

Shadowing gives prospective students practical insight

Before students are selected to attend The John Carroll School, Bel Air, they are strongly encouraged to spend at least a day at the Catholic high school to make sure it's the right environment to continue their education.

"The candidates are matched up with a current student at John Carroll," said Gary L. Scholl, vice principal of the school. "We try to match them up with students who have similar interests, or who came from the same feeder school, if possible, so it makes it a little more comfortable when they are visiting for the day."

The visit is called shadowing, and it's a practice most Catholic high schools in the region recommend before candidates commit themselves to a school.

Shadowing days are usually arranged in the fall - when the application process is underway - and candidates meet with the admissions personnel, spend the day going to classes with another student and submit a writing sample, Mr. Scholl said.

"We collect a writing sample that day as part of their visit," he said. "It's one of the things we've found to be very helpful when selecting our students."

Prospective students schedule a shadow day in advance with the admissions staff, Mr. Scholl said.

In the case of larger feeder schools, like St. Margaret School in Bel Air, one or more days are set aside specifically for those candidates, he said.

"If you get too many candidates in one day, it can be disruptive to the learning process," Mr. Scholl said. "It's better to coordinate all of this in advance to get a good match for the students who serve as their guides for the day."

The regular schedule is always followed when candidates shadow for the day to give them an authentic snapshot of what John Carroll has to offer, he said. "Teachers are asked to involve prospective students in the activities as much as possible."

About 50 percent of John Carroll students come from the public school system and

the rest come from various Catholic and private schools, and Mr. Scholl said it's important for candidates to become familiar with the facility, teachers, staff and students before making a final choice.

"We've found the shadowing program to be a very successful tool in matching students with our school," he said. "They get a real insight into the culture of our school in the broadest sense. If they select John Carroll they are selecting it on the basis of a good understanding of what our community is really like."