

Alt-Day, not Alt-Daze

Just as timely and anticipated as a Premium Night meal at the cafeteria, Alt-Day rolls around once each month in attempt to give students a break from the ordinary. So what enticing options can students usually expect to be served? Certainly, Student Life 101 will be dished out, perhaps preceded with an all-school assembly as an early-morning appetizer. Maybe top it off with a helping of Campus Beautification Day for dessert, but that's strictly optional, of course.

No matter how you look at it, Alt-Day is full of activities, sometimes too many to handle. It is certainly understandable that Alt-Day is the most convenient time to schedule school-wide activities, but there comes a point where the day becomes so cluttered that students are unable to realize Alt-Day's full potential. Often the typical "To Do" list covers everything from assemblies, academic advisor meetings and SL101 and 102 sessions to teacher activities such as films, field trips and review sessions. This causes the true purpose behind Alt-Day to become shadowed.

The original purpose of Alt-Day was to allow students the opportunity to try something different or explore something in the academic curriculum. Wouldn't it be great if students really had the time to do those things? It seems nearly impossible when the multitude of required activities interferes with student plans.

The issue is further complicated when students say they want to use Alt-Day to catch up on homework, which is indeed an Alt-Day option. Some teachers deny them that option by assigning additional homework for Alt-Day. Just because students aren't formally attending class doesn't mean teachers should give extra work-- it just interferes with the original purpose of Alt-Day.

Granted, Alt-Day does not mean students are allowed to goof off and procrastinate for an entire day. The school calendar counts Alt-Day as an academic day without formal class so productivity should be high on the agenda. It is just the means to which students dedicate themselves that matters.

The ideas behind Alt-Day are wonderful. Give students a day away from classes to be academically productive on their own. In that respect, students would like to use Alt-Day to its fullest.

So let them.

Spread the word

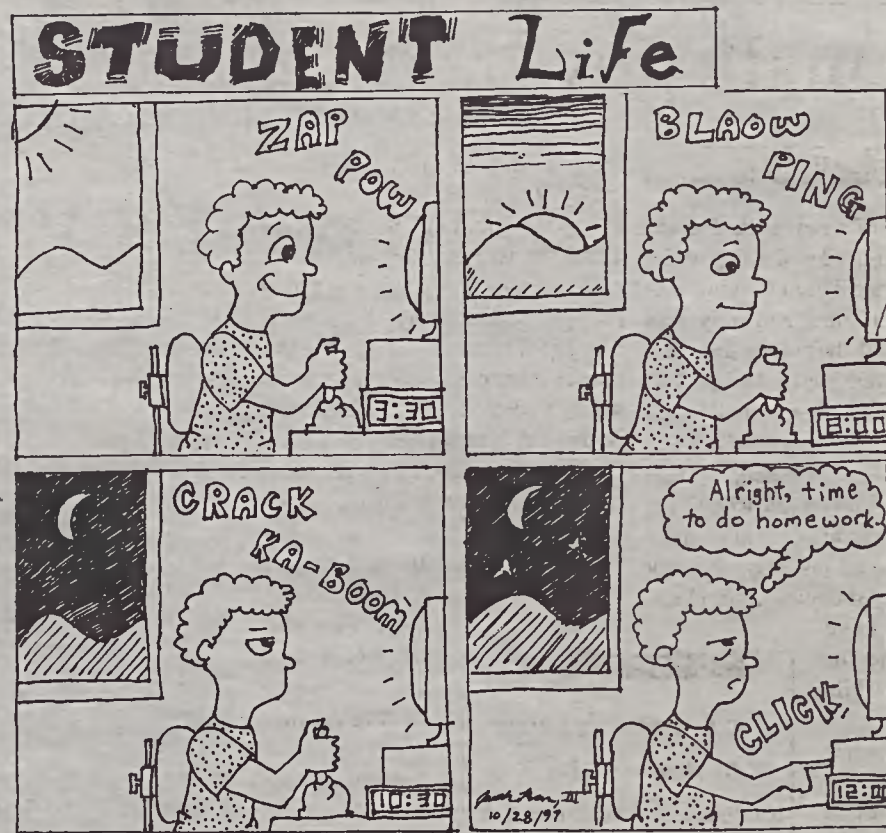
Like it or not, a lot goes on at NCSSM. Between student activities on the weekends, sports and club meetings, students become so enmeshed in the web of campus events that they don't even know exactly what is happening on campus. Where can students find the information that they need to take advantage of the opportunities this school offers?

NCSSM employs many of its resources to insure that information is distributed well. First comes the Daily Bulletin, which lists mostly announcements from the Guidance and Academic Programs Offices. It and the Toilet Times, the weekly student activities newsletter, are found on most halls and in other public places. Other announcements come through email, mailboxes or notes on individual room doors. It's obvious to see from the number of sources of news that NCSSM wants its students to stay informed.

Unfortunately, this intention alone is not enough. Many students do not receive the information they need, whether it be an announcement about Alt-Day, an invitation to a club interest meeting or a message from a teacher. An example is November's SGA Speak-Out, which was canceled because so few students showed up to participate. Many were not even aware that a Speak-Out had been planned. Furthermore, a student whose computer account is broken probably will not receive mass emails, and messages posted by the cafeteria will have little effect on students who dine elsewhere.

Knowing where to look for a particular piece of information can be an equally challenging dilemma. Scholarship information may appear on the Academic Programs bulletin board or on that of the Guidance Office, but students can never be sure which. Likewise, some seminars are advertised all over campus while others are not advertised at all. And it seems odd that unexcused absence notices are placed in student mailboxes but absence request forms are tacked to doors.

In order for this school to successfully function as a community, its administrators, teachers and students must actively spread information and announcements to others. NCSSM continually swarms with activity, so a single sign will probably do little to enlighten the campus to a particular occasion or event. Furthermore, students have the responsibility to constantly seek out the information they need from every source available. Only through this means can NCSSM provide the best experience possible for everyone who lives and works here.



Taking ridiculous to a stupid level

It is spring 1994. A student in Bryan finds comfort from the heat by placing a plastic wading pool in his room. However, to his dismay, an SLI threatening a level comes swaggering his way. What rule has he broken?

Even if this student looks in the handbook for hours, he will not find the rule that condemns swimming pools in rooms, simply because it does not exist. However, it is mentioned in the handbook that school officials are allowed to make such rules if they feel it is necessary.

This creates a gray area that encompasses all conduct violations not expressly enumerated in the handbook. There seems to be no way of deciphering this gray area and thus remaining level-less. As a result, students have become apprehensive about getting a level for any of their actions that are seemingly playful or harmless.

Several seemingly obscure activities are considered level-worthy. They include not wearing shoes off hall, climbing trees above ten feet, and possessing water guns. These are not mentioned in the handbook, and thus have become hearsay. Although well-known, they are not recognized by everyone.

We realize that it is not feasible to include every scenario that may receive a level in the handbook. We are asking for a little leeway on the part of school authorities when giving levels. After a tense school day, participating in playful or stress-relieving activities can be therapeutic. Often, wrestling or water-balloon fights may be just what is needed, but caught up in the fun, some forget the possibility of violating the code of conduct. If an SLI simply asks for a certain activity to stop before issuing levels, most students will adhere to the request.

Since not all levels are preceded by a warning, many students complain about the circumstances of receiving them. In this case, the student life staff encourages level appeals. After an appeal last year students usually don't receive levels for brushing their teeth after midnight. The gray areas of the student handbook may leave room for staff interpretation, but with level appeals and cooperation with the staff, unequitable levels may be resolved.

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