

August 16, 2010

Dear Heathwood Hall Episcopal School Community:

On the cusp of Opening Day, I am guessing this letter will find you immersed in preparation. This is the time of year that we feel one set of routines and expectations drifting away and another ready to crash in.

Here at Heathwood Hall, we too are busy making last-minute preparations. Whether you and your family are joining us as new members of our community or returning as seasoned Highlanders, our faculty and staff are committed to making sure your migration is as smooth as possible.

One of the ways we've worked to ensure an easy transition – and a successful school year -- is to anticipate your needs, expectations and questions and to offer helpful information that is easy to access. That's our job. However, beginning this year, we are taking our communication practices to a new level.

If you're a returning family, you might remember that we conducted a full Communication Audit this past school year. Our audit focused on school-to-home communication, examining all the ways in which each area of our school communicates to our parents. It was conducted by a cross-section of our administrative team -- Kara Sproles Mock (co-chair); Donnie Bain (co-chair); Jane Beach and Liz Summers -- and I'm thankful for their leadership and dedication. You may have participated in one of the five focus groups or be one of the 180 people who took our online survey, leaving more than 90 write-in responses – and for this, we all are grateful.

Part of our summer work involved identifying priority areas and creating a plan for improving our school-to-home communication. I'm pleased to share that we're opening this school year with what we believe to be many positive changes, all based on your input. These changes include:

***A re-tool of Edline, our information portal.*** We heard that you want to find things more quickly, for the pages to be more consistent and for the information to be as accurate as possible. So, as you navigate Edline this year, within each of our four academic divisions you should notice increased consistency – in terms of how the information is organized and placed on each page – as well as a consolidation of information. This should reduce the amount of time you spend searching for what you need. In addition, our teachers are committed to updating Edline more frequently and making sure the information that is posted is accurate and up-to-date.

***Calendar consolidation.*** This year, our school will have three major calendars: 1) Our All-School Calendar, which can now be accessed by clicking on a button located on the

front page of our website (www.heathwood.org), among other places, 2) Our calendar for athletics, and 3) Our calendar for the PEAK outdoor education program. Depending on your child(ren)'s grade level(s), there may be calendars that are more specific, but these will stand as our school's "big three." We encourage you to explore the features and event details offered in these calendars. You will find "layering" options so you may see what you want to see.

***A new look for our website.*** Heathwood.org has assumed a new look and feel that we hope you will find pleasing and more reflective of our school, its mission and our visual identity. We encourage you to visit and click on the drop-down menu found in the left column and read the featured news items toward the bottom of the page, where you'll find highlights about our achievements and opportunities for involvement.

***New directional signs on campus.*** Over the summer, we replaced and added several signs on our campus. Our goal was to not only "dress up" our campus a bit with signage that is consistent in look with the official names of our buildings, but to make it easier for anyone visiting our campus to find their way.

***The Highlander newsletter.*** We have published three editions of our newsletter, *The Highlander*, including a special Back-to-school Edition, since school closed in May. To access these issues, visit <http://publish-it-online.com/publication/?i=43787> or click on "News and Events" from the front page of our website. Look for electronic versions (or, as I like to call them, "virtual magazines") of *The Highlander* each month with two exceptions – the Christmas season and the summer – during which we will print our newsletter in a way that is environmentally friendly.

We hope that the above improvements will make your experience one that is richer and easier. As you note other points of communication where you believe the school can improve, please let Kara Sproles Mock, our Director of Marketing and Communication ([mockk@heathwood.org](mailto:mockk@heathwood.org)), know your ideas. Welcome back!

Respectfully,

*Chuck*

Charles H. Jones III

Head of School