

FOLLOWING IN THEIR FOOTSTEPS

Siblings follow lead, apply to NCSSM

BY MARY KOHLMANN

Welcome Day has come and gone, and some NCSSM students are reliving the nervousness and jubilation—or disappointment—of their own sophomore spring through the struggles of their younger siblings.

“It was like reliving the application process,” said senior Genevieve Pike, whose younger sister was admitted to the incoming junior class.

Siblings of older NCSSM students have something of a leg up when they arrive at the school. Many already know the rudiments of campus geography and which restaurants on Ninth Street best suit their tastes. They can go to their sisters or brothers for expert advice on life at Science and Math.

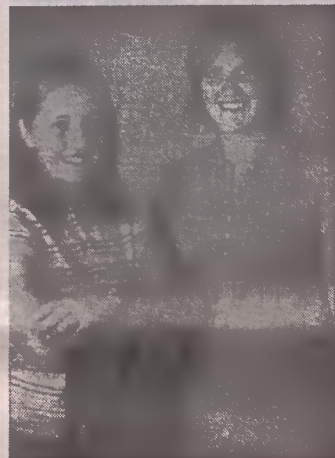


Photo courtesy of Genevieve Pike. Senior Genevieve Pike (left) will be succeeded by her sister Catherine next year.

“I can help her choose classes. She’s been calling all week about that,” said senior Theresa Crowgey, who also has a sister arriving next fall.

“We were able to tell them what to expect,” Pike said. “I had no idea what I was doing, coming here, and [my sister] did.”

“I think [having seen my brothers attend] made it feel more homey for me,” said senior Samantha Carey, sister of two Science and Math graduates.

However, “second generation” students must also cope with being compared to their brothers or sisters by both teachers and fellow students. They are separated, said Carey, from other juniors by awkward acquaintances with unfamiliar friends of the often-just-graduated sibling. Carey said that being sought out and recognized by her brothers’ friends “was really fun, but most of my senior friends were his guy friends. I didn’t really have senior girl friends or junior guy friends.” If the crucial two-week mingling period is spent with inherited friends, she suggests, building new relationships later on is all the harder. “But,” she added, “I got to meet a lot of random seniors.”

Officially, NCSSM makes no distinction between siblings of students and other applicants. Student opinion, however, is mixed on whether family ties play a role in admission.

“I think [my application pro-

cess] was about the same as anyone else’s,” Carey said.

“I think it helps you stand out from the rest of the applicant pool, but then you’re on your own,” said Anna Engelke, who has no siblings at the school.

Some students believe that Science and Math should follow the lead of many colleges and magnet schools and give special consideration to siblings.

“It seems like they should get in,” senior Amy Beeston said. “It says a lot about a school when the parents are willing to send another kid.”

Those students currently trying to console a younger brother or sister hurt by rejection from his or her sibling’s school might agree. But to give an advantage to one group of applicants is to put the rest at a disadvantage—an idea that would find little support among the eldest and only children of the NCSSM world.

Overall, students seem pleased with the idea of their family members taking their place in school.

“I’m happy for my sister,” Pike said. “I think she’ll do well here.”

“I’m really excited,” Crowgey said. “Her seniors will be our juniors, so I hope I’ll be able to see them. [This place has] afforded me a lot of opportunities, and I think it’ll do the same for her.”

Exam schedule places Physics Thursday at 9 a.m.

BY SARA WISE

Approximately 180 physics students will take the last exam of the year on Thursday, June 8th at 9:00 a.m. The Instructional Council voted to approve the third trimester exam schedule last December.

The change was made to alleviate the overflow of exam conflicts. During first trimester exams, about 100 students had to rearrange one or more of their exams. With the addition of one more exam block, the Instructional Council hoped to avoid so many conflicts.

“For Spring Trimester, after some discussion, the tenth block was placed on Thursday morning, specifically with the idea that it might help maintain a quiet atmosphere on campus through Wednesday night,” Director of Academic Programs Tom Clayton said.

