



2018 VALEDICTORIAN ACHIEVES HER AMERICAN DREAM AT FCDS

By Mindy Li '18

Unlike some international students who come to the United States because of their parents' wishes, pursuing my education in America has been my dream since my first visit to this country in the summer of 2012. The three weeks that I spent in a summer camp in Florida completely changed my pattern of life.

I loved how students moved freely between classes instead of sitting in one classroom and studying all day. I loved having open discussions with teachers instead of simply listening to lectures and taking notes. I loved designing my own schedule from a variety of courses instead of having the same schedule as every student in my class. For the first time, I experienced a drastically different, non-test prep academic life, which convinced me to pursue my high school education in America.

Eventually, I obtained the opportunity to attend FCDS in my freshman year, but more challenges were waiting for me in my new life. Although I was relatively adaptable to new environments after growing up in both northern and southern China and attending both day schools and boarding schools, transitioning to a culturally different country without my parents was difficult. I was immediately overwhelmed by the intensity of academic work, and my imperfect English only worsened the situation. While watching other students talk effusively in their groups during lunch, I always remembered how happy and outgoing I had been when I was with my best friends in China. Under these academic and social pressures, I was disheartened and fell sick frequently during the first month of my freshman year. However, I turned out to be lucky because fortunately, I met wonderful teachers, friends, and host families.

I am always thankful for the FCDS teachers who were so patient and helpful to me, such as Mrs. McKee who helped me improve my English writing and Mrs. Angell, who took me to math contests that undoubtedly enhanced my interest in mathematics.

Students at FCDS also proved to be cheerful and encouraging. Not only did they integrate me into the FCDS family by helping me in classes and sharing their stories at school, they also helped me adapt to my life in the United States when we participated in after-school activities together and had fun at parties.

However, when it comes to teaching me about American life and culture, nothing compares to the efforts of my host family. Without them, I would never have experienced the vibe of an authentic Thanksgiving family dinner or the fervor of Black Friday, nor would I have adopted a typical American lifestyle ever in my life. Thanks to the help and positive impact of these wonderful people, I conquered all problems that had once depressed me, and America became my second home because of them.

After my successful adaptation to my new life and new school, my growth and transformation continued. Instead of being timid in front of strangers, I became more talkative and outgoing, which definitely boosted both my social and academic achievements. In my four years at FCDS, I turned from a childish freshman into a

much more thoughtful and independent-minded senior.

Influenced by the way everyone helped me, I was always ready to help everyone around me with my best efforts, both on and off campus. As an international student, I was delighted to tell domestic students about my own country and culture, and I was eager to help international students to overcome any difficulties they encountered in the United States.

Even as I move on to Brown University for my undergraduate education, I will maintain my connection with the Fury family and I am looking forward to making more contributions to this lovely family as an alumna in the future. 🌸

Mindy Li graduated from FCDS in spring 2018 as the school's valedictorian. Now enrolled at Brown University – which she chose in part for its appealing liberal arts setting – she is studying applied mathematics.

