

December 23, 2014

A Letter from an Impressed Parent:

Below is an article I wrote as I witnessed a great partnership with the JMH culinary class and Ian Baillie Primary school.

Susan McLenaghan

Ian Baillie Christmas Dinner:

I am writing this because I just happened to walk in on something great, something magical. The kind of something that you don't see every day. Ian Baillie was having it's annual Christmas dinner but this time they had connected with the Culinary Class from James M. Hill and it was the culinary class that was putting on the Christmas dinner (with the help of the trusty home and school). It was Flo's (admin. support) idea to get the culinary tech class involved. She works in both schools and she immediately thought of them when she heard the principal (Mrs. Beth McCarthy) talking about getting the turkey dinner catered for the staff. With a limited volunteer base the home and school opted to purchase a prepaid dinner for the children, but they wanted to keep the turkey dinner for the teachers tradition alive. Carrie Kingston (parent and chair of the home and school) was humming in the kitchen with a big smile on her face as the culinary class and their teacher (Miss. McDonnell) was helping them wrap up the leftovers in the kitchen. Everyone was moving around the kitchen, talking and smiling as the smells of turkey filled the air. The Staff Christmas dinner had been a great success.

When asked, Miss McDonnell stated the following: "The culinary class started catering earlier this school year when the School District was holding their Principal's meeting at the Learning Commons at James M. Hill. The organizers were unable to book the caterers that they normally get their lunch from, so one of the district staff asked Heidi Ryder, one of our administrators, if she had any ideas of where else they could look for a caterer. Heidi came to me and asked if it would be possible for our Culinary Technology students to cater the meeting. I agreed to the partnership, as it would be a great opportunity for the students to gain real-life experiences pertaining to the food service industry as well as working with people outside of the school. Bill Kierstead, the principal, was extremely supportive in making sure the students had what they needed in order to make this successful journey. The culinary class provided the group with break and lunch (lasagna, rice, meatballs, fettuccine alfredo & salad) and it was a hit. The students showed pride in their work and treated the event with professionalism.

Since then, the culinary class has catered many other meetings in the Learning Commons and a few weeks ago, Beth McCarthy (who would have been at the Principal's Meeting) contacted me about catering a Christmas dinner (Turkey) for her staff at Ian Baillie. This forced us to try out catering to a meal off-site. The students prepared the meal in the kitchen at JMH and organized it so that it could be easily loaded and unloaded at the school. Beth provided the class with a great kitchen at her school to work in to make up the plates and to serve it to her staff. The students received nothing but great comments about their work. Most of the staff there, were raving about the efficiency of the students and the quality of the meal.

Having the students doing these types of events in the Culinary Tech classes, puts them in a position of responsibility, knowing there are other people relying on them to have their products ready for them. They also gain a sense of pride; I get to see a number of these students light up when they get to say, "I made that". The food service industry has a high pressure atmosphere and the students get a taste of it as they participate in these events." (Miss McDonnell)

This partnership with another school (JMH) to put on an event brings forth great possibilities for schools to work together. Not only was this wonderful for Ian Baillie school, but it provided a venue for the culinary class to showcase their skills and it integrated the students with the younger students which demonstrates to younger students how they can become involved when they reach those higher grades. Some of the students from the culinary class were actually students that had attended Ian Baillie.

The rare feeling, you know the one, where your heart stops as you witness something special and joy fills your heart, because in that instant you realize this is it, this is the way it is supposed to work. Working together and accomplishing a task together one school helping and providing for another school, how wonderful is that? This is true magic. Working together, whether it be to provide Christmas dinner to staff or just plain helping out with activities at recess. The possibilities are endless whether it is to offer after class knitting or art or writing skills or whatever you want to do in your school. We have older students that have those skills and can put in those volunteer hours for our younger students. This not only builds partnerships for schools but it also has the capacity of offering what might not have been possible before, because teachers can't do it all and because we all want to be involved in our schools. So, this is one solution on how to build partnerships and lighten the load but still provide active, after class or during school activities for students. What a novel idea. Well congratulations Ian Baillie for a wonderful Christmas dinner and sparking some great ideas for future possibilities of wonderful school partnerships. I for one was truly impressed and glad to have been a bystander for this great event. Bravo!

Sincerely,

Impressed Parent