

“I can tell that we are going to be friends ... new school, new year, new me, new you!”

**Jo-An Vargo
Head of Primary School**

The beginning of the school year can be overwhelming. There is a great deal that is new – new classrooms, teachers, classmates and routines. It takes our skillful teachers about six weeks to help our students adjust. I can see the changes as I visit the classrooms. It doesn't matter if a child is an introvert or an extrovert, she/he is thinking reflectively — answering questions, participating in group-time brainstorming and thriving in our learning environments.

It looks effortless, but it's not! Our teachers know that students need to take “baby steps” when they encounter unfamiliar situations. Their attitude is relaxed. They've prepared each day's lessons carefully to provide appropriate pacing and down time, so students can replenish their energy.

Remembering that we all need time to process and regroup can help parents recognize that some children don't want to share about their day immediately after school. They may be more receptive to questions at dinnertime. It's also important to remember that children need down time after school, too. While after-school lessons, scouting activities and athletic teams are cherished parts of childhood, our children also need days during the week when they just go home and “chill out” — in the backyard, at the park, with a good book or engaging in a quiet game or activity with siblings or parents.

I love spending time in classrooms and watching your children become comfortable and competent learners. And I am thankful every day that our Holland Hall teachers are experts in creating learning environments that foster responsibility and independence.