



May 27, 2009

Dear Heathwood Hall Parents,

I hope you are well after the long weekend and are looking forward to our last few hours together!

During my presentation at our Ambassador's Luncheon last month, I noted that I would be discussing some building plans we have in the works, but that I didn't want to leave the impression that my focus was on the more aesthetic aspects of our school at the expense of those more fundamental to our mission. I write somewhat in the same vein today. When a new Head of School comes on board, it is a natural time for examination and reflection on current practices. During the next year, you will receive updates from me on varied aspects of Heathwood Hall; today I am writing about our athletic program.

Our Athletic Director Jeff Whalen and I have spent a considerable amount of time together reviewing what will become a strategic plan for athletics. Much of this plan already is underway, while other considerations will wait for the 2010-2011 school year and beyond. In no particular order, what follows are the guiding principles of our plan going forward this coming year:

- Our coaches will be effective teachers of their sport.
- Varsity coaches will be responsible for the whole program in their respective sport from Middle School through Varsity. It is our expectation that you will see a great deal of similarity between the coaching and athletic programs of our younger student-athletes and their older counterparts.
- Our coaches will encourage our student-athletes to participate in multiple sports. For the good of the student-athlete and the school, we can not be myopic and have our children specialize.
- We will find more opportunities for our coaches to be with us on campus beyond their time in our Athletic Center and on our fields. This will foster stronger connections with our students and better oversight of our programs.
- Because it is important to have strong role models for our students, we will be even more focused in our attempts to provide our female student-athletes with female coaches (such as newcomers Nancy Somera and Brionna Dickerson, who join Lynn Humphrey, Peyton Sasnett and Melanie Giese).
- Coach Curtis Player's responsibilities will change. He will become the Assistant Director of Athletics for Middle School and serve our coaches of younger players. We expect that having Curtis work with his fellow coaches toward a more uniform approach within particular programs and improve the understanding of our younger athletes regarding expectations for success within and beyond SCISA will strengthen the overall program.
- We will endeavor to make Heathwood Hall a regional hub for sports that are not, to use NCAA jargon, "revenue producing." To do so will increase our "public purpose" and community leadership beyond our gates and enrich our students' lives. Sports that we may target include volleyball, tennis, lacrosse and wrestling, among others. We have wonderful facilities to share, and it is our hope that by hosting and running more camps

- and clubs on our campus, we will provide better opportunities for our kids while providing stronger exposure of our school to non-Heathwood Hall families.
- Our coaches understand that the viability of their sport is in their hands. We not only expect our coaches to recruit *internally* but to do so on a yearly basis to increase participation in their respective sports.

Beyond next year, we will pursue other guiding principles. We will undertake the due diligence of visiting other great independent schools that have mandatory participation policies – some in athletics, others in “activities” (including athletics) – with the goal of gaining insight into the pro’s and con’s of such a policy. Also, we will be working on a more flexible internal finance policy, so that we may more effectively let our budgeted dollars flow to the sports with unexpectedly high participation levels.

I write hoping you will find solace in Heathwood Hall’s continuing to improve itself -- regardless of the economic environment -- in every facet of our life here. Furthermore, it is our expectation in this time of heightened accountability that, by providing you with our strategic plan in athletics, you in turn will hold us to the standards we have set for ourselves.

Here’s to a wonderful summer and the start next school year of a stronger athletic program. Go, Highlanders!

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Charles H. Jones III".

Charles H. Jones III