

## Principally Speaking

### *-Working Together to Unlock Each Child's Potential*



Today more than ever, the education of a child takes a team effort. To be competitive in a global market place, our children need to develop the essential 21<sup>st</sup> century skills of academic rigor as well as critical thinking and creativity. It's not enough for our school to just teach a narrow curriculum that matches the standardized state assessments our students need to master. Our children need to prepare to think, to work, and to solve problem.

Here at Heritage, focusing on the needs of the **whole child**, we are dedicated to helping each child:

- enter school **healthy** and learn about and practice healthy lifestyles.
- learn in an **intellectually challenging** environment that is physically and emotionally **safe**.
- actively **engage** in learning and **connect** to the school and broader community.
- access **personalized learning** by qualified, **caring** adults.

Unfortunately schools alone cannot ensure that each child becomes a whole child. This is why especially this year we are continuing to focus our efforts in strengthening our partnerships with our families and the community. This year's building-wide theme- *Space, Faces and Learning Place: Exploring our Neighborhoods* seeks to draw our student's attention on the aspects of community as well as promote our school as a learning community. The learning community certainly extends beyond the walls of our building as does the responsibility of educating our children. Working together to unlock each child's potential is accomplished not only through the hard work and perseverance of students but also through the ongoing support and efforts of teachers, parents, and the community-at-large.

I personally have high expectations that teachers will be **caring** to students and one another; be **collaborative** in creating lessons, and looking at student work; show a **commitment** to learning and apply best instructional practice; and provide positive, ongoing **communication** with families. Likewise, families are encouraged to partner with the school by supporting home practice, and reading at home; communicating with teachers; supporting and teaching the principles of our Honor Code (respect everyone and everything, be safe, be caring, be ready, and make good choices); and sending their child to school each day with a "can do attitude" ready to learn.

Finally, we are committed to working with the community to support our students in their learning. To this end of the last several years we have forged lasting partnership with such community resources as:

- **M&T Bank** through our long standing mentor program;
- **Junior Achievement** which uses hand-on experiences to help our students understand the economics of life;
- **Audubon Library** and its support of community literacy and programs for children and families;
- **Amherst Police** in the area of personal safety; and
- **Daemen College** through a unique college class that is taught on site at our school giving future teachers a chance to learn about literacy practices while at the same time supporting our students.

This year we have established a new partnership with the **Amherst Symphony**. Sharing their love of the arts and music, the symphony has adopted our school as part of their school visitation program. They will be coming to our school in February for a special program. In return Heritage students have been asked to develop their holiday concert program cover and we are encouraging families to attend their free community concerts this season. (More information will be made available to parents to encourage their involvement.)

I trust you will continue join the staff of our school in the valuable work of educating the whole child and help each reach their potential. This year there will be numerous opportunities to get involved. Attending monthly PTA meeting is just one way parents can stay informed and share in the work of our learning community. The newly design meeting format encourages communication and dialogue around issues related to our children. This month on **Tuesday, November 20<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m.**, Ann Nowak from Sweet Home Family Support Center will engage parents in discussion and share some practical suggestions we can use to improve communication and increase positive behavior in our children. To keep up-to-date with all the things that are happening I encourage you to read the Weekly Informer, check your child's student planner and/or take home folder, and check out our school on the Internet at [-heritage.shs.k12.ny.us](http://-heritage.shs.k12.ny.us).

Our commitment to creating opportunities for families and the community to join us in educating the whole child will continue for many years to come. Thank you for assisting us in helping all children actively engage in learning and connect themselves to not only our school but the broader community. Have a great holiday season!

Mr. Wolf