

Discussion surrounding the state of the nation's educational system is at an all time high. It is nearly impossible to watch the news, read a magazine, or attend a gathering without the topic being broached. Politicians are betting their political careers on the issue. From the tragedy at Columbine High School to the decline in our nations achievement scores, it seems that everyone has an opinion about, and a solution for, the erosion of our educational system. For a penny, I'll offer my thoughts too.

Blame for this decline falls alternatively on many groups: athletes, teachers, administrators, students, and parents. Some place the responsibility on television, the movie industry, computers, or the Internet. As for the solutions to the problem, they are equally varied. Many believe that video cameras, gun control, and metal detectors will halt the violence. Others are convinced that utilizing competency tests for both teachers and students will improve teaching and learning, respectively. All the while, legislators are doing their best to pass more laws to filter out the negative stimuli that affect our youth. Not surprisingly, everyone is in full agreement that increased funding will solve all of the problems.

Unfortunately, not even Bill Gates' best philanthropic effort could solve this dilemma. The problem runs far deeper than most people think, or want to admit. The entire system is failing the children of America. At the root of the problem, in my opinion, is the shift away from the concept of community. Once upon a time, children were held to a higher moral and ethical standard within their community—be it the school they attended, the town they lived in, or the country they called home. The climate was such that students wanted to belong to a positive, value driven culture. There was not a stigma attached to “conforming” to the expectations of the community. Similarly, educators were encouraged and even asked to form relationships with students that are now considered forbidden in our litigious society. Just as disappointing is the pressure placed on teachers to “teach to the test” instead of fostering a classroom of independent, critical thinkers. Equally disturbing, parents are often viewed as adversaries in a relationship that was once rooted in a united front for the benefit of the children.

Thankfully, Eagle Hill School is a much different community. We have the freedom to set our own standards, create our own expectations, and build our own culture. We have the flexibility to respond to change without having to react in an urgent and dramatic fashion. We have the courage to uphold the values that we believe are in the best interest of our students and our community. As you read this newsletter, I would encourage you to think about the powerful sense of community that is enjoyed and cherished by all of us at Eagle Hill School.

For the students, we have created a community where they feel safe to explore their talents and test their limits. This is a place where the development of self-esteem and self-worth is fundamental in all that we do. As you read each article, consider the number of exciting and positive experiences that our students are exposed to each day. Read between the lines and recognize the trust that is inherent in our student/faculty

relationships. Feel how proud the students are of their accomplishments and how eager they are to venture onward.

For the faculty members, we have created an environment where their talent, time, and effort are translated into tangible, yet previously unimaginable results. This is a place where they can effect change with each class they teach and in every conversation they have with the students. As you read each piece, consider the importance of their work and how much they believe in the mission of the school. Notice their involvement in every aspect of the students' lives and how much emphasis they place on becoming more effective role models, leaders, and educators. Understand their passion for helping each student individually and appreciate their willingness to give so unselfishly of themselves.

For the parents, we have created an environment where they are encouraged to participate and feel part of the process. This is a place where parents expect results and are rarely disappointed. As you scan the photographs, notice the pride and happiness in all of the faces. Understand the sacrifice that comes with the decision to enroll a child in boarding school. Feel the relief of knowing that a school like Eagle Hill exists for these children.