

Hello Incoming Freshman,

First off, congratulations on making it to Stuyvesant! It's not an easy feat that you have accomplished so be proud of yourself! I hope you enjoy the four wonderful years you will be spending here. However, now that you have made it to Stuyvesant, "surviving" is its own challenge. But don't worry about being thrown into the unknown, I had already experienced it for you! As a self-proclaimed "fairly successful freshman" and now a rising sophomore, I have several pieces of advice that I hope you will consider so that the Stuyvesant life is not as depressing and stressful as some make it to be. I will be completely honest with you that I am guilty of procrastinating, in fact, I'm a chronic procrastinator. Despite this, I still tend to do very well with my school work... all at the expense of my well-being. So, though it is possible to survive while procrastinating, avoid making your life harder than it needs to be. Do homework during your frees! Start a project at least a week before the deadline! Another piece of advice is a pretty common one but I really do recommend you join clubs, but most importantly, make friends. If you lack time management to join clubs, at the very least get acquainted with your classmates and make friends. Having someone to talk to, ask questions, and suffer together can be very comforting. Now that I've given some general advice, I have a few tips for this class specifically— Big History taught by the exemplary teacher Miss Firdman. Consider yourself blessed to have the privilege of being in this class. To begin, the class is very informative and engaging without being all too heavy on the workload. Miss Firdman does care about your well-being and offers fair homework assignments (around two to three times a week) and project deadlines are assigned with sufficient time. Expect a considerable amount of writing... even if writing isn't your forte, I guarantee that by the end of the school year, your writing will have improved significantly. Now, for some tips. First, never ignore any opportunities! Miss Firdman

frequently puts up extra credit assignments, especially before a test (usually in the form of a study guide). The extra credit assignments are intended to be easy points for you, so don't pass up on it. Second, be organized! This should go with any class. Miss Firdman gives notebook quizzes to make sure you're on the same page, but as long as you keep your notes and homework organized, it's more easy points. Third, participate! I have to admit that I am soft-spoken and have not participated as much as I could have. Don't be afraid to add your own thoughts to class discussions. Miss Firdman does not bite! She tries very hard to make the classroom environment safe and appealing for everyone with her "jokes" (just play along and laugh ☺) and ridiculous accents. Fourth, make acquaintances and friends with your classmates! You can expect lots of social interaction in this class. Some memories off the top of my head include reading passages with a partner, discussion ideas in a group, classroom debates, presentations, and group projects. If you are ever absent, it will be nice to have someone to count on to send you the notes for that day in case there is a notebook quiz. Lastly, do not stress! This class will be nothing in difficulty as compared to some of the other classes you will be taking this year. As long as you do your homework and demonstrate clear effort, the class will be a breeze. Tests are light as long as you have a general understanding of the unit. Not to mention, almost all the homework assignments are Cornell Notes— in other words, Miss Firdman assigns studying for an upcoming test as homework. You will surely find yourself looking back at previous homework to study, so do not discard them! Miss Firdman's class has been a wonderful experience for me and gives me hope for my future at Stuyvesant. It's not always where you will get a kind, genuinely passionate, and understanding teacher. So, treasure this privilege and make the most out of it! Best of luck to you!

"Double A Batteries"

Letter to Incoming Freshman

Dear Incoming Freshmen,

Welcome to Stuyvesant High School! Even though you are done with the SHSAT, the hard work is not over. Freshmen year is a year for new kids to adapt to their new environment. Since Stuyvesant is a large school, it can be easy to get lost. However, it's not that bad! Freshman year is designed to prepare you for future years, such as the much dreaded junior year. For example, you will learn how to take advantage of your free periods. Find out what your capabilities are in terms of productivity during these frees. Learn what/where you like to eat if you decide to go out for lunch. This will help you start your other years already knowing how you want to spend the limited free time that you have. Also, learn how Stuy offers to help its students. There is a printing station on the second floor, and there are computers for you to use in the library. If you need to ask for help, you can always ask your guidance counselor for advice or sign up for tutoring with ARISTA or AIS. Freshman year is relatively relaxed, so figure out what clubs and sports teams you want to join and also what extracurriculars you might want to do.

