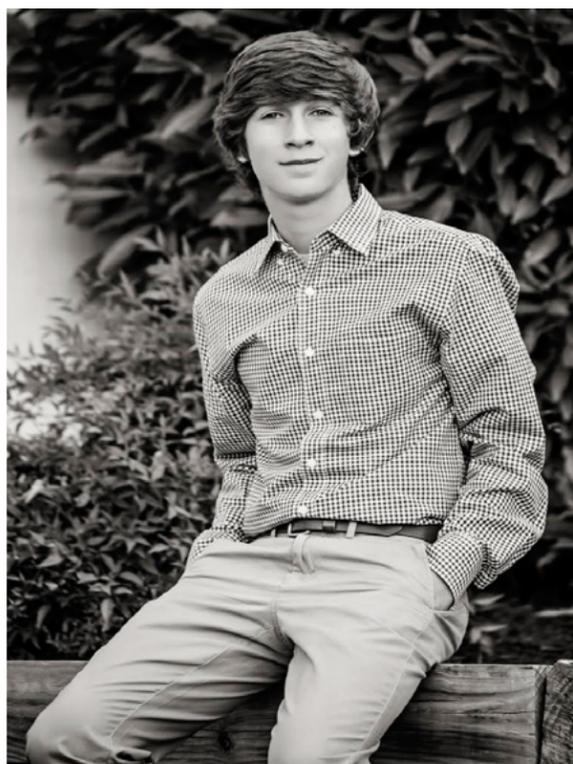
Q: Do you have any advice for yourself in that first year? Anything you wish you would have known?

A: The first year that I came wasn’t my first year teaching; I had taught in public school before that and went to graduate school, so I was coming back into teaching. The advice is probably not to take myself quite as seriously. And then to understand that institutions move slowly but they do move. So, not to be impatient when try-

ing to instigate change. Now that I’ve been here a while, I’ve been able to see some really good changes and growth. But when you’re only here one year and you have ideas, that’s really hard because it takes a while for things to get in motion. So that would be my advice, to just sort of relax.

Q: Do you have anything to add or elaborate to your chapel talk you gave earlier this month?

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Lipton Leaves

By Jacob Lipton '17

I remember sitting on the couch with my mother scanning the course selection packet to plan my sophomore year schedule. She looked over and asked, “What about newspaper? That sounds interesting.” After reading the short, single-paragraph course description, I was not convinced. I continued to agonize over the decision of an elective, and considered classes in science or with computers. I didn’t get excited about those either and wondered if my lack of enthusiasm was connected to this packet being a reminder that summer was ending and returning to school was imminent. I pondered my options that night and reluctantly decided

to join the newspaper class despite my initial concerns. I was entering only my third year at SSSAS and felt like my writing wouldn’t be on the level required to write and publish stories for a newspaper. However, my mother assured me that taking the class would be a great way to enhance my ability to write.

I turned my course selection form in with newspaper class written down at the bottom of the list of classes. Before the first day of classes, I peeked at the rosters of my classes on the school website. To my horror, I was the only sophomore in the class; even worse, there was only one other boy listed on the roster. I went through schedule on the first day. When it was time to meet in the tech lab for newspaper, I nervously shuffled in and took a seat in a brightly colored desk chair. A junior named Matt sat down next to me and introduced himself. This was his first year in the class as well, and he also noticed the gender disparity on the class roster. When the rest of the students sat down at computers, Mrs. McElroy welcomed everyone. The senior editors introduced themselves and discussed how the class works and what the expectations were.

I spent that year not focused on the newspaper, but rather trying to do the least work as possible. I always opted for the easier stories, tried to collaborate with other students, and waited until the last minute to finish my stories.

While my stories were still always written at the last possible moment, I enjoyed working much harder and tackling tougher stories this year. Over the three years spent on the staff, Mrs. McElroy was able to impact me more than any other teacher I’ve ever had a class with. She pushed me not only to improve my writing but to overcome the fear of interacting with people I don’t normally associate with. I needed to interview a countless number of students, teachers, and faculty members over three years, but I gained confidence to get that interview even if I the person was a complete stranger.

