

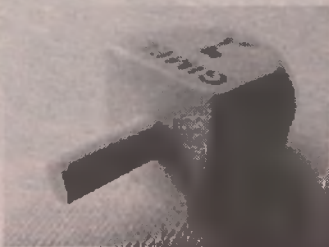
Winter celebrations cross many cultures

BY MARY KOHLMANN

As December approaches, NCSSM students can and do take the opportunity to learn about the many cultures and religions represented within the school through the celebration of a multitude of holidays.

While "Merry Christmas!" is the staple winter greeting for much of America's Christian majority, members of such a diverse community as NCSSM should be aware of the festivals outside the trimmed trees and stuffed stockings. Many people have learned about Hanukkah, the Jewish remembrance of an ancient Israelite victory and the miraculous replenishing of the temple lamp. Children are also taught about Kwanzaa, a cultural event created in 1966 to create unity and promote strong values among African-Americans. But fewer people know about Eid-al-Fitr, the Muslim celebration of the end of Ramadan's fasting. Before their arrival at NCSSM, some students have never heard of Diwali, the Indian festival of lights.

Students agree that NCSSM is welcoming to people of all creeds. "Everyone is really accepting and tolerant," said Muslim junior Aniqah Shahrier. RLA Jake Reardon, who is both Jewish and Catholic, said that "this is what Science and Math is about—diversity."

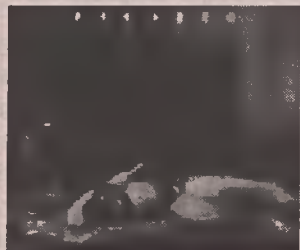


Dreidel played during Hanukkah.

Administrators are careful to respect this diversity through such often-overlooked measures as terminology and decoration. NCSSM has a Winter Dance, which will have blue and white lights to honor the colors of the natural season, and Winter Break. MPC Alex Cole-Weiss said, "The point is not to be politically correct, but to go beyond that and facilitate celebration and learning. We try to further the understanding

of different cultures. We hope that everyone, regardless of their religious affiliation, can enjoy themselves."

According to Director of Student Life Kevin Cromwell, students are encouraged to share their culture with their classmates. "If you let your SLI know, celebration of Hanukkah can become a hall activity, as can Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, or any other religious holiday," he says. Shahrier explained the basics of Islam to her hallmates during a hall



Kwanzaa Candles

Culture Night. "I think there's a lot more we could do to teach one another about the [elements of spirit] that go across the different celebrations," says Cole-Weiss.

The school also makes allowances to help students celebrate days that are important to them. Menorahs are specifically listed as an exception to the rule forbidding candles in dorm rooms, and students can request excused absences for religious reasons. Shahrier was excused from classes in order to celebrate Eid-al-Fitr with her family.

"I think that for a lot of cultures, it represents a time of reevaluation and coming together and celebrating family and bringing closure to the year. You're bonding within your community during the cold winter months; it provides a place to come together and be warm," said Cole-Weiss.

The fact that so many different cultures celebrate around the same time allows more people to come together with that legendary "holiday spirit." Of course, as Christian RLA Melissa Bragg points out, "[Having Christmas spirit] just in December is kind of hypocritical." Ideally, NCSSM's student body will carry the winter rush of goodwill and cultural curiosity into the New Year.

Chemistry students journey to Thailand

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been synthesized chemically, but enzymatic synthesis would be cost less and take a lower amount of time to complete.

Working at the UNC-CH School of Pharmacy, the pair was able to complete two of the steps of the synthesis, which requires six steps. "We're both interested in biochem," said Liu, "and we wanted to work in a real university lab that was funded. ... It's a good way to

see what grad school's like."

Fox and Liu's project has recently been published in the *Biochemical Biophysical Research Communications* journal. "We are very excited about this," said Liu, "but [we] are unsure as to whether we will be able to return to the lab to conduct further research."

At the Thailand Science Fair, Morris presented the bacterial fuel cell project, while Fox and Liu presented the project on heparin.

Blackboard hurts students by shifting printing burden to them

BY SARA WISE

Over the past year, the increased use of Blackboard and the price of printing privileges have revealed an effort to transform NCSSM into a paperless campus. The transition, spawned by the financial and environmental costs of printing, has encountered several obstacles.