In addition to alleviating exam conflict, the Instructional Council hoped to provide a safer end-of-year environment.

“When the decision was made, we felt that three nights with no academic activities could be potentially hazardous,” Clayton said.

There were no major disciplinary problems last year when students were free on both Thursday and Friday. However, Thursday exams are not unusual in the history of NCSSM.

“We have successfully fit in academic and social activities in a briefer period.

It has been very successfully handled for years,” Clayton said.

There are several differences between the exam schedule of this year and of years past. There were usually two exams on Thursday.

“That makes a huge difference. It’s a lot easier to control 150 people who do not have exams as opposed to 450 people, which is the problem this year,” Jones said.

Steve Jones is also the coordinator of the Student Activities Board.

“The problem is, what if you have a senior who doesn’t care about the exam? Would he be allowed to participate?” Jones said.

Coordinating student activities around the Thursday morning exam has required several compromises. There will not be a field day this year.

Although some students will have to adjust to the schedule change of year-end activities, most student reservations about the exam are based on academic concerns.

“Many students suggested that the exam could change to Sunday night or perhaps another possible time.

“Even starting exams the Friday before would be better,” Senior Margaret Yim said.

There is no student input on the Instructional Council. They made the decision to stick to Thursday morning.

Graduates take gap year to explore Japan

BY MARY KOHLMANN

Several NCSSM students are preparing to spend an exciting 13th year of school immersing themselves in a foreign language and culture.

“Instead of going to college next year, I’ll be going to Japan,” says senior Sara Cheney.

Beginning in August, Cheney and two others will live with host families and attend a regular Japanese high school. They will take normal classes, although they will drop down a level in some subjects to concentrate on breaking the language barrier. A primary purpose of the trip, they say, is gaining fluency in Japanese.

Sara and Alison Seffels, two other participants, first became interested in the program when a representative from the Council on International Educational Exchange’s (CIEE) High School Abroad program visited Alison’s Japanese class.

“I didn’t give it much thought at the time,” Sara said. Alison was initially the more enthusiastic of the two, but as senior year wore on, both were drawn more and more to the idea of living in their favorite foreign country. The significant money requirement and commitment of time made the decision difficult. But, “after I agonized over the decision for awhile,” Alison said, “It was just like ‘Well... it’s such a great opportunity.’”

They hope that the knowledge they

gain will be useful in years to come.

“I want to go into video games,” said Alison. “And the big companies are over there.”

Alison also hopes to return to Japan sometime in the future while writing fiction, in order to benefit from scenery she describes as “magnificent.”

The three girls have followed the normal college application process this year and are requesting one-year deferments of enrollment. They will return to the normal academic track in the fall of 2007.

Many students can see the appeal of a space to breathe between miles on the educational treadmill. Alison admits that the trip will be “a little bit of a break, especially coming from here.” But they agree that the merits of a gap year are determined by its use.

“If you’re just going to sit around the house, it’s not worth it,” Alison said.

The trip will allow for personal growth as well as education. “I want to spend more time on my art,” Cheney said. “At Science and Math, I haven’t had much time for my music and my art and stuff, and I’d like to pick that up again.”

She feels that the gap year option is “good for me because I have no idea what I’m going to do [with my life]. It’s good to take a year off to figure your life out as long as you’re not sitting around throwing rocks at a puddle of mud.”

These students’ miniterm trip to Japan gave them a glimpse into the future, and made them glad that they chose the country they did from among CIEE’s other programs in Australia, Brazil, Costa Rica, France, Germany and Spain. “Japan’s a wonderful place,” said Cheney. “The people are

so kind.”

They have spent years studying Japanese culture and language, and feel ready to explore it in more depth. Some changes, however, may prove more difficult than others. As Cheney mentioned, “Everything is so tiny!



Photo courtesy of Luis Zapata. Senior Sara Cheney makes a couple of stitches in her cloth dragon. She said that she hopes to spend more time on her artwork during her gap year in Japan. “At Science and Math, I haven’t had much time for my music and my art and stuff,” Cheney said. “I’d like to pick that up again.”