

Forum

Rearranged grad requirements prove to be taxing on student schedules; forecasting plans revisited

EMILY REED

With the end of the school year a few months away, why would we rearrange graduation requirements for two classes? Just a week before forecasting, on April 4, counselors announced that the requirements had been adjusted for this year's sophomores and freshmen.

The differences are simple. The change in graduation requirements made in 2008 was imposed prior to the Class of 2012's freshman year. This made it easier to adapt to the new classes and changes in expectations. The current change, however, comes only two months before the end of my second year in high school, and it really shook up my schedule. With the addition of three new required social studies classes such as Civics and Gov, World History Green and Economics to fit into my already jam-packed schedule, it makes it difficult to fit in everything I had planned to take.

The number of social studies credits required is

still the same at six, but the classes that students can take to achieve these credits have been changed.

"We no longer offer International Relations and Crisis," Lou Bailey, principal said. "However, World History Gold will combine some aspects of both of these classes."

Making classes such as Civics and Government and Economics required for graduation creates a more "cookie cutter" look on transcripts, not only in our own high school, but throughout the state.

In the past our district has not complied with the state standards regarding psychology, but now are conforming. Last year, there was more variety in the combination of classes offered to students, such as International Relations and Crisis which have been cut for next year. Classes were taken based on what

the individual wanted to take or was interested in. By making us all take the same classes, there is not a lot of variation or individuality from student to student.

"We didn't necessarily change the requirements," Bailey said. "We just rearranged which classes would

psychology has been made an elective credit. We are just now conforming with that," Bailey said.

This year the state standards for graduation requirements were changed, causing the district to comply with the changes.

"I wanted to take psychology, but now since it doesn't count, I can't take it

anymore. I can't take as many electives that I wanted to," Emily Mathes, freshman, said.

Timing is an important component of this change as well. Why apply these changes to

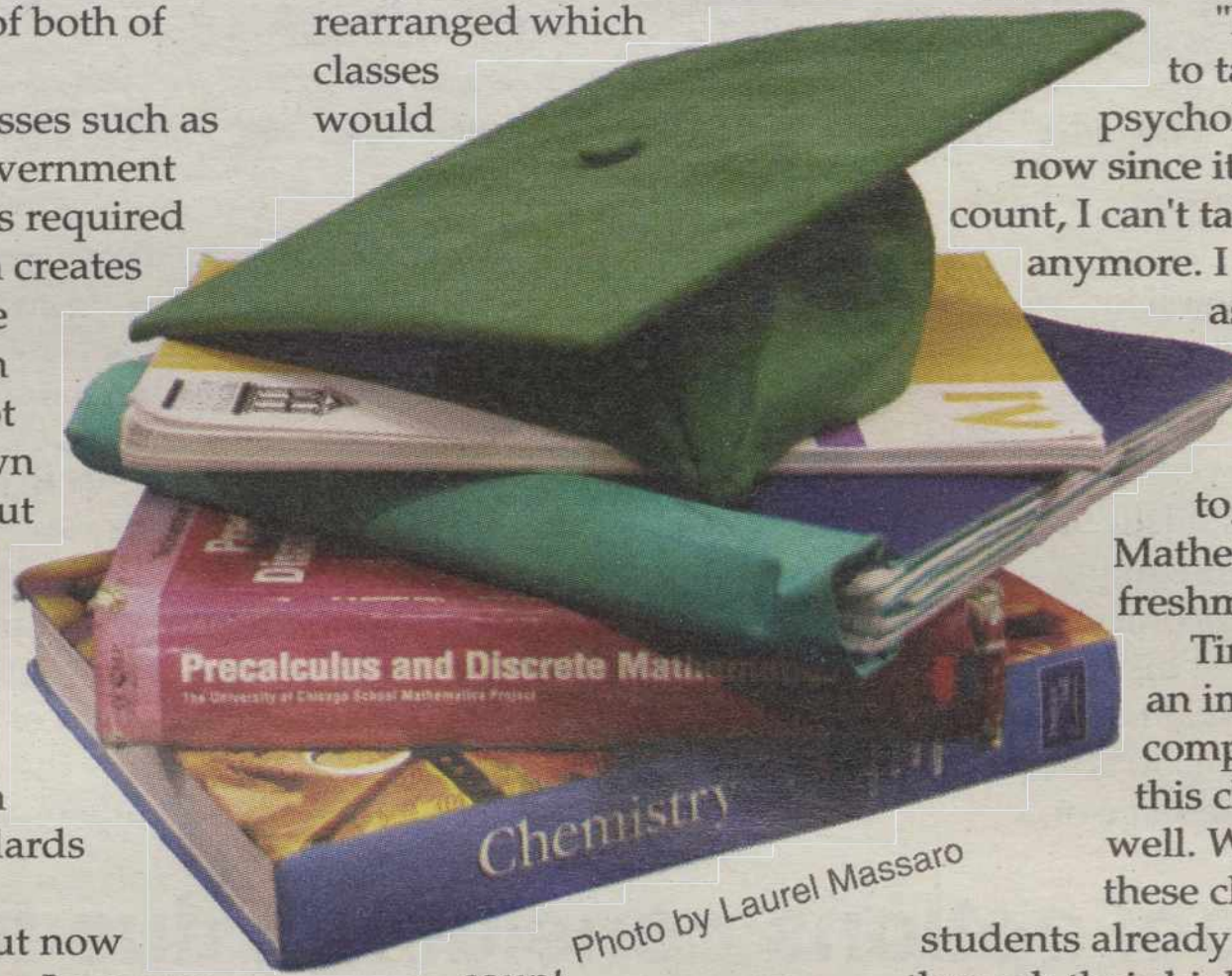
students already half-way through their high school career? Some of us already have all of our classes planned out, and a drastic scheduling change shakes up everything.

