

More than Just the Numbers

Joel Bicknell
Head of Middle School

Built into every school year are natural breaks such as the end of first quarter, which provide us the opportunity to reflect upon student performances. First quarter grades and comments will provide most parents the first comprehensive assessment of their child's performance. Over the next couple of weeks, all MS students and faculty will participate in student-led conferences to evaluate experiences and observations in the first quarter.

This process of student-led evaluations supports the Holland Hall philosophy of "holistic accountability," as it relates to grades and comments. In his book, *Accountability for Learning*, Douglas Reeves states, "...the term 'holistic accountability' refers to a system that includes not only academic achievement scores, but also specific information on curriculum, teaching practices, and leadership practices." Reeves defines such an approach as including a balance of quantitative (grades) and qualitative (comments) information that focuses on the individual.

While grades provide one view of a student's performance, they clearly do not provide the full story. In conversations with colleagues and students, our faculty focuses on the behaviors that lead to the student's performance. They assess these behaviors to identify the underlying causes of weak and strong results in the classroom. In doing so, faculty are better prepared to guide students in recognizing the specific strategies that work for them as individual learners.

In our system of "holistic accountability," I would be remiss not to mention the third point of reflection – the parent perspective. Parents provide vital information about the student's experience at home, which provides the faculty a context for the behavior they observe at school.

This 360-degree approach allows the teacher, student, and parent perspectives to all be included in the evaluation process, ultimately providing a holistic view of Holland Hall middle school students.