

## Sharing the Journey

I recently quizzed several OLG graduates about their very first day of school, as kindergarteners.--- “I remember not wanting to let go of my dad’s hand. I finally did when I saw my friend from pre-school.” Another student said,” I looked at my mom standing in the doorway smiling. She was smiling but kind of sad too. I walked away and went over to some girls playing with the dollhouse. When I turned to look back, my mom was gone. But I felt safe because Ms. Zbaracki was nice.” Another student shared, “I remember thinking how cool I was in the OLG uniform. I was getting to be more like my big brother.” If I could talk to the parents of those students, what would their impressions be of that first day? Were they anxious as they dropped their child off? Would they say it seems like long ago, or just yesterday...?

Those kids have certainly grown and changed. As younger students they learned to listen, to follow directions, and to be part of a group. They worked hard to learn to read, gradually reading to learn. They stepped into the “tween” years. Teetering between childhood and early adolescence, they were challenged emotionally, socially, and academically. In Middle School as 8th graders they continued to be part of a group, but also leaders of groups. *Family Groups* afforded them the opportunity to step into leadership roles. Class stewardship projects kept service and community at the forefront. And all the while these young people continued to grow physically, intellectually, spiritually, and emotionally.

How are you evolving as your child continues to grow? Perhaps you have a new job or greater work demands. Maybe you’ve returned to school, with new goals ahead. Have you become a more patient listener, problem solver, decision maker, communicator? You may be more aware of the developmental changes your child experiences. Do you see your child’s eagerness and joy when you give them your time and attention? Are you able to give your older student more “space” and responsibility? Maybe there are certain things you are trying to model for your child, such as community service, a healthy life-style, staying connected to school activities. Has your sense of humor and fun blossomed through the years? (Hang on to humor!)

Teachers are on that same path of growth, of evolution. And as they continue to develop as educators, ( some being parents as well), they work to find the most effective strategies to help students develop skills to navigate a complex world, make wise decisions, recognize their talents, and foster optimism.

As parents, as teachers, it’s helpful to remember---we “grow-up” right along side our kids. We ALL continue to evolve into amazing individuals. We make our mistakes, and celebrate our successes. The learning comes in recognizing where we can do better, trying something different, and supporting one another through the good and not so good times. Our job requires us to maintain both a healthy concern for our childrens’ safety and well-being, while encouraging them to develop new skills and autonomy. That can be tough to balance, but all part of our wonderful journey!

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