"We are currently going on a case-by-case basis. If a

sophomore is taking or had taken psychology it counts as a social studies credit," Bailey said. "Students that signed up for AP Psych in the fall met with counselors to decide if that was a class that they still wanted to take given that it would not be counted as a social studies credit."

Graduating classes of 2013 and 2014 are affected by this change.

Because this is the first year in which this change is implemented, we are basically stuck with it. But there is good news. The little "wiggle room" that these changes may create make students think twice before taking classes. It makes students choose electives carefully, knowing that there will be fewer class options in the future to fulfill the continued six credit social studies requirement. This could also encourage the four year planning that the counselors suggest during forecasting every year. While these new requirements are bothersome, they may be a blessing in disguise.



count

as social studies, and which ones would be electives."

According to Bailey, psychology has widely been classified as an elective credit. "All around the state,

Reduce, reuse, recycle; our generation can make change

CIARA WOLFE

Look around you. Do you see loose pieces of paper lying around? Empty plastic bottles or bags littering the floor? Most of these materials will be thrown in the garbage by the end of the day. One plastic bottle that goes into the garbage will take 700 years to decompose. Billions of tons of recyclable paper are thrown away each year. Chances are, you're surrounded by thousands of recyclable materials each day. There are several ways for people to reduce the amount of materials that are wasted. It all depends on whether or not our society will take the initiative to make the world a better place.

Recycling and conservation are vital to our world. In order to prevent wasting the Earth's resources, the population must become more aware of the benefits of recycling. The consequences of wasting resources will be great if our up-and-coming generation doesn't reuse materials.

Although recycling rates have gone up in the past few years, there is much more that we can be doing as a society, and as a school, to reduce waste as well as conserve resources.



Photo by Laurel Massaro

Victoria Guerchon, junior, collects recycling during her third period math class. According to the EPA, in 2009 paper and paperboard products accounted for about 28 percent of all materials in the municipal waste stream. In that same year, 62 percent of all the paper that Americans used was recycled.

As a whole, the United States recycles only 0.6 percent of the 100 billion plastic bags that are brought home from grocery stores each year

(according to the New York Times). The other 99.4 percent of the plastic bags end up in landfills or as litter, on land or in the ocean. According to the

Earth Resource Foundation, each of these plastic bags will take 1,000 years to decompose on land, and 450 years in water. The Environmental Paper Network says that of all paper in America during 2010, 44 percent was wasted. The paper industry's goal is to reduce this number to 40 percent by 2012. The past few years have seen large increases in recycled materials; however 100 acres of forest are being cut down per minute in order to make paper, almost half of which is not recycled. Plastic bottles are responsible for 50 percent of all recyclable waste.

If our generation doesn't make a change regarding how we dispose of materials, the coming years will hold many consequences. First, fuel prices are affected by the amount of recycling that goes on. By making more products from scratch, much more energy is used than simply salvaging old materials. Fuel prices then go up, which causes a ripple effect throughout the economy, making prices higher on everything. Secondly, wasting materials makes the Earth a dirtier environment for us to live in. The Earth is only so big, and the only way to avoid

taking up space with landfills and garbage is through using fewer materials and reusing. Lastly, producing new materials rather than recycling old ones creates harmful emissions that pollute the air. Therefore, recycling promotes cleaner air for us to breathe.

As a school, there are many ways that we can save resources and recycle more. The most obvious way would be to reduce the usage of paper. If teachers simply printed worksheets using both sides of the paper, our paper consumption would be cut in half. Also, if possible, more assignments could be done and turned in electronically, which has the potential to significantly reduce WLHS' paper consumption. As for recycling aluminum cans and plastic bottles, all we need to do is place recycling bins next to garbage cans, so that students can recycle without using any extra time or energy.

By starting the movement to recycle more now, our future generations can implement recycling for the rest of their lives. Integrating new recycling ideas into our school could be the start to the change that will make our Earth better.