In Ms. Firdman's Big History class, be prepared for essays. You will be writing a lot in this class, but this doesn't mean that you should be scared. Your essays will get better since you learn how to improve your writing in this class. To do well in Big History, try to be specific and add details whenever you write on your tests. Do the homework well. This will help you understand the class better and prepare you for tests better. Also, make sure you do the extra credits for Big

History. Many of them are designed to help you study for tests, so doing the extra credit will help you do better on the test, not only by adding additional points to your grade, but also helping you understand the material better. But most importantly, keep a positive attitude both inside and outside of class.

In general, don't panic. Whatever troubles you might have, know that other kids are probably going through the same problems. Find people to talk to and connect with, and surround yourself with people, things, and activities that make you happy and make you who you are.

Extra Credit Advice for Freshman

Dear Incoming Freshman reading this,

Congrats on getting in! Don't ever have regrets coming to this school; going to this school is an opportunity you can't buy. You're going to have a great time here, and you'll definitely love freshman year (even though it is a bit of a pain).

There's a lot of things I wish I knew coming into Stuyvesant, but since you're in history with Ms. Firdman, I'll start with quick advice for this class. The number one thing I would tell you is to prepare and schedule well. In most history classes, including this one, you need to write a lot. This can vary in length and intensity from your cornell notes, to your essay exams, to your final essay. No matter which it is, take your time on it, and take advantage of the time you're given. In Ms. Firdman's class if you have an exam with an essay, you'll typically get a week, and a study guide that doubles down as extra credit. **Do it please!** It's one of the best ways to prepare for the tests, and will give you a safety net for the test. Not doing it is foolish, I regret not doing all of them, since they can really build up overtime. The second thing I want to tell you is to value the people you meet in your class. Never feel uncomfortable to introduce yourself because you think you're quirky, or don't fit in. I felt the same way, and it's probably the best thing I learned in Ms. Firdman's class. Some of the people I met in that class are some of my best friends (rip original group). They're a really good resource and don't be afraid to become good friends with them. Last thing for Ms. Firdman's class is **don't cheat**. I know this sounds obvious

but you'd be surprised how many people don't follow this implied rule. Cheating never works. It just cheapens your own reputation and other's faith in you. Cheating will make it hard for you to do your actual work and isn't a reliable alternative to sucking it up and doing the work.

Now is where I give you general advice, just stuff I really wish I knew walking into my classes. The absolute, absolute top advice I will tell you is to study smarter, not harder. You will probably realize when you start getting work in Stuy is that there is a lot of stuff you need to learn. You'll also realize some classes are more or less just a refresher of a previous course you've already taken (if you went to an advanced school, or you're in AT bio). If that's the case, you need to allocate your time so that you study best. Make sure you study for understanding, not memorization. In addition, you have to speak to your teachers and guidance counselors. They're there to help, and let them help you **early**. That way you have more time to repair your issues, not when it's 2 days before the end of term and you need extra credit. Also, it just improves the quality of class. The last thing I want to tell you is **don't worry about your grades**, (well not literally). Getting an 85 on a test isn't the end of the world. It just means you have improvements to make. Failure leads to success. I was failing spanish, bio, and probably geo by the third week of school. Of course, I'm not failing now. You cannot let it define you, and understanding the material is far more important.

Appreciate the time you have here, and in freshman year. I've been told it flies by for most people. Hopefully I helped you, and best of luck.

Also go Stuyvesant Peglegs (the football one)!!

June 17, 2019

Dear incoming freshmen,

Please read this paper, you'll gain a lot of insight about life at Stuyvesant and doing well in Ms. Firdman's class.

During the start of the school year, I had this predisposed thought that I was going to do well and succeed, just like in middle school. But what I've learned over my first year at Stuyvesant is that there's so much more than just success in academics, doing well in your classes and receiving high marks on your tests. For me, it was tough transitioning from the complacent lifestyle at my old middle school, always receiving good grades on "decent" work. At Stuy, the school really makes you reflect on the things you're doing. It challenges you in a way that isn't like middle school. You have responsibilities. You need to pace yourself, reduce procrastination, and just do it, but not at the last minute. I know procrastination is something that we are all at fault, but hear me out. If you want to sleep a decent number of hours every night, you need to organize your life by setting priorities when you start projects, complete your homework on time, and place a limit on your social media use. It just isn't worth your time mindlessly scrolling through your phone and liking other people's photos. This year, I came to the realization that time is valuable. You can waste all the money or energy in the world, but ultimately you can't waste time. It's something that you're never getting back, no matter how hard you wish for. So, spend your time wisely. Make memories with your friends, responsibly. Think about the next four years, and the things that you want to achieve, rather than letting others dictate them for you. Spend some time reflecting on your past self and think about ways that you can be better. If you have some free time, spend every week, reflecting on the things that you can improve on, whether it is participating more in class, being more active in clubs, exercising more often, or starting a new habit. Whatever it is, make the next four year of your life at Stuyvesant High School the best it could be.

