

## **Homework** **Joel Bicknell**

In the August 29 Wall Street Journal, Daniel Akst's article, "Raising the Bar: How Parents Can Fix Education," speaks directly to the value of declaring education as the family's highest priority. In choosing to send your child to Holland Hall's Middle School, you have already made that declaration. Akst's article presents one parent's perspective on how to keep education at the top of the priority list. Specific to his family's approach to homework, he states:

"With some effort, we resist the impulse to 'help' our boys much with their homework... But we make sure homework is done early, without loud music or other distractions. We're available for consulting, and while they're still young we review their work nightly."

Again, Akst presents one perspective on how to support Middle School students at home. A Holland Hall parent recently asked me what her role was in helping her student complete homework. I reiterated that we focus our efforts at school on developing each student's sense of personal responsibility. While Middle School students will require varying degrees of "consulting," parents play a key role in building their student's confidence and empowering their independence in homework completion.

Just a few weeks ago, here in the MS, we discussed at Forum the topic of homework. While the student debate was framed to incite an initial emotional response, the students gravitated to the real question: What is the purpose of homework?

Students recalled that the number one indicator of future success in school was a developing a disciplined work ethic. The Holland Hall Middle School experience revolves around developing habits that will ensure future success, and thus, developing our students' work ethic. Yes, we must be sensitive to the pressures on our students' time outside of school. However, purposeful homework that is well-designed to develop critical thinking and synthesis skills is a vital component of the student experience in Middle School.

As a Middle School faculty, we communicate at each grade level regarding the pace of instruction, assigned homework and upcoming assessments. In doing so, we aim to challenge our students in a developmentally appropriate manner. Conversations will continue throughout the year as we strive to mentor our students to achieve more than they did the day before.