I would also like to thank every member of the staff I worked with over during my time in the class. While I was initially worried about who was taking the class, everyone I met in class was kind, friendly, and genuinely cared about the rest of the writers.

Lastly, I would like to thank specifically the members of the 2017 staff: Afua, I know you will be a great editor, but make sure to keep the internal issue and the published issue separate. Jamie, don’t get too rattled or exposed; your presence over my shoulder motivated me to work harder. Miller, thanks for joining the staff so late in the year and still making a positive impact. Harrison, stay passionate about the Caps even if they can’t get past the second round. Wendy, I am glad I got to work with you, even if it was only for the first half of the year. Gwendolyn, even though you weren’t in the actual classroom, you were pivotal to the staff.

While I had my initial fears and doubts about joining The Voice staff, I am so glad I did.

Until We Meet Again...

By Jamie McLucas '18

This year, seven teachers will leave the upper school to pursue their interests/passions/careers elsewhere. We have gathered some parting words from each of them in response to the following questions:

1. What are your plans for next year?
2. What is one special memory from your time at SSSAS?
3. Do you have any parting words for your current and former students?
4. If you could go anywhere in the world for a week, where would it be?

Profe Siddeeq:

I plan to work hard and follow God's will. I plan on practicing on guitar a lot more and writing more original music.

One special memory I have here is one day when I showed up really late to school. I missed my A period class and there wasn't a substitute. The entire class was present and they went over the homework on the board, took a picture of it, and emailed it to me.

For my former students, DON'T STOP TAKING SPANISH

I want to go to Panama and Japan.

Father Miller:

My family and I are moving to Mechanicsville, Virginia, just outside of Richmond. I have been called to serve as the rector of Immanuel Episcopal Church in Old Church.

A very special memory has been the ability to work with so many of my former coaches and teachers. From being on the field with Coach Taibl to talking about classroom dynamics with people like Mrs. Tyree, Mr. Garikes, and Mrs. Vascott, it has been beyond memorable to be able to connect with such wonderful people as colleagues and friends. My teachers and coaches at St. Stephen's & St. Agnes taught me so much about character and values. Wherever I am in life, the lessons I learned both as a student and faculty member at SSSAS will be the foundation for what I do. The faculty and staff of St. Stephen's & St. Agnes School is made up of exceptional people.

Work hard. Be humble. Make good decisions. The rest will come in time.

Castine, Maine. My grandmother lives in Castine. It is a very special place to me and my family. We all tend to work very hard at what we do, but whenever we gather in Maine life slows down. It is in Castine that I am always reminded that family is one of the best gifts that God has given us.

Mr. Chipkin:

I am moving to northern Baltimore to teach science at St. Paul's School for Girls. This move brings me much closer to my family.

I will never forget the camping trips I took with the astronomy club. One year the students and I were on a hike and came to a waterfall. Some of the students spontaneously decided it would be a great idea to wade out underneath the waterfall. It turned into a fantastic bonding exercise, and it's a memory I will always treasure.

The universe is a bizarre, counter-intuitive, and wonderful place. Keep learning. Keep your sense of wonder. And have fun.

Does it have to be on the world? SpaceX is talking about sending a few space tourists around the moon next year. The trip would take about a week. I'd love to ride along. But if I must stay on this planet, then I choose New Zealand

for its rugged beauty, hiking, and, of course, Middle Earth..

Mr. Kaufman:

Teaching 11th grade Honors English at Pace Academy in Atlanta

Jonathan Randle and Will Seale juju-ing on the proverbial beat

Read Interlaken, Switzerland

Ms. Leins:

I will be moving to Portland, Oregon in June to enjoy the outdoors and lots of cycling adventures. I'll also be working as a middle school learning specialist at Catlin Gabel School. Going on the Kenya trip this past spring break with a group of SSSAS students was an incredibly special adventure that I will always treasure. I will miss you all so much! You have made my time here at SSSAS the best three years of my life. Please keep in touch and stop in to say hi if you are ever in the Pacific Northwest! Portland, Oregon! Seriously, I love it there...it's absolutely beautiful, rain or shine, and now I get to live there!