On the topic of the class, Big History was one of the best classes that I took freshman year. Ms. Firdman was an unbelievable teacher, humorous, fun, interactive, friendly, approachable, and all the positive words you could describe her with. It was such an amazing class. During the beginning of the class, you'll start settling in, and getting comfortable with the class rules. Some of the class rules include being respectful to your classmates, participating in class, and not committing academic dishonesty. Throughout your time in class, you will have to do readings whether on an online textbook or on the Big History Project website. As you're reading, you'll have to do Cornell notes. Cornell notes are a form of note-taking method where you'll have two columns: one as the main points and the other being the supporting details. At the bottom of the two columns, you'll have to write a summary being about 7-8 sentences. Your Cornell notes should take about an hour to complete, if they are concise and comprehensive, and they are excellent study guides for when your have tests coming up. Ms. Firdman will post all the homework on her class website monthly, so be sure to pace yourself if you have other projects and tests coming up.

In class, the majority of the time is based on class discussions where Ms. Firdman calls on numerous students at a time to share their answers. If you're shy and unwilling to participate, these are

good times to speak up and just talk about your ideas. No one is going to judge you if you say something unclear or just a wrong answer. When talking about Big History, you'll be exploring different time periods of increasing complexity. By the name itself, the class will go through the entire history from the Big Bang to the modern era, looking at how events or thresholds lead to more advancements in the complex creation of the Universe. During mid-December, the class will start going in depth towards Global History, learning about the different religions and important time periods between the 10th century to the 17th century such as the Renaissance, African and American empires, Atlantic Slave Trade, English Civil War, etc. These topics will help prepare for what you'll learn in sophomore year, if you're going to AP World, AP Euro, or Global Studies. Starting at the beginning of June, instead of learning about history, we'll be transitioning towards a debate assessment, where we choose our desired topics and construct points to strengthen your argument.

You'll also be having frequent tests, projects, and research essays throughout the entire semester. This year we've written at least three research papers that you'll have to submit on Turnitin, a site for checking plagiarism. For me, the tests that Ms. Firdman gave were fairly straightforward and simple, but you'll have to do a bit of studying prior. As much as you want to give into procrastination, fight it. It's a deadly disease, and it's something that we've all been diagnosed before. Seriously, plan out what you're going to do, and do it. There's really no time for slacking off if you want to do well in school. But on the other hand, you need to have some energy and socializing, so make sure that you talk to your friends and hang out with them every Friday or so. Just be sure to manage your time.

The last thing that I want to end with is about making friends and having connections with people. When you come into Stuyvesant High School as a freshman year, you'll encounter new people in almost different classes. These people come from a multitude of backgrounds and cultures. Be sure to make friends, and make the right ones that'll help support you. Sure you can stay with your old middle school friends, but high school is about opening up and talking to people you don't know. It's part of what makes freshman year such a journey as you meet new faces and explore your passion.

Sincerely,
Kai Wei Zhang

Dear Incoming Freshie,

Hello!! I'm writing this letter as a rising sophomore, as part of an extra credit assignment. Don't get me wrong, I love extra points, but there are a lot of points I'm eager to share with you.

As I'm writing this letter, it's already June and I'm practically finished with freshman year. My first year at Stuyvesant was truly something I hadn't expected and was honestly a huge eye-opener for me. Personally, going into the year, I was ingrained with the middle school mindset of being told that I was gifted and was of above average intelligence. I'd always completed all my homework and projects with ease, never having to pull an all-nighter. But, I'd soon become deeply humbled by my experience in Stuyvesant.

In the first few months of school, I struggled a lot. It's hard adjusting to a new environment, and you shouldn't be too surprised if you find that you too struggle in the beginning. After all, the workload is much more intense and unforgiving. Maybe you have an amazing work ethic, but for those who have a procrastination problem like me, you won't survive in the long run. I cannot stress how valuable time is in high school. For me, I wasted a lot of my time in the beginning of the school year, and it led to a lot of unproductivity, late nights, and a general feeling of regret.

