

Swimming Through High School

By NEHA SHABER, SOPHOMORE,
ASHLAND HIGH SCHOOL

High school is like swimming. As freshmen, you are thrown into the murky, deep end of the pool with rocks as bones causing you to sink to the bottom. After nearly drowning and adrenaline-powered instincts kick in, by sophomore year you learn the skill of treading water. Feeling slightly more confident, junior year you begin taking swim lessons, learning basic technique in preparation for the first competition. Senior year creeps up and it's finally time for the competition deciding your future at regionals, states or even nationals.

As I have begun learning to tread water, the Class of 2017 is prepared for their first competition—a feat commemorated at Convocation on September 9. Although, Convocation isn't just for the seniors, it's for the freshmen as well. The goal is to celebrate the old and welcome the new—the academic circle of life. Class spirit is shown through face paint, body paint, tutus, beads, and of course, class tees with slogans like GO B19 OR GO HOME for the Class of 2019 and IT'S OUR TIME for the Class of 2017. Clad in our respective class gear, Convocation day began!

Breezing through two 30-minute periods, the announcement everyone was waiting for was called for students to head to their assigned cross-grade groups for the ensuing activities. Immediately, the hallways were flooded with flashes of green, red, white and blue forming a crowd around the room assignments posted in front of the main office. Squeezing through and finding my name on the alphabetized list, I made my way to the colorful Spanish classroom of Ms. Vargeletis. Led by junior and senior leaders, we were given a presentation about the five core values of AHS—respect, responsibility, integrity, involvement and achievement. Next, our class was split into two groups of around 13 students, and we began to cut the palpable awkwardness with some icebreakers. Our quick “speed dating” activity helped us find a sense of unity with the fact that the most unlikely people like Senior varsity athletes and



Senior class officers. (Photo/ Neha Shaber)

Sophomore club officers still have similarities and common interests (in case you were wondering, waffles are a great unifier of people).

Soon after, we began our game show-themed PBIS (Positive Behavior Inventions and Supports) activities. We first played a classic game of charades, which my team dominated the moment I released my inner drama queen. After a grueling 30-minute round, we hustled to our next classroom where we played Family Feud. Unfortunately, it wasn't in our budget to get Steve Harvey as our host (should've voted yes, Ashland:P). Teams went head to head being asked questions like, “Which teacher has the most school spirit?” and “What are the rules of the student parking lot?” After some surprising responses, we headed to our final game, Jeopardy. Despite any way I try to spin this, my team got creamed. With a buzzer in the middle of our team circle and categories like, “AHS Faculty” and “Being Legit,” we were asked trivia questions about our school where I soon realized I'm possibly just as clueless as I ever was as a freshmen. After a heartbreaking defeat, we made our way to the Gymnasium for the actual ceremony.

Seniors Take the Stage

Once the freshmen, sophomore and junior classes were seated in the bleachers, it was time for the seniors' big

reveal—their moment to come out as top dog of the school. You could hear the faint cheering of seniors outside in the hallway as Senior Class Representative Adam Skiba, wearing green, confidently strutted into the gym to the tune of “Closer” by the Chainsmokers.

The excitement in the air soon turned into confusion—the freshmen class color was green. Suddenly, Skiba ran through the freshmen bleachers ripping the green freshmen shirt off revealing a red sophomore shirt. He repeated this action running through the sophomore and junior bleachers until he was down to his white senior shirt representing the senior class's journey to get to this point. You could hear the seniors against the gym doors as Skiba revved up the crowd until the beat dropped and there was a blur of white. Seniors barged into the gym holding American flags and throwing toilet paper at the seated classes (I nearly got knocked out by a roll!) and went to stand in their section playing stadium horns as the whole school went nuts.

Our principal, Mrs. St. Coeur, welcomed us all and stated she was so proud of how the Convocation events unfolded as it's one of her favorite days of the school year. Following her short speech, two seniors sang the national anthem and Senior Class President Maggie Duich received the key of the school for her class. With jokes



AHS Class of 2017 revved up in the bleachers. (Photo/ Neha Shaber)

up her sleeve and her heart in her hand, Duich proclaimed to the seniors, “We made it!” after she made her descent down the bleachers and received the symbolic key, which she said represented a new beginning. She also welcomed the freshmen by saying high school is hard and to hang in there because they will eventually have their time as seniors. The other seven senior class officers then came down to each give their ritual one-line advice to the freshmen. The advice came down to a searing, “It's English, not ELA and “It's

History not Social Studies,” and a funny clincher of “Shmoop not Sparknotes.” After a couple of announcements about Homecoming, it was over.

Convocation was like every student and teacher at our school came up for air at once and we all saw and accepted each other for the AHS family we are, in which every member is important. And every time we remember that, it's magic. For more about the world through my eyes, keep reading my monthly column :)

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