NCSSM realized it was necessary to speed up the transition to a paperless campus when more than four million sheets of paper were printed off the networked printers during the 2000-2001 school year. That is approximately six hundred pieces of paper for every student. This caused the cost of printing and laser cartridges to exceed the amount allocated in the copy center budget by thousands of dollars.

The astronomical cost of paper and printer maintenance sparked investigations by LIT@COM's Communications Center, in conjunction with ITS, to find out the source of the problem and how to fix it.

At the time, printing was free and unlimited for students. Diane Futrelle, director of the library, observed that the abuse of printing was in tandem with the explosive use of e-mail.

"Students printed anything and everything, including personal e-mails. One student even printed the entire contents of a book. The length of time required to print these personal documents prevented other students from printing shorter, school-related assignments," Futrelle said.

In an effort to lower the costs of printing and encourage students to save paper, printing privileges were instituted beginning last year, requiring students to pay \$20 for 400 pages, or five cents per page. Otherwise, students have the option of using their personal printers, which still is not free, considering the price of the printer, paper, and ink cartridges.

"We are not trying to shift the cost to the students. That is not the goal. This is not a profitable

process," Futrelle said.

The actual cost of printing is six cents per page, which does not include the costs of machines and maintenance. Most universities, high schools, and public buildings charge ten cents per page.

Data is not yet available

to determine whether the institution of printing privileges has lowered the amount of paper consumption.

NCSSM has also been working to-

wards a paperless campus by encouraging teachers to use Blackboard. Willie Painter, the communications center manager, has watched this shift take effect in the copy center.

"I have definitely noticed that more teachers are scanning documents instead of printing copies for every student. I think it's a good idea because some students are just as happy reading documents off of a computer screen as they are about having a hard copy. With Blackboard,

the students decide whether or not to print something," Painter said.

However, it appears that students do not always have that choice. Many teachers prefer

that students print documents instead of reading from their laptops.

"I do not like having laptops in my classroom because I believe they create a barrier during discussions. Although I understand that I cannot prohibit the use of laptops, I strongly discourage it," humanities instructor Katy Fenn said.

In the section of night WECS

that Fenn teaches with Kyle Hudson, over 130 pages were posted for required reading during the first trimester. That translates to approximately \$6.50 in printing privileges.

In this case, Blackboard simply transfers the burden and cost of printing to students.

"It's not very fair to dump that expense on students. Now you have to have money to be able to do your homework."

-Alex Cole-Weiss

"It makes WECS reading a whole lot harder for us. I feel like I'm wasting paper because I'm printing these pages for myself and nobody can re-use them," senior Peggy

McKay said.

Course document packets, which are already used in several literature classes, are a potential solution to this problem. Although the production of literature packets makes the school responsible for the cost of printing, more paper is saved.

Humanities teachers are not the only ones who encounter conflicts with printing. Even physics teachers require that students purchase printing privileges in order to print labs during class.

"It's not very fair to dump that expense on students. Now you have to have money to be able to do your homework," senior Alex Cole-Weiss said.

Printing is the only privilege students have to pay for at NCSSM. Students do not have to pay for textbooks but they are asked to pay for printed documents that they use in the classroom.

One option could possibly allow students to print school-related material for free, but pay for personal printing. The difficulty lies in separating the two.

"This would probably require the examination of every printed document, which is an invasion of personal privacy," said Futrelle.

The conflict between Blackboard and printing privileges is a hard one to resolve. As long as the satisfaction of having a tangible piece of paper in hand still remains, the necessity of printing will continue.

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volunteers who were there most of the weekend who really profited from the experience. With Fliss's help, they went from cleaning computers to blowing them out, on to the inner disassembling of computers and then building them from scratch. "All the roles were really important," said Fliss, "including

cleaning out keyboards and monitors."

Mark Dibner said the Geek-a-thon "went brilliantly." "I felt useful," said McKinnon, who worked most of the time fast paced and on five computers at once. The possibility of another Geek-a-thon happening on NCSSM's campus is almost certain. Fliss hopes to have another one in the spring,

depending on interest, starting a consistent two-a-year cycle.

Although the event went very well, there also is room for improvement. "We are still putting together how to do it well," said Fliss. Most of the work is skill based, but Fliss wants to "make sure folks clearly know where they can help." Fliss hopes to have many NCSSM volunteers at the next Geek-a-thon.