You too will have many opportunities to better yourself in Stuyvesant, and it's your own responsibility to realize them early on and take advantage of them. Stuyvesant is unlike a lot of high schools in that it cares about its students and provides them with more than enough resources for help. However, you must be willing to take the initiative and hold yourself accountable for your own mistakes. Doing so will allow you to grow as a person and achieve your goals. In high school, rather than pity yourself, one must truly be able to realize that you will have to work for your goals rather than expect them to come easily.

Big History is one such class where you cannot expect to improve without putting in the time and effort. Taught by Ms. Firdman, I can honestly say that it was one of my favorite classes this year, and I'm not only saying that because she'll probably read this. She is truly an amazing teacher and you're lucky that you have someone like her so early on. Big History itself is a very stimulating class in that it makes you think and ask questions. It's unlike other history classes, as it's much less focused on facts rather than the ideas, conclusions, and questions that arise from them. Ms. Firdman personally was the perfect teacher for this course, as she made learning enjoyable and encouraged discussion in her class.

As much as she is a fun person, her class is just as challenging. You will have to study a lot and be able to allocate your time well, otherwise her amount of workload will overwhelm you. Additionally, asking questions is one of the most important things to me in her class. Some of the best students I know are the ones who ask the most questions, and for good reason. If you don't understand something, then ask rather than be left ignorant. The goal of the class isn't to appear to be the smartest and most knowledgeable, but rather to gain a fuller understanding of

everything. As Confucius once said, "The man who asks a question is a fool for a minute, the man who does not ask is a fool for life." No one will judge you for being curious.

Don't juul, and remember to stay in school. Most of all though, don't lose yourself in the workload. Your physical and mental health prioritizes over everything. Good luck in Stuy, you freshies.

- Anonymous.

Dear Incoming Freshman,

Congratulations on getting into Stuyvesant! A new chapter of your life starts here in this school, and it might seem intimidating at first. You might be feeling confused in this 10 floored school at the beginning, but don't worry, you'll know every corner by your third week. Your selection of courses so far has been very good, because you chose big history. Big history is a very interesting course that starts off from the big bang, and moves on into the global curriculum throughout the second semester. Ms. Firdman is a really understanding and caring teacher, so talk to her if you have any concerns. She offers extra credit for almost every test, so please take advantage and do all of them, because this really boosts up your grade. Homework is usually assigned every other day, and is posted on the website in advance, so make sure to take advantage of this also, and get work done early. This leads me directly into my next point. Stuyvesant is very manageable if you don't procrastinate. Get your work done as soon as possible, and most importantly, take advantage of your frees. I usually got 7.5 to 8 hours of sleep every night, and it was because I got my work done as quickly as I could. Moreover, sleep is really important, and you should prioritize it as much as your work. This is one of the things Ms. Firdman really stresses on. Get enough sleep. It really helps with academics, and pulling all nighters is not healthy. Again, talk to Ms. Firdman if you have any concerns. Her tests are very fair, and some of the are essays that you get to do at home. In big history, you will get a really good grade if you put the work in, and be sure to take notes. There is a notebook check every marking period, but take notes not only for the check, but also for yourself, which can in many

ways help study for tests, and study something in the future. Overall, big history was the right choice, and if you need anything, me, and the rest of the Stuy community are right by you.

Best wishes,

Kartik Vanjani

Dear Class of '23,

As you probably already know, high school is essentially a different world from middle school. Stuyvesant is the second best high school in New York City. Once you think about it, Stuy seems like a really difficult school that gives you hardly any breathing time. Honestly, my experience in freshman year has showed me that the pressure depends on the student.

I think I have a lot of connections, so I have seen all kinds of people at Stuy. I know some people that dedicate all their time to schoolwork and studying with minimal interaction with friends outside of school. Make sure you don't do that because being able to relieve the stress of school or just have strong connections is honestly far more worth it than getting absolutely perfect grades. Then there's people that do not try to dedicate all their time to school work but do so anyways. I took an AP in freshman year and all the kids in that class overthought homework assignments to the point where they took seven hours to do what took me half an hour. To prevent this, start developing good time management from early on and make sure to not get too distracted while doing homework. A personality that describes quite a lot of Stuyvesant students, is those who flex on social media about how little sleep they got or how much work they have. If you're wondering, I am far from one of these people. The problems with these people is that they are far too distracted by texts and posts that they would just rather measure the sheer amount of work as opposed to figuring out how to tackle it. Another, which is more depressing than nearly any other student, is a person that dedicated time until the person couldn't handle it anymore. At the start of the year, the individual showed good grades and was quite charismatic, despite being the "flex on social media" type. By the end of the second semester, the individual began to post about visits to a psychiatrist, undernutrition, and getting high. You may be wondering what mentioning this story would do. It is to give an example of how the work can get to people. There are two primary personalities that show a counter to this. Obviously, there's the perfect being that is attractive, scholarly, charismatic, good time management, literally everything. But then there's the demographic that I definitely fall under.

