

News from the Primary School

Jo-An Vargo

As I was signing each child's class placement letter this week, I reflected on how crucial a parent's shared perspective and feedback are to our young students. Each of you has chosen to make a significant monetary investment in your child's education by enrolling at Holland Hall. You share our values and understand our efforts to develop the essential qualities of a Holland Hall graduate.

There was an article in the *Wall Street Journal* two years ago about the role of parents in the education of their children. (*Raising the Bar: How Parents Can Fix Education*, by Daniel Akst, August 29, 2008) It stated, "In a survey of the research, Michigan's Department of Education summarizes the findings neatly: 'The most consistent predictors of children's academic achievement and social adjustment are parent expectations of the child's academic attainment and satisfaction with their child's education at school. Parents of high-achieving students set higher standards for their children's educational activities.'" Our mutual efforts to take those expectations and support each child's motivation, student behaviors, emotional stamina and resiliency will lead to the achievement we all want for them.

I've always appreciated the partnership the teachers and I have experienced with our families. We work diligently when determining appropriate class placement for our students. By taking into account as many factors as possible — ranging from learning styles, academic achievement and social and emotional behaviors — we strive to create well-balanced classrooms. I know that sometimes children (and their parents) do not initially understand all of our decisions. Sometimes children are temporarily unhappy to not have a teacher that an older sibling had or to be separated from a close friend, or even because they've heard that a particular teacher was "nice" or "not as strict".

I can't tell you the number of times the teachers and I have heard something along the lines of the following at some point during the year, "My child and I really wanted _____(teacher's name) this year. We'd heard that But now my child really enjoys his/her classmates and loves you." I'm sure you understand my point. Please support us and, therefore, your child by pointing out that he/she will discover many things he/she likes about these new classmates and new teacher.

Our children are better off when we help them focus on the joy that naturally arises from new experiences and giving one's best. Choosing to develop a positive outlook and realizing that they are in charge of this process can also result in greater self confidence and optimism the next time they face an unfamiliar situation. I look forward to welcoming you on August 18th.

