

## Wise Fools: Sophomores, or the Administration?

KATY BLACKWELL

Sophomore: from the Greek *sophos*, wise, and *moros*, stupid. It would be a 'wise fool' indeed who tried to tackle NCSSM during the sophomore, as well as junior and senior, year of high school.

Yet in the fall of 2002, some may be asked to attempt it. Wyche is being renovated, creating 50 new beds for students. One of the plans for those new beds—certainly the one with widest circulation among students—is to enroll 50 sophomores, eventually to transition to 200. Sometimes, it is easy to forget that the administration really has no clue what it's like to be a student here.

"That's ridiculous," senior Nicole Peterson's comment on the idea, is a typical reaction. The only true variation comes in the reasons why students think sophomores are not made to survive NCSSM. The main reasons are that parents wouldn't let them come combined with the fact that they would be too immature with so little high school under their belts.

Not all parents are eager to send their teenagers to a co-ed boarding school under dubious (i.e. not their) supervision. Some parents even had to be convinced to let juniors come, then *re*convinced whenever a level or unexcused absence was issued, when rumors of various unpleasant activities on campus were heard, and especially when report cards reach the mailbox. These are all understandably of greater concern the junior year than the senior; one could only imagine what it would be like as a sophomore.

"I don't think they're mature enough for it" said senior Amy Westervelt. The feeling on campus is that students need to adjust to going to high school, with different classes, teachers.

"It's better for the student" said Jeffrey Millman, also a senior, to grow both at the home school and at Science and Math. Without that, "it would be too great of a maturity gap. It would change one of the great things I like about this school," the high maturity level and behavior of the students.

Even one year can make a large difference in anyone's life; certainly, a difference large enough to determine whether a student would stay once he or she arrives.

"[The school's] not going to get 50 sophomores to come

her and stay...If I'd come here as a sophomore I wouldn't have stayed," reported junior Emily Neslen.

The enrollment of a sophomore class would have an effect on the student body. Peterson brought up another good point:

"How do you base admissions? Your first semester, freshman year? You're going to loose smart people who just screwed up their first semester. They'd make it more selective, and I thought they [the admissions office] were trying to open that up".

"It'd be like coming out of middle school and going to college" without those two high-school-from-home years, points out junior Kristen Drum, and it's already difficult to make the transition from being a sophomore at home to becoming a Science and Math junior.

There is a nearly unbridgeable gap between junior and senior due only to the experiences of one year at Science and Math. With just 50 sophomores, more students for that graduating class would have to be admitted for their junior year, until the numbers evened out at 200. Members of the same graduating class would be separated by a year's worth of the Science and Math experience...one of the best things about this school is the class unity, which doesn't need to be taken away.

The last issue is probably the greatest: could anyone survive three years at Science and Math? Even discounting the maturity level difference between sophomores and juniors. And even if they are mature enough are their parents going to be ready to let go of them when they're only 15/16 years old? One junior called it "three years of totally over-the-top stress." Seniors such as Sheng Li were more expressive: "Three years of this school would be...oh my God!" Many seniors—tales of "second semester slackness" aside—are close to burning out after a year and a half; we're suggesting doubling that. Ouch.

The administration no doubt has its (positive) reasons for considering extending enrollment to a sophomore class. I don't think they've considered the proposal from our point of view. Now they have opinions from a fair selection of the student body, and the students invariably say "no. *Bad* idea".

Trust us, guys. We're the ones with first-hand experience.

## Tenth graders could be a good thing

EMILY WARREN

Recently there have been many rumors circulating the NCSSM campus about the possibility of sophomores coming to the school. The idea has been proposed by Dr. Gerald Boarman as a way to "alleviate unnecessary pressures on students." When he first came to the school, Dr. Boarman realized that students had too many requirements during their two years at NCSSM. In addition to the eight required courses, the school offers a plethora of seminars and extra-curricular activities. Students can become so stressed out and overworked that they don't enjoy the time they spend at NCSSM.

"I want these kids to have a life," said Dr. Boarman. He feels that there are many wonderful aspects of the school that are missed because people have to work so hard to fill all of their requirements in two years. He sees that to ease some of this pressure, students need more time to learn the same curriculum.