There are people who decide to under-dedicate to school. Stuyvesant has a policy that regular classes can assign a maximum of thirty minutes of homework, while APs and ATs can assign up to an hour. This means the average freshman is allowed to spend a maximum of three hours on homework everyday, but that's only if every class assigns homework. Using me as an example, I probably spend an hour on homework everyday. Getting to school takes me an hour by train, so I manipulate that time alongside my two free periods and lunch which stem from the fact that I took no electives. This and the fact that I only study during these times has led me to spend very little time on school at home which further allowed me to hang out a lot with my friends. In my opinion, it's nice but it gets weird when scholarly friends discuss grades.

However, the biggest threat of all of freshman year is definitely the end of each semester. That is the time of year where all the teachers assign projects, some even assign multiple, but this time just reflects the mentality of the student as well. I'll tell you how I got through it. First, understand what you need to do. Once you got that done, pick the order you want to do it in. I prefer doing it in order of due date but prioritizing the easier projects. Now that you understand what you need to do, do one project a day, make sure you do not leave too much undone if you cannot finish it that day, and do not risk overworking yourself by trying to finish all your projects at once. After succeeding, feel free to flex on Insta or Facebook.

Overall, the same ideas can be applied to Ms. Fridman's class in particular. Her projects are on the scarier side, but it just looks scary. As cliché as it sounds, pace yourself, balance your life, and stay strong. I'm sure you will be fine.

Sincerely,
An Anonymous Upperclassmen

Dear incoming freshman,

Most of you probably think that Stuyvesant would be the hardest experience of your life according to what others say about it. This is nowhere near the truth though. There are countless clubs that cover virtually any interest, and if there isn't one that's about what you like, you can just make one. Through this you can make more friends and have a fun time. Stuy is an experience that, through time, you learn to love. Obviously, you have to try your best, but if you do that, school wouldn't even seem hard. What you have to focus on mostly is paying attention in class and doing the work that you are assigned, as the teachers also want the best for you. If you are confused about something, have social problems, or even problems with teachers, talk to your guidance counselor. They are also always there for you and will answer your questions regardless of what they are. Additionally, if you have any issues with school work or do not understand a specific topic in class, I would definitely suggest that you look into the Stuy Arista program. You can schedule one on one tutoring sessions that are very helpful. Specifically for essays, if you want to ask for help editing or proof-reading, it is useful to go to the writing department in the library. They check for any spelling or grammatical errors, and they can also help you with improving upon ideas in your essay.

Now, time for Big History. This course is incredibly interesting, and it teaches you a myriad of things that you have never known or even thought about before. Even if you, at first, think a topic is going to be boring, you end up learning so much about it that it becomes fun and thought-provoking. The class doesn't have very high of a work load, and the every-other-day system of homework assignments is extremely practical since it gives you time to do your homework for other classes or even do the Big History homework a day or more in advance. Notebook quizzes happen once a marking period, so make sure to take thorough notes. It is a win-win situation since it greatly assists you in learning and remembering class topics and discussions. As per the tests, they are not too hard if you put your mind to it, pay attention in class, and obviously study. The questions are very fair, and if there are open-ended questions, they are fairly graded. There are also projects that are assigned, both in groups and individually. Even though they can sometimes take up a good chunk of time, they are immensely useful as through research and communication you learn about a diverse array of subjects and you also learn how to work well in groups.

Aside from that, I would like to wish you all the best and have fun!

Good luck,

Dorin Flocos

Hi Incoming Freshman!

