

October 18, 2011
TOPIC: EXCELLENCE

Dear Lower School Parents:

As we begin the second quarter, the Lower School Faculty has been discussing the term EXCELLENCE. It was the topic of conversation for Episcopal School Sunday with Dr. Lee Cox that has continued in our divisional meetings. Our school mission is “academic excellence in a Christian environment,” and AES is known as a *school of excellence*. Our motto is INSPIRED to ACHIEVE. What do these terms mean, and how do we promote these traditions here at Ascension?

Excellence can be defined as an unrelenting determination and commitment in pursuit of a goal (Mario Andretti). Excellence is an art won by training and habit. We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not a single act but a habit--a process that should occupy all our days (Aristotle). AES LS teachers described excellence as giving 100%, setting high standards, persevering until the task is complete, working to one’s own potential, and striving to do your personal best. Teachers felt that it is important to show children what excellence is and is not.

We model excellence in the classrooms and around the campuses daily as we strive to do our personal best, and also instill this desire in the students we teach. Teachers agree that we can inspire excellence at school by encouraging the best in behavior and work, giving students opportunities to show their capabilities, expecting and rewarding excellence, and being good role models. Parents can help support an atmosphere of excellence by continuing to have high expectations for themselves and from those around them on a daily basis from year to year.

Excellence requires practice. It does not come easy, and is often connected with a “struggle”. I heard from a parent recently who was upset that her child went home with a set of poor grades on her test papers. She asked the question, “I thought we were a school of excellence?” I have heard parents say, “I’m not paying for C’s”. Consider this analogy: If a child strikes out at the ballpark, do we blame the coach or the poor construction of the bat? Or do we get out into the back yard and practice more until the child develops the skills and confidence to perform better? If a child does not ride a bike on the first try, do we blame the wheels or handlebars and store the bike away, or do we ask the child to try and try again until he develops the skill to ride with confidence? Thus, if a child scores poorly on a test or on a report card, do we seek to place blame, or do we double our efforts to support the child at home and in conjunction with the school?

Each of us holds a piece of the puzzle in the development of the whole child. The school cannot do it without the parents, and the parents cannot do it without the school. I hope you recognize that each teacher strives to inspire students to excel. We want and need the support and cooperation of the parents in order for your child to achieve to the highest potential. Together, we can be *inspired to achieve* excellence.

A teacher sent me an email Tuesday morning, "If we want to know what excellence looks like, I believe we saw it in chapel this morning!" What a blessing to have the LS Girls Choir, the Boy Choir, the Middle School Choir, and the Upper School Ensemble perform for a special chapel service. The Lord was surely smiling down on us this morning as children's voices were raised to praise and glorify the Lord. Excellence surrounds us—from the classrooms to the sports fields, from the gymnasiums to the playgrounds. Look for it! Talk about it! Notice it and talk to others about it! Sing the praises of the school to which you and your child belong!

As always, I am honored to be associated with such a fine faculty and I am honored to have your child and your family here at Ascension.

TAKE NOTE:

Here is a way for you to talk about the EXCELLENCE you see here at ASCENSION.

Please spread the word to your friends and acquaintances. We are scheduling small group tours two days in November so that even if someone is "thinking about AES" or perhaps doesn't even know about us, we would like for you to help us spread the word.

The dates for Lower School visits are NOVEMBER 10, at 8:30 A.M. and NOVEMBER 15 at 8:30 A.M. If you would like to arrange it for them, just call the office and tell Monica. We will take it from there. If they would like, they may call and schedule the tour for themselves. If you know someone who would be interested in the other three divisions (PS, MS, US) look on the website to see when those tours are scheduled. Word of mouth is the nicest and most effective way to really tell people the wonderful things that happen at AES.

Blessings!

Lucy G. Begnaud