



clique



Sophomore slump

The first year was great, but what lies ahead?

By MELISSA HOFFMAN

Herald News Teen Correspondent

With the school year nearing its end, a freshman reflects on making the big step to high school and wonders what advantages — if any — might come with becoming a sophomore.

Act I: The comedy of being a freshman

It is true that moving on to high school is a big step in growing up. However, becoming a ninth grader is, in essence, equal to becoming a baby again. The world is new, most of the faces are those of strangers, and the rules are completely different. As with any new experience, it can be as scary as it is a fantastic adventure.

When I first saw my school, Mount Saint Dominic, I was somewhat frightened, but at the same time awed. My school is a hybrid of a castle and a college campus. The dark, massive oak doors that grace its front look like they would be awfully intimidating on a dark, rainy night — and they are. But on the Thursday that I started school, it was a bright, sunny day and some not-so-intimidating people with welcoming smiles were holding open those very same doors, enabling me to leave my fears at the doorstep and enter with excitement and anticipation of all the great things to come.

I came from a small, close-knit grammar school. My eighth grade class totaled 15 students. Practically overnight I became a

member of a class of nearly a hundred girls. Mount Saint Dominic is a small Catholic high school located on the campus of Caldwell College. Our buildings are literally part of the college. I went from a three-hallway school to a maze of forbidden staircases that lead to a land of college students. I walked into school knowing the name of the principal and the name of the school. Other than that, I didn't know any girls, any teachers or any hallways. Lucky for me however, this all changed in a matter of a week and a half.

Freshman, like babies, are spoiled in the way that they get away with more because they don't know any better yet. Though it does happen occasionally, detentions aren't readily given out to freshmen. Take, for instance, when freshmen get lost in the hallways and arrive 10 minutes late for class with the alibi of nervous misdirection. The detention that would be handed to any upperclassmen for the very same reason is whispered away with a timid excuse. Contrary to the popular belief that upperclassmen are known for dealing out cruel and unusual treatment, our upperclassmen are quick and willing to help out. Like older siblings, the upperclassmen, have a helpful knack of pointing you in the right direction simply upon seeing your confused expression. The teachers and students help you, because you are, after all, a helpless freshman.

Still, despite the pampering received during freshman year, my friend Andrea Ficarra, who attends Passaic Valley, thinks that sophomore year has more perks than freshman year: "I'm looking forward to it," she said, "because I won't be the littlest anymore. Well, technically, I could be, at 5 feet tall, but I'm looking forward to it because I won't be the cute little freshman anymore."

Personally, I like being a cute, adorable freshman. In the past I've been considered nerdy or dorky, so cute is a nice, new adjective.

Freshman year has been full of every kind of crazy, fun, and excitingly chaotic event that I could imagine. From Field Day, a fierce physical competition between class years, to Penny Wars, a fundraising competition, the freshmen get equal, if not more, teacher support for these events than the other classes do. We get pep talks and nice, long step-by-step explanations of things that go on. If you mess up a race or competition, it's OK because you're a freshman and there are still three more years to redeem yourself.

Act II: The tragedy of being a sophomore

Then comes sophomore year — a year of anonymous existence.

Although sophomores are still in the school, there is, in truth, nothing to look forward to in this year. You can't bend any of the rules because you are no longer an innocent freshman. You also have no right to complain because the juniors are, after all, taking the SAT. And above all, you remain far beneath the nice, but still superior seniors.

Freshman year unveils many new experiences; junior year, in our school, comes complete with the Junior Prom; and in senior year there is graduation and, almost as nice, a trip to Florida! This coveted trip to Florida is the jewel of senior year. Before they depart, the seniors make posters saying "Don't you wish you were in Florida? Oh yeah, the seniors are." The one year that gets more pampering than freshman year is senior year.