Get excited to start your first year here at Stuyvesant! I know what you might be thinking: Stuy gives so much homework and it is really competitive. After making it through my first year of Stuy, I'm truly being honest when I say everything is manageable and it's not as bad as rumors depict it to be. What's great about Stuy is that there are so many people, it is inevitable that you will find people you click with in every class and you will find your friend groups. Your friends and peers will be very supportive and help you throughout the year especially when you are stressed. A helpful tip is to join a team/club at Stuy that you have some interest in. Everyone that I know that has joined a team has loved it and made so many friends from it. It is especially good because you will make friends from grades above you that will be able to help you and give you advice on what lies ahead. Either way, you will find friends that help you out, such as sharing their study guides, so never be hesitant to reach out for help. Facebook also comes in handy with support because your classes will make groupchats on messenger and you can ask questions or post questions on your freshman Facebook group and people in your grade or higher grades will reply and help you. Moreover, joining a club or team that you have to attend after school is also beneficial because it teaches you how to manage your time. I swam with the Stuy swim team and my club team which practices 2-3 hours a day and it forced me to do my work and not procrastinate, and even with little time I was always able to do all my homework and study before 12. What I have come to realize is that many people procrastinate so much in the afternoon and leave all of their work for late at night and this will hurt you and your grades. To do well at Stuy pay attention in class and participate. Always do your homework, it doesn't always need to be perfect, but get it done because homework is an easy grade booster. When it comes to tests you will adjust to your teachers and the tests they give and you will find a way of studying that works best for you. Don't be discouraged if you do bad on your first tests, because that is normal and you will be able to improve and raise your grade.

For Ms. Firdman's Big History class specifically, I have a few tips. First of all, I'd just like to say her class is very interesting, I used to hate history, but the Big History curriculum and the vibe of the class is great. In her class, you should participate especially for the Do Now's. Moreover, make sure to take diligent notes in class because there are notebook quizzes after each marking period and this is another easy grade to get. For the homework, most of the time you will be doing Cornell Notes on pages in the textbook. If you take good Cornell Notes, when a test comes around you can use your homeworks as a study guide by simply reading over them. I also found it helpful to re-read the textbook pages prior to the test and fill out the study guides she provides, which are also worth extra credit (yay!).

Overall, I promise you will have an amazing freshman year at Stuy, and remember that your happiness comes first, so don't get too caught up in getting a high GPA, but at the same time do your best and with everything you do, give it your all. You got this!

Best of luck!

Mayumi Schaepers-Cheu

Letter to Incoming Freshmen Extra Credit

Dear Incoming Freshmen,

Welcome to Stuy! Here are some tips to help you transition to high school.

You've probably heard people say that you can only choose 2 out of 3 things: good grades, sleep, or a social life, which isn't true. The key to balancing all three is good time management. If you take advantage of your free period(s), lunch, and commute, and use that time to do homework or study, then you'll have a lot less work to do at home, and a lot more time to dedicate to sleep and extracurriculars. It was also helpful to me to set a bedtime for myself. This way, I was more motivated to finish my homework (since I work better on a time crunch), and I was able to get enough sleep (~8 hours a night). Getting enough sleep is really important. Sleep deprivation is very detrimental to your health (you might experience headaches, nausea, and other physical effects). It also lowers academic performance, because it is much harder to concentrate and your memory doesn't work as well. Despite what you might hear, it's definitely possible to get at least 7 hours of sleep a night, and you definitely should aim for that.

I also recommend signing up for clubs. There will be a Clubs & Pubs fair at the beginning of the year, and you should go to find out about and sign up for clubs. If you're on the fence about joining a club, go to the interest meeting to see if you like it. It's better to sign up for too many clubs and quit a few than to not sign up for any extracurriculars at all. Clubs and teams are really great and a big part of high school.

Lastly, if you're reading this letter, then that probably means that you're taking Big History. Big History is a really great and interesting class. Its curriculum covers history since the Big Bang, up through present day (and even the future!). The homework is usually to take Cornell Notes on a Big History or textbook reading. Some of them can be a bit lengthy, and take longer than 30 minutes. However, homework is generally assigned every other day, which means that you can do it in advance, or split it up between the days to create less work for yourself the night before. You should also try to take good notes in class. This includes writing down the date, Aim, and Do Now. This will help you do well on the notebook quizzes and will help you study for tests. In preparation for tests, Ms. Firdman provides a study guide template. I recommend using it, because it helps you focus your studying, and you get extra credit for it.

Overall, the transition to Stuyvesant might be tough, but I promise that it gets better. I hope you have a lot of fun in Big History and have a great freshman year!

- Nour

P.S. Feel free to message me on Facebook (@Charlotte Nour Kastoun) with any questions you might have :)

Dear incoming freshman,

First of all, congratulations on your acceptance to Stuyvesant! I know it was a long journey and you're probably exhausted from it all. So, for the first few days of school, make sure to take a rest because, after that, your REAL adventure in Stuyvesant will begin (and it's probably not as bad as you may think it is!)

