

Educating Towards Moral Responsibility

Over the last several weeks, I've engaged in many conversations with students, parents, faculty, visitors to campus, and fellow administrators regarding what differentiates the Holland Hall experience from experiences at other schools. For those who have been associated with the school for several years, we can agree that the relationships formed between people who have consistent values, constitute the social norms of our school. Certainly, the priorities we place in providing an education that develops our students' discipline of thinking make Holland Hall a special community.

I've discussed in previous Campus Connect articles how important the *Essential Qualities of a Holland Hall Student* are in crafting the Middle School experience. In the next couple of months, I will highlight an individual quality and the practices in place or in development that make these expectations operational in our school.

In focusing our students' attention on the Quality of Morality, we provide opportunities for them to develop their ability to:

Possess integrity, ethical standards, and compassion.
Exhibit respect and sensitivity for others
Cherish the humanity in all people and treat them equitably

As an Episcopal school, we embrace Judeo-Christian values to guide us in our discussions and practices. The school employs two Episcopal Deacons who both have significant educational experience. As chaplains, they provide pastoral care and teach sections of Religious Education. Reverend Bert Bibens, Primary and Middle School Chaplain, also leads two chapel services in the Middle School each week — a chapel for sixth through eighth graders and one for fourth and fifth graders. Reverend Bibens comments,

“We approach morality as if it is each student's responsibility to live their lives in ways that would make their parents and God proud of them. In taking this responsibility, they develop their understanding of integrity and ethical standards.”

All of our practices and traditions in the Middle School are directed to educating the whole child. We want them to see the world through analytical, aesthetic, athletic, and compassionate lenses. By doing so, students can embrace the Golden Rule... “Do unto others as you would have them do to you”... thus cherishing the humanity in all people. Our teachers, as advisors, are able to observe student behaviors and mentor them towards this ideal.

In considering “treating them equitably”, we must understand the difference between being treated fairly and being treated equitably. Great debates have occurred over this idea. How this dynamic plays out in our Middle School hinges on maintaining the balance between being fair and equitable. Fairness means equal treatment for all. A one size fits all approach. This is appropriate in many areas of our school — dress code,

dismissal times, and emergency lunch card procedures are a few examples. Equitableness means treating each person as an individual, creating an environment of fairness. This plays out in our approach to discipline when we consider a first-time offense (depending on the severity) differently than a repeated offense.

So, if our students are to “cherish the humanity in all people and treat them equitably”, they must understand where their moral compass lies. For many of us, that is a life-long process. However, we mentor towards the ideal that being equitable means there is a standard that guides our decision-making. Being equitable means we cherish the humanity in all people, as individuals created by God.