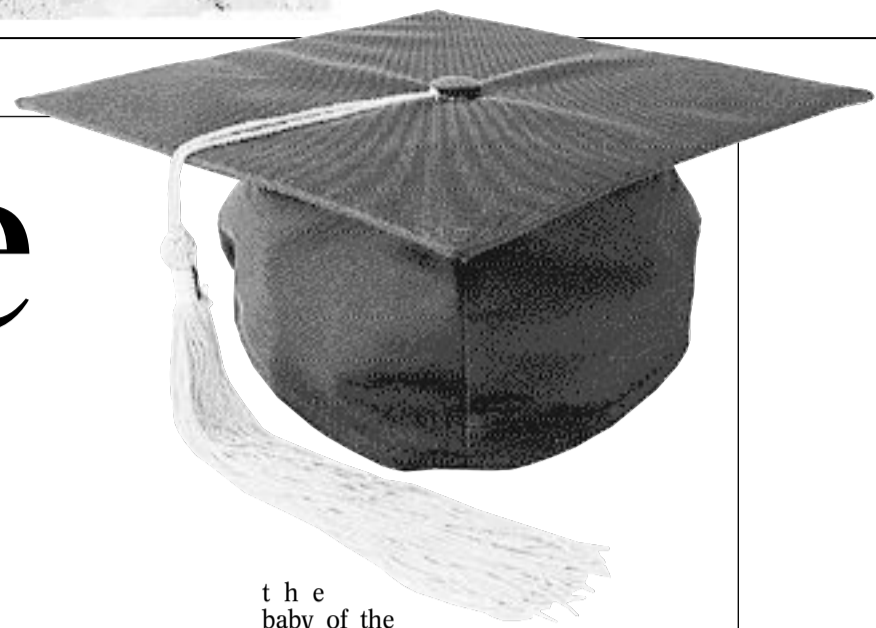
In sophomore year, there is absolutely nothing.

"Sophomore year is adjusting from being

the baby of the school to the people that no one cares about," said another friend and classmate. That seemed to sum up my feelings toward joining the lost ranks in the fall. This transition will be similar to changing lifestyles — moving from the celebrity A-list to Actors Anonymous. The work is harder, the devoted teachers that led the freshman class in competitions now have new freshman to dote upon. The seniors that adored you last year are gone. And you're stuck in a year as insignificant as one single grain of sand on a vast beach. Almost all of the teachers who I have grown to know and love are freshman class moderators, which means that they are the fuel behind the freshmen. These teachers dedicate their careers to making the freshmen as welcome and peppy as they possibly can be. The only catch is that you grow to love these teachers, but as soon as a new bunch of freshmen come in, you're all but forgotten. Although they still love you deep down, they now push the new frosh to beat you, just as they did when you were a freshman.

I know I won't hate the incoming freshmen. My freshman year exceeded everything that I expected it to be, and I know that theirs will too. Freshman year was magical, and what I'm truly afraid of is losing the magic as I enter sophomore year. Will the enthusiasm our whole class possessed drain out? Will the teachers still like us? Will the new freshman call us "Smelly Sophomores" or some other cruel name? I can only pray that sophomore year holds up the happiness and excitement I had all through freshman year. Freshman year turned out to be more amazing than I expected, so hopefully sophomore year won't be as terrible as I expect it to be. Truthfully, though, as terrible and scary as sophomore year may seem, it is the people in your life that help you make it through the year. Because I seem to have an abundance of good people in my school, maybe, just maybe, I will live to tell the tale of the dreaded sophomore year.

Melissa Hoffman is a freshman at Mount Saint Dominic in Caldwell.



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GAMES Back to the battlefield

"Battlefield 2: Modern Combat," three stars (out of four); Electronic Arts for Xbox 360 (also for Xbox and PlayStation 2), \$59.99; Rating: T (Teen)

The "Battlefield" series of titles has been the king of big-scale first-person shooters, first on the PC and recently on consoles as well. So its arrival on the Xbox 360 was almost a guarantee.

And, predictably, "Battlefield 2" for Microsoft's new console is a quality game, with upgraded visuals and more vehicles.

In the campaign mode, you take charge of an entire side of a conflict, one soldier at a time. Although your computer-controlled mates can put up a good fight, you can also swap from soldier to soldier with the flick of a button.