The first thing you should do to prepare for this remarkable journey is to establish an easy-to-follow work schedule! The workload at Stuyvesant is a force not to be reckoned with and it's important to do your work on time so that it won't overwhelm you later on. When I was in middle school, I had the liberty to spend as much time as I wanted on each of my assignments so I can work them to perfection. However, that simply won't work out in Stuy. You may find yourself juggling many projects and assignments at once and it would be simply too time-consuming if you spend an hour on each of them. The first thing I recommend you to do is create some sort of To-Do list for all of your homework. Don't spend so much time on making it like what you see on Instagram or the Internet because chances are, you'll end up not using it. I downloaded an application called "myHomework" on my laptop and phone which I used to record all of my homework. After you've done that, take the time to plan out how much time you will allocate working on each assignment. I preferred to do all my smaller assignments during my frees/lunch in school and longer assignments at home. Of course, you should plan accordingly if you know you have something coming up during the week. Now, if you do happen to come across a situation in which you have a bajillion of things due the next day (it's okay, we've all been there), just take a deep breath, get rid of any distractions - including your phone - and take on each task one by one. It's also okay to slip up sometimes. Not every assignment, test, or project is worth an all-nighter. With that in mind, the best way to avoid such circumstances is to plan ahead!

The second thing you should strive to do is familiarizing yourself with Stuyvesant. Stuyvesant has a plethora of resources you can use to better your grade or for general advice. Many students use Facebook (yes, that old thing your mom probably uses) to communicate and ask any of their questions to upperclassmen. Additionally, if you're struggling in a class, I highly recommend you go to your teacher's AIS. Not only would you get personalized help but you would also get close to your teachers. If you're intimidated by your teachers, you can look into ARISTA instead where Stuyvesant students offer free tutoring. You should also spend some time learning more about the minor and simple things about Stuyvesant you wouldn't have known before, like where the bathrooms are, how the printing station works, how to fill an absence note, etc. It'll make your experience at a new school a lot less confusing and easier to manage. Don't be afraid to ask your teachers about any questions and concerns you have about the school. They'll be very understanding.

My last piece of advice regards Big History, the course you are probably taking now if you're reading this. If you do not know, Big History is a unique course that studies history from the start of our universe all the way to the present and future. The curriculum is broken down in

eight thresholds of increasing complexity and includes many approaches to history like science. Despite it being a different course, the class will go over material that other global classes are doing so you would be prepared for sophomore year. Big History can be a very enjoyable and informative course if you know how to manage your work and time. Frequently, Ms. Firdman will assign Cornell notes on the material taught the next day. It might seem troublesome to do them at first but in the long run, your Cornell notes would be a valuable source of studying material you can use for tests. Good Cornell notes can save you a lot of time studying. For projects and papers, use ARISTA's essay editing service! It's always helpful to have an extra set of eyes to look over your paper for any small mistakes you have. Lastly, don't be afraid to ask Ms. Firdman for any help or questions you have. If you're struggling in class, it's best to talk with your teacher before it gets any worse. Ms. Firdman is very kind and understanding. She doesn't bite!

I hope my advice sticks with you for your first year of high school. As you can probably tell, Stuyvesant is a challenging school and might be overwhelming at first. However, in Stuyvesant, there is no such thing as an impossible obstacle. Before you know it, freshman year will be over already and you will be out of school in no time! With that, I wish you the best of luck for your next four years in Stuyvesant High school.

Sincerely,
M. L.

Dear Freshmen,

First of all, congratulations on getting into Stuyvesant! Now, I know you probably have heard this a million times, but Stuyvesant is not an easy adjustment. You have to deal with more work, harder classes, and less sleep. You'll finally have to study for tests and actually have to pay attention in class. But don't let that worry you! Stuy offers many opportunities that definitely make it worthwhile, even if it might be a bit hard to get through. Anyways, I have some advice to make your freshman year a bit easier.

