



Office of the Head of School

August 2019

Dear Holland Hall Families,

The theme for this year is *The Impact of our Core Values*. Here's why.

A twelve-year old boy and his father sat in the admission office of a very traditional, somewhat stiff and exacting, private school. (Can you tell this is not a story about Holland Hall?) His public elementary school years were coming to a close, and it was time to find a new school.

The little boy had taken all of his tests. He had completed the tours and gleaned, to an extent, what the school day would be like for him. Math first thing, then English, then history, lunch, and so on. Same thing...every day—aside from the occasional field trip or special schedule. The recipe was clear, predictable.

In that well-appointed office, and in a rather large leather chair in front of a desk, the boy—father sitting behind him—waited for the academically-dressed (think elbow patches) admission director to conduct the final interview.

He entered and introduced himself to the boy and his father. Sitting down across from the boy, his questions began: “What are your favorite subjects? Do you generally get along with other students? What are your greatest weaknesses as a student? What sports do you think you will play? How would you like to participate in the arts?” Those sorts of questions...

The boy answered them honestly and to the best of his ability. He liked being asked questions, as most children do. He felt important, and he knew the director was listening to him closely. After all, he was taking notes.

At the end of the 45-minute interview, the director subtly rested his notebook on the side table and removed his glasses. With a dusting of dramatic flair, he leaned toward the little boy, who could feel the excited gravity of the situation.

The director asked: “Now, tell me, young man, what will *you* bring to our esteemed institution?”

Somewhat taken aback, he thought to himself, “What an unusual question...” Glancing over his shoulder at his father, then collecting his thoughts and straightening his shoulders back up, he looked the director in the eyes and answered confidently: “Books.”

Try to keep it concrete, and try to keep it simple, I say! I think the boy thought the same way.

Books? Yes. Writing utensils? Yes. Nowadays, iPads and laptops? Yes. Our students bring all of these things with them to school; it would be hard to focus on academic excellence otherwise.

5666 East 81st Street  
Tulsa, Oklahoma 74137-2099  
*phone* (918) 481-1111 *fax* (918) 481-1145

[www.hollandhall.org](http://www.hollandhall.org)

But what's the most important thing each of our students brings to school each day? Their core values, elements within that drive how they make decisions and to what they pay attention. Brené Brown offers this definition of a value: "A value is a way of being or believing that we hold most important." A clarity of one's personal values also serves as a North Star in times of challenge.

*Trust. Hard Work. Honesty. Self-Regulation. Respect. Kindness.* Holland Hall's core values emanate from our mission, from our diversity and inclusion statement, and from the primary, middle, and upper school's Honor Codes. The impact of living these values, along with the overlapping and augmenting ones, is that our students learn and develop with their family's help to lead extraordinarily impactful and meaningful lives.

You can easily imagine a much longer list, and that's a good problem. Our students (and we) develop these values from within and from the influences around us. Our places of worship, the books we read, the manner in which we compete, and the conversations we choose to lean in to. They not only shape our core values, our core values also shape who we are and how we impact those around us.

For myriad reasons, you choose to invest in your child's or children's education here at Holland Hall. You believe, on some level, that the values your family holds dear are respected and encouraged in the daily life of our school. They will not sync perfectly—such is the way of human nature and of being in community together. The hope, more importantly, is that the school's core values, in conjunction with your family's, will influence, in positive and challenging ways, the way your child grows into this world.

The 2019-2020 academic year greets us with deep promise and excitement. I hope you look forward to the opening of school as much as I do!

In community,



J.P. Culley  
Head of School