The online mode — this game's real highlight — is stellar. With 24 players fighting at once, the "Battlefield" series' hallmark large-scale white-knuckle firefights are as entertaining as ever.





But, to be clear, this latest iteration isn't an all-new fragfest. It's an enhanced port to the Xbox 360. And \$60 is a lot to ask for another round of battles.

Fans will revel in this game. Newbies should and will embrace it. Battle-hardened vets may want to spend their money elsewhere on more original titles.

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hall monitor

KEEPING TABS ON WHAT LOCAL TEENS ARE THINKING, WATCHING & DOING

JUNE 8, 2006	What is the best way to invest money?	What is the most difficult computer task?	How many hours a week do you exercise?	What is your primary form of communication?	Will our generation see a woman or black president?
 Arielle Saltzman , 17, Clifton	Stocks	Making a spreadsheet on Excel	13 hours (lacrosse)	House phone — my cell phone dies all the time!	Only a woman president
 Arash Akhavi , 18, Clifton	Savings account	Finding exactly what you need on the Internet	15 hours (track)	I try to avoid virtual communication, i.e. texts, instant messages	Both, times are changing very rapidly
 Nadia Gerasimova , 18, Clifton	Invest in gold	Graphic design, like working with pictures	About 7 hours	E-mails	Woman
 Bilal Mian , 18, Clifton	Savings account	Programming	About 21 hours (track)	Instant Messaging	Both, times are changing

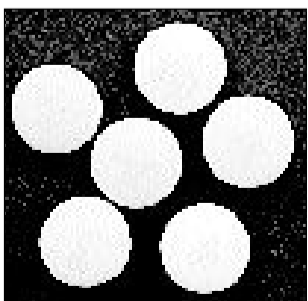
Photos by MARTA PACZOWSKA/Special to the Herald News (teens); The Associated Press (gold, instant messaging, Clifton); file photo

Tasty treasures

M&Ms, those perfect little candy-coated chocolates, now come in white chocolate.

"Pirate Pearls," a tie-in with the "Pirates of the Caribbean" sequel (in theaters July 7), are good. But these white chocolate goodies didn't cause the same amount of fuss around the office as the dark chocolate ones did. (Disclaimer: We are chocolate snobs around here.) Like all white chocolate, the M&Ms are super-sweet. But the crunch of the coating seems to help stop the sweetness from overwhelming your taste buds.

This is not at all related to the actual quality of the candy, but we were utterly fascinated with the little icons Mars created for this movie tie-in, which replaced the classic "M" on some of the candies. All of the icons use the "M" and some sort of pirate regalia: One "M" holds up a cannon, another is the cuff for a hooked hand. Arguably, the best one is the skull, using the "M" for the jaw. Hey,



Photos by Knight Ridder News Service

we just can't resist fun details.

The white chocolate Pirate Pearls (and other "Pirates"-themed M&Ms) are around for a limited time, so if you love 'em you might want to stock up. Find them at retail stores everywhere, ranging from 55 cents to \$3.99.

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BODY



Balm buzz

A new line of products at Bath & Body Works has been getting some good buzz — which is appropriate since it's around thanks to a bunch of busy bees.

Until recently, The Savannah Bee Company only produced honey — extremely tasty honey. The honey was so good, it was picked up by kitchen and gourmet foods store Williams-Sonoma, which was followed by Dean & DeLuca and others. Now Bath & Body Works is featuring their all-natural body products made with beeswax. The line is free of petroleum, preservatives, synthetic fragrances and artificial colors.

We tried their lip balms because, frankly, we're addicted to balms. We sampled a tinted stick and a tin. The tint was slight and perfect because it simply enhanced our lips' natural tone, and the fragrances were so fresh smelling, you'd swear you were slicing up some just-picked fruit. The balm is light in texture and almost silky, rather than sticky.

The balms come in tins or sticks, but the tints only come in the stick version. The balms come in six flavors, plus natural beeswax. The untinted ones go for \$4 and tinted for \$5.50. Find Savannah Bee at www.bathandbodyworks.com, your local Bath & Body Works store or on the company Web site at www.savannahbee.com.

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