Mr. Hotkowski:

I'll be a student again, seeking separate degrees in Nuclear Engineering and Computer Science. There are many to choose from, and most in the classroom! I'll pick one of my earliest though. When I first came to SSSAS, during summer break, Mr. Taylor was one of the first people I met. For such a gorgeous and esteemed school, I wasn't expecting a young, long haired, ear-pierced math teacher dressed in yellow flannel. He was kind and welcoming. The entire SSSAS community is like that, I soon learned, but I'll never forget that first interaction with Mr. Taylor.

Though it may be hard, try to listen to your teachers AND have fun. They've been through the student process, remember that. At the same time, you cannot relive your moments. Odds are High School and/or College will be some of the most pure fun years of your life. Join clubs, meet people, and do things. So hard to pick! I might a week to backpack in the wilderness. It has been too long since I've been on the trail for an extended period of time. Perhaps The 100-mile-wilderness in Maine.

Mr. Rho

My plans for next year is to teach at Shorecrest Preparatory School in St. Petersburg FL. As for a memory, I would say it is memories of meeting all of my students and faculty and all the various school related projects we've worked on (incl all the collaborations, the bloopers, the jokes that ensued, & the successes, etc). For parting words, I would say, "Don't be afraid to say yes to new learning experiences that you feel unprepared for or that you feel like you don't know enough about. No one is ever ready. Go out there and take those chances. It will be those experiences that will redefine the limits of yourself and open new pathways that can change the course of your life."

If I could go anywhere in the world for a week, I would probably say Argentina for a heli-skiing trip during our summer (their winter)! A culinary exploration tour would complement that trip well too... We have an unlimited budget for that trip, right? =)

1st Year Q&A

By Jamie McLucas '18

For our last issue of the school year, we decided to include a short question and answer for three of our first year teachers, reflecting on the past year and looking forward to the next.

1. Do you know anything now that you wish you knew in September?
2. What are you looking forward to next year?



Ms. Khosla:

1. "I wish I had known that my students were more willing to do their homework when it was on a worksheet rather than out of the textbook"
2. "I'm looking forward to knowing half of the sophomore class too, because this year I only know freshmen, and so next year I'll know half the freshmen class, and fifty percent of the sophomore class."



Profe Bartis:

1. "I really liked the novelty factor of my first year: pink slips, the obsession students have for Panera's bagels, pep rallies, and Lacrosse's rules. All new things to me."
2. "I look forward to teaching new classes, hearing from my "old" students, and helping Mr. Tang with the robotics team."



Ms. Lewis:

1. "For me, the most important thing that I wish I had known in September that I know for sure now is that I did not need to worry about how wonderful the students in my classes would be. I have been absolutely delighted with the warmth and kindness shown to me as a new teacher this year by both the faculty and students."
2. "Next year, I am looking forward to learning more about the SSSAS community and meeting more wonderful members of the school."

Summer Movie Preview

By Harrison Brown '20

With summer looming on the horizon, people like to spend their summer in a lot of different ways: going to the beach, playing with friends, and going to Nats games. However, there are ways to relax and enjoy summer out of the sun, including going to the movies.



Guardians of the Galaxy Volume 2

May 5 release

Director: James Gunn

Cast: Chris Pratt, Zoe Saldana, Dave Bautista, Kurt Russell, Vin Diesel, Bradley Cooper
Synopsis: The further adventures of Marvel's space-faring group of misfits, with Peter Quill meeting his mysterious father.

Buzz: Slash Film says that fans of the first Guardians film (which they call "a minor miracle") will absolutely love this one. "Vol. 2 is funnier than most movies that are marketed as pure comedies...and it has an emotional weight that makes these characters even better than they already were." Rolling Stone adds that the film features "a new mixtape of Seventies and Eighties pop hits and enough space-opera snark to shake a nebula at." And, apparently Baby Groot dances.



Baby Driver

June 28 release

Director: Edgar Wright (Shaun of the Dead, Hot Fuzz, The World's End, Scott Pilgrim vs. the World)

Cast: Ansel Elgort, Kevin Spacey, Lily James, Jon Bernthal, Eiza González, Jon Hamm and Jamie Foxx.

