



December 17, 2008

Parents get to relearn what school's all about

Moms, dads shadow kids, do assignments at Windemere Park

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Michele Strong hadn't written a poem in years.

But the 45-year-old Lansing woman wrote one Tuesday as an assignment for her twin sons' mentoring class at Lansing's Windemere Park Charter Academy, where she and other parents are shadowing seventh- and eighth-graders for "Bring Your Parent to School Day."

"It's not all about just dropping them off at school and picking them up at the end of the day," said Strong, as she watched her 12-year-old sons shoot hoops Tuesday morning in gym class. "They know I care about their day, who they associate with. It's just so important, even if you just pop in sometimes, so they know we're all in this together."

Katrina Ngalle, an eighth grade language arts teacher who spearheaded the event, expected 30 to 50 parents to stop in throughout the day. Ngalle also teaches the mentoring class, where middle-schoolers learn how to mentor younger children.

Strong's poem, titled "School Shadow Day," detailed her morning at Windemere Park, including her fear of gym class.

"He was going to make me run, so I got scared and went to art," she said.

In the corner of her paper, she drew a red-and-blue flower with colored pencils.

"I think parents underestimate what middle-schoolers are doing," Ngalle said.

"They don't understand how rigorous it is. In order to achieve this high level of academics, it takes a lot of work. I think a lot of parents don't remember middle school."

Ngalle hopes to invite parents to school again in the spring. Students from her mentoring class helped organize the event and served as hosts and guides for the day.

Strong's son, Michael, said he wanted his mom "to see what we do and see if she could do the work that we do," especially in his seventh-grade math class.

"Some parents, they think the work is easy for the kids, but it's really not," said his brother, Jordan.

Additional Facts

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