There are three basic options. First, the school could cut the number of requirements on students. This is not going to happen; the school would look bad if it allowed even more students to be even more slack than they already are. Second, NCSSM could become a year-round school. Dr. Boarman doesn't like this idea very much. He feels that students need the

long break of summer. People need time with their families, and many need to work in the summer months. The final option is to make NCSSM a three-year school.

Many people, especially seniors, have a negative gut reaction to the idea. But there are many benefits.

"I don't completely support the idea of 10<sup>th</sup> graders, but I can see some advantages, like being able to take the classes that really interest you," said senior Emily Kachergis. With the additional year, you can spread out course requirements. Also, more elective classes would be offered. Think about all the activities that happen after school in addition to homework: AP review sessions, the play, seminars, chorus, intramural and varsity sports. There are so many things to do it is hard to fit it all into two years.

Adding a grade will give people more time to get to know each other. The quality of our athletic program would probably improve if half of the team didn't graduate every year, as would our chorus, orchestra, and all performing /competing student organizations.

Part of Dr. Boarman's vision must be to emulate the Illinois School of Science and Math which is part of the same consortium of schools as NCSSM. Their system includes a three-year-long curriculum similar to the one that Dr.

Boarman hopes to implement here.

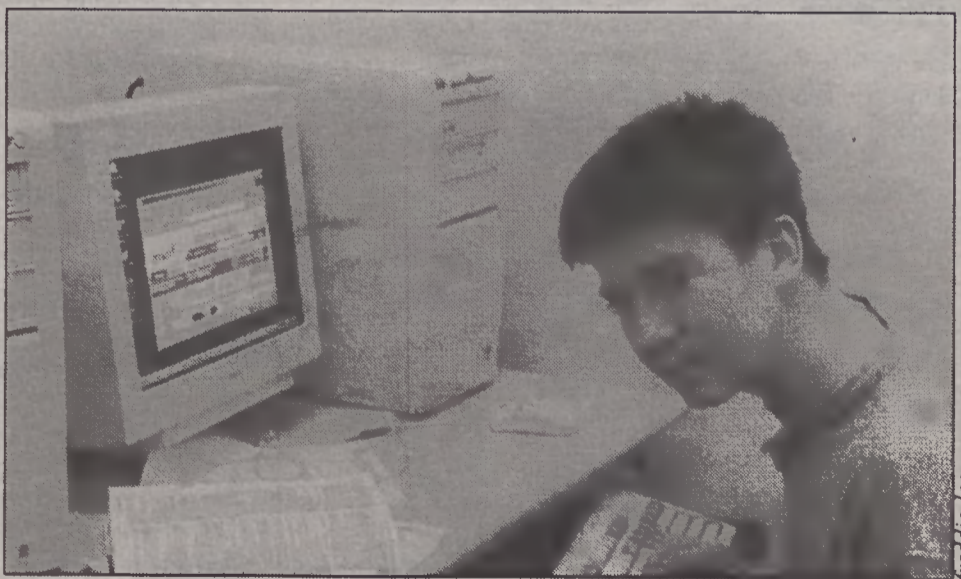
Also, Dr. Boarman thinks the school will attract many students who wouldn't otherwise come.

"Kids get too involved at home; they don't want to give up leadership positions or friends," said Dr. Boarman. Maybe they would be more willing to come if they hadn't yet found their niche at home.

During the spring, Dr. Boarman plans to create a team to examine the issue of bringing 10<sup>th</sup> graders to NCSSM. He wants the input of teachers, parents and students.

At the beginning of this transition (if it does happen) 50 sophomores would be admitted to NCSSM. These new students would probably live separately from the rest of the school in Wyche (the R.O.C). If things go well, a larger class of 10<sup>th</sup> graders would be invited the next year. This transition would take 3 years, after which each class would have 200 students.

For those of you who are repulsed by the idea of our campus being invaded by fourteen and fifteen year-olds, don't worry. They're not coming yet; the first possible year they could come would be the fall of 2002. You will all have graduated by then. Also, Dr. Boarman is very interested in students' perspectives on this issue. If it's really important to you, let him know how you feel.



This is another picture of Jonathan Drew (he also goes by "J.D." for short). He is a senior on First Hill, the roommate of Robert McRight, and has appeared in every issue of *The Stentorian* this year. Say "Hi" to J.D. if you see him.