Synopsis: A talented young getaway driver sets out on one last job, only to learn that getting away from a life of crime isn't as easy as avoiding the police after a robbery. The Washington Post reported that director Robert Rodriguez described the film as an "action musical."

Buzz: Indie Wire reports that director Edgar Wright "takes a ludicrous concept and turns it into a brilliant exercise in high style and a rush of big ideas." In this case, "Baby Driver is Heat remade as a jukebox musical, with the main character's personal soundtrack (he's always listening to music) informing all of the action on screen," says Slash Film. Rolling Stone's preview mentions an intense soundtrack and visually

impressive chase scenes. IGN.com (Imagine Games Network) gives this movie an 8.5 out of 10 rating, and they think that the first scene is the best of the whole movie. "See it in the loudest theater you can find. And then see it again," advises Slash Film.



War for the Planet of the Apes

July 14 release

Director: Matt Reeves

Cast: Andy Serkis, Woody Harrelson, Steve Zahn, Amiah Miller, Karin Konoval, Judy Greer and Terry Notary

Synopsis: In the third chapter of the rebooted Planet of the Apes series, Caesar and his ape tribe find themselves in conflict with an army of human soldiers.

Buzz: Meta Critic explains the plot: "Caesar and his apes are crited into a deadly conflict with an army of humans led by a ruthless Colonel (Woody Harrelson). Caesar wrestles with his darker instincts and begins his own mythic quest to avenge his kind. Caesar and the Colonel are pitted against each other in an epic battle that will determine the fate of both their species and the future of the planet." Slash Film says "If this film is even as good as Dawn of the Planet of the Apes, this will probably be the best trilogy of films released since the original Star Wars movies (or the Lord of the Rings films, depending on your tastes)." Rolling Stone compares Harrelson's Colonel to Marlon Brando in Apocalypse Now, and writes that the film is "the most epic and ambitious Apes movie yet."



Dunkirk - July 21 release

Director: Christopher Nolan

Cast: Tom Hardy, Kenneth Branagh, Mark Rylance, Cillian Murphy, Harry Styles

Synopsis: A dramatization of the famous evacuation of 330,000 French, British, Belgian and Dutch troops from the beaches of the seaport Dunkirk as Germany advanced into France

during World War II.

Buzz: Slash Film focuses on the fact that Christopher Nolan is directing this movie. Even though movies about World War II are nothing new, "there's something about Nolan tackling this moment in history, complete with IMAX cameras at his disposal, that adds some interest to an otherwise familiar cinematic setting." The New York Times says that the IMAX cameras used are "the gold standards for movies designed to be seen big."

Vascott Continued



A: Probably not, in terms of elaboration, as I was just thinking, the main things are what I said. I would just emphasize that you should be true to yourself and be good, and if you are, then it won't be necessarily easier but you'll have the strength of yourself to rely on. And, the same thing about being present and not scattering your brain all over the place. Those are things that have taken me a long time to learn, and back to your first question, I would remind myself of all of these things.

Q: What is one special memory from your time at SSSAS?

A: I have so many, this is really hard. Lot's of individual talks come to mind, which I'm not gonna share! The first time that I started to feel like I was going to cry, on leaving, was when I went to Evening of the Arts and saw everybody performing. I just thought "these are my people, it's gonna be hard to leave." So that was very touching for me, and since then I've had more.

Q: As of now, do you have any parting words for your current and former students?

A: Wow, parting words[sigh]. I would just say, love each other and take care of each other. That's what we really need, and if we all do that, the world's gonna be a better place.

Q: Do you have any plans post-SSAS?

A: Well, first of all I'm gonna have a summer! Which I don't normally get. I'm going to go to Maine and spend some time in a cabin in the woods with my husband. Then on the first week of school, so I don't feel so sad about not being here, I'm going to the beach for a week with a girlfriend. So those are two things, but I've always had a lot of things I haven't had a lot of time for, and one of them was, for a while, I was learning to play the hammered dulcimer and I haven't had time to practice, so I want to start taking lessons again. And finally I want to spend some more time with my mom, she's 97, and I need to do that while I can.