Freshman year for me wasn't that bad. I still have to get used to not having a lot of sleep, but my grades are pretty good and I have joined a good few extracurriculars that I enjoy immensely. So, if you really want to get the best experience out of Stuy, you should really join an extracurricular. These include things such as sports teams, Spectator (school newspaper), Key Club, Robotics, STC (Stuyvesant Theater Community) and the Speech and Debate Team. Those are a few of the big ones, but there are many smaller ones so I'm sure there are going to be a few that interest you. Look at the Facebook group for any announcements for interest meetings for clubs and go to any that interest you. You don't need experience to join most of these clubs, so don't hesitate in joining. For example, I was on Stage Crew for STC's production of *Wait Until Dark*, even though I had no experience. Joining an extracurricular will make you happier at Stuyvesant.

Now with extracurriculars, you need to manage your time well. This means that you should limit your procrastination. Now, I'm not saying that you should never procrastinate, since that is nearly impossible and that I'd be a massive hypocrite if I said that because I procrastinate a lot. Anyways, this includes doing your homework during your lunch and frees and limiting the amount of time you spend on your phone. Trust me, you will sleep earlier.

Also, you shouldn't stress about college or the number of APs your taking. I should've said this earlier, but you should only take classes that you are interested in. Doing so, you will be more motivated to do the work, which especially matters if you are planning to take an AP class. So, if you're feeling that you have to take an AP science class even if you aren't really interested in bio, you don't have to take it! It's perfectly fine to take AT Bio (I took it and I'm doing just fine)! Now with colleges, it's way too early to worry about that (that's for junior year). Also, there is something my guitar teacher says about college that I don't remember the exact wording, but I think it goes something like this, "The college you got into is the one that are meant to go to." Essentially, don't worry too much since it's all going to work out in the end.

I assume that if you are reading this letter, you are in Big History. Big History is a very interesting course that looks at history from the Big Bang to the future. It is very science oriented, with some of the thresholds being about the formation of the stars, life, and even elements. There is some history that is involved, but that is mainly in second semester. Ms. Firdman (who is a wonderful teacher), often assigns Cornell Notes with readings for homework. With my Cornell Notes, I made them as detailed as possible, even if it meant that I took a long time writing them. This made it easier to study for tests, since I only had to read a

handful of Cornell Notes instead of a whole unit in textbook (NOTE: While Big History doesn't have an official textbook, we get PDFs of the global textbook when we get to the more history oriented units). Now about her tests, they include multiple choice and/or writing. They are not that difficult, but you still have to study your notes since you have to retain information to answer the questions. There are sometimes essay tests, but they are pretty rare and it's not that difficult to write an essay in a period. She also offers extra credit, which you should do since it's actually pretty helpful when studying for the tests (Ex: she offers an essay outline for the essay tests and they helped me organize my thoughts, which made it easier to write the essay in a short amount of time). She also assigns many projects. They include a lot of informative writing and some presentation elements. My advice is that you should learn how to write a good thesis statement and learn how to include an argument in an informative paper. Those are things Ms.Firdman will teach you during class, but if you are still struggling with doing so, don't hesitate in contacting Ms.Firdman for help (she helped me with my thesis for the final project).

Now, I hope this letter made you feel a bit easier and well adjusted. Now I hope that you take some of my advice for your freshman year. They certainly would've made my life way easier.

Sincerely, Anonymous

Extra Credit

Dear Incoming Freshman,

Welcome to Stuyvesant High School! Stuy is very difficult at first because you have to leave behind old habits, and develop new, efficient ones as fast as you can. The school may seem large and scary, but most people are really nice and will go out of their way to help freshmen. In Stuy, to be successful you need to be hardworking. It doesn't always come down to grades. Yes, grades are important, but you also need to know how to communicate and ask for what you want. For example, if you are doing poorly in a class, you **MUST** go to the teacher and speak with them; you have to take the initiative. It may sound bad, but in Stuy, the teachers usually don't care about one student out of the hundreds they teach.

For Ms. Firdman's class, you just have to do all the homework and review it to do well on tests. She gives lots of extra credit opportunities and interactive projects. Big History was one of my favorite classes of freshman year because it's one of the easiest. Ms. Firdman is an excellent teacher, who keeps the class engaged through her various accents and is easy to talk to. Since she assigns the homework early, my suggestion is to do 2-3 over the weekend so you have more free time during the week. Cornell notes take about 30 minutes to do, and gives you a good understanding of the material, while also preparing you for the test. Her tests are extremely easy, if you do the homework, you're in good shape. The essays may be a little confusing, but she gives more than enough time to do them, so you can go to her with a draft.

The only way you will succeed in Stuyvesant is by not procrastinating and lessening your screen time.

Sincerely,

A Student That Has Struggled