

November 2007

Hello! I am a proud parent of a 7th grade magnet student at McMillan Magnet Center. I would like to share with you our experiences to perhaps help you make the best decision for your child for their middle school adventure.

When my son was in 4th grade, he came home very excited about the recruiting visit for a magnet school opportunity that would start at 5th grade. We talked about what leaving his beloved Sunny Slope Elementary early would mean. He was looking forward to the wonderful teachers he already knew that taught 5th and 6th grade and wanted to be in their classrooms. He built strong relationships with his previous teachers and wanted to continue to see them. He was looking forward to the day he would assume the leadership positions for the flag corps, fire patrol, safety patrol, kindergarten reading partner, etc. He was looking forward to walking home from school without always attending afternoon kids club. We chose to stay at Sunny Slope Elementary and it really did enhance his leadership opportunities and skills.

During 6th grade when the McMillan Magnet Center recruitment team visited, the presentation must have been pretty amazing as my son came home very excited about now attending a school that was not the one I planned on him attending. He is involved in a swim team that practices every night at the middle school within walking distance from our house and we always said "one day this will be your school". His enthusiasm was pretty extreme about McMillan and he was well versed in the magnet focus at McMillan. I worried about his middle school years and hoped he would stay with his comfortable friends close to home but we researched this mathematics, engineering, and technology school. The curriculum is very strong.

I was very surprised at the open invitation to tour the school any day and any time that worked for us. We walked around the school viewing all students and every place we wanted to go. I assumed we would be taken to the places staged for recruitment purposes so we would not accidentally see a typical middle school issue. Not only were we impressed by every student we encountered on these random visits, but the energy the teachers exuberated was wonderfully positive. They are at this middle school because they want to be there, not collecting a paycheck counting the days until retirement. We also attended open house and interacted with the families of McMillan. During open house, all classrooms are open and the teachers are available to answer any questions you may have. I was excited to see how clean, full of natural light and bright the building is. The technology available to the teachers and students is amazing.

I actually had my mind set on our neighborhood school as I work only a few blocks away from McMillan and have for over 23 years. I did not want my only child dealing with not only challenges of adolescence but now the 'neighborhood' around his school and the extra time out of his day riding a bus.

Jill Best, the magnet coordinator, was amazing. She is excellent at her job recruiting students but takes it a step further. She builds the relationships that my son stayed at Sunny Slope Elementary school for 5th and 6th grade to enjoy. She has programs that connected my son to not only the teachers at McMillan but to other

students. He attended a Jump Start camp during the summer so when he walked into school on day one he had many familiar faces greeting him. A bus was provided to and from this activity.

A wonderful opportunity has come from our decision that McMillan was the best choice for us as I drive my son to school each day. We have 20 minutes of time to talk, plan, and just be together. My son is able to participate in many after school activities that are structured so that he has a bus available to take him home. Check out the amazing list of choices on the web site. The bus ride home has turned into a time for recreational reading, sometimes homework or visiting with friends.

My son has made many new friends and now has a long list of 'favorite' teachers. McMillan has been a good choice for us. My son comes home from school and routinely says 'I love it at school'. These are not words I expected to hear so often during his middle school years.

I share these experiences as I was certainly not expecting to have my son attend McMillan Magnet Center and now can confidently encourage other parents to consider allowing their middle school students this option.

Sincerely,

Jeannie Plambeck