Q: If you could go anywhere in the world for a week where would you go?

A: Australia and New Zealand come to mind but I've always wanted to go to the Galapagos. And that goes with the fact that I teach adaptation biology and the whole Darwinian thing. And there are lots of cultures that I haven't gotten to see. I haven't been to Europe much, so Great Britain as well is somewhere I'd like to go.

Are APs Worth It?

By Jamie McLucas '18 and Afua Nyantakyi '18

It's the end of the year, and for most students only one thing is holding them back from a relaxing three months of vacation: final exams. While 20 percent of your semester grade is enough to motivate any student to study, that isn't always the case when it comes to AP courses. The AP exams do not count toward a student's course grade, and college credit is often only offered to students with high exam scores. The gamble of potentially working hard to no avail leaves most students wondering whether or not it's worth it to take that grueling three-hour-long exam in the first place.

Some students tend to make a distinction between which exams are and aren't worth it, then distribute their effort accordingly. For example, senior Yukt Mitash explained that he took three of his five AP exams this year seriously. He needed a five on the other two exams in order to get credit, but did not feel as strong in these subjects, so he chose not to try on them. However, overall, Yukt said that it was definitely worth it to take AP exams, as you can save money by not being required to take introductory college courses.

However, some students have other motivations for not trying on particular exams. For example, senior JP Willis didn't try on his AP physics exam because he had already done well enough to get college credit on his AP Chemistry exam his junior year and did not need any more science credits for college. He also didn't try on his AP English Literature exam because he is not going to pursue English in college. To the contrary, he put lots of effort into his AP Latin exam in order to place out of introductory classes because he plans on taking Latin throughout college.

Despite the strategic planning when it comes to effort, Margaret Ferguson '17 concluded that in this school "more people try overall [on their AP exams] than don't." Jessica Edwards '17 also hopes that other students "know that this is something that their parents did pay money for and hopefully that they should try. Both Margaret and Jessica agreed that the College Board should not place too much weight on the AP exam, it being "one test, not a total reflection of how you did in the class."

With regard to AP classes, it seems students choose to take different ones for different reasons. Junior Zach Morris said that he takes some APs because he is genuinely interested and passionate about the subject area, while he takes others simply for the AP designation.

Ms. Hardwick, AP U.S. history teacher believes that the AP classes can "take away from some skills that you can develop in highschool and focus more on test taking. They aren't really focusing on skills that will help you later in college."

Ms. Weith, associate director of college counseling, said that AP classes and exams are completely worth putting effort into, and are important in the college process. She explained that this is in no small part due to the fact that students all over the world take the AP exams, which allows schools to compare students on a much larger scale. However, she also recognized the fact that AP exam scores in sophomore and junior year are more important than those in senior year because those scores cannot be shared with colleges during the admissions process.

Mr. Mallet explained that in his opinion, in addition to being an opportunity for students to pursue a subject area that they are passionate

about at the collegiate level, APs are important because they demonstrate to colleges that students are pushing themselves at the highest level of academic rigor at their school. However, he also recognized that many students view AP courses merely as AP exam prep opportunities and for the AP designation on their transcript, and as a result take these courses and exams without a genuine interest in the subject. He also said that AP course curriculums can be very rigid and not allow students to work as much within the class and subject matter, and

that learning should be more organic.

SSSAS offers 24 AP classes. According to The College Board's online data, in 2016 approximately 2.5 million high school students worldwide took AP exams. Of those who took the AP US History exam, 11.9 percent scored a five, and 52.4 percent got a three or higher. Of those who took the AP English Literature exam, 7.4 percent scored a five, and 54.6 got a three or higher, and of those who took the BC Calculus exam, 48.5 percent scored a five, and 81.1 percent got a three or higher.

In	Out
fidget spinners	paying attention in class
summer	finals
real tans	spray tans
freedom	school
class of 2018	class of 2017
duck donuts	sugar shack
Guardians of the Galaxy	Pirates of the Carribean
Air Force Ones	Adidas
milly rocking	dabbing



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