



by Stephen Allen, Head of School

Appealing School Decisions

No organization is perfect and thus, from time to time, a parent may consider appealing the decision of a school official. Although appeals rarely occur, when they do, honest and kind communication about concerns is always welcome.

In my experience as a parent and as an administrator, I have seen some very interesting appeals cases. Sometimes, all of us simply want to be heard without actually engaging in an official appeal. Before coming to HCS, I have seen parents appeal subjective decisions about the judgment of how much game time an athlete receives, disciplinary decisions, who gets the lead part in a play, and who is the cheer team captain. Most of the time, the need to appeal is minimized when honest, open communication takes place early and often. As the parent, we must consider what we teach our child when we determine to appeal everything with which we disagree. As a positive approach, reflect on what we teach our children when we require that the student take his/her complaints to a teacher or a coach when they are not happy about a situation. We can stand by our child's side (different from always taking his/her side) to model reasonable adults discussing differences in a Christ-like manner. Of course, wisdom is required to account for each situation and what the child's developmental stage requires for the situation.

Consider the real life scenario of a family whose child definitely excelled in a particular area. The case seemed clear as to what the child deserved. When disappointed about not receiving a particular honor, the parents simply encouraged the child to continue working hard to improve and – here is the point – to remember that life will not always hand you what you think you deserve or what you actually do deserve. To this day, the child has developed into an adult who does not get rattled with life's disappointments – a gift much better than an honor or an award.

In the area of discipline, at times, parents and students may believe an appeal is warranted. Appealing a disciplinary

decision should be prayerfully done in the manner outlined in Matthew 18:15-20. In doing so, concerns should be kept confidential and discussed with only the parties who are a part of the resolution process. Further, first attempts to resolve concerns should begin with a thorough, adequate discussion with the person who made the related decision.

The person to whom an appeal should be made is generally the next immediate supervisor and should be done in writing. The line of appeal varies with each situation. The most common chain of command is from the teacher to the vice principal to the principal to the Head of School, or in the case of the preschool, from the teacher to the preschool director to the Head of School.

In each step of an appeal, all parties from previous meetings should discuss the facts together, at the same time. The person to whom the appeal is made may make an immediate decision on the appeal or require a short amount of time (usually a day or two) for the collection of more information, prayer, and reflection. When an appeal occurs, the decision that was previously made (1) could be upheld with no changes (2) revised for lesser consequences (3) revised with greater consequences, or (4) revised to rescind the previous decision altogether.

Here at HCS, appeals beyond the Head of School are to be made in writing for the Board of Directors to determine if the appeal will actually go beyond the Head of School. The Board of Directors may hear appeals if policy violations exist, not general disciplinary consequences.

