

Order, Order!

(Our Unique Junior High Order System)

By: Tricia Diehl, Liberty Parent

One of the many reasons I love having my kids in a smaller school is the richness of experiences they are offered. We have an impressive school history, and all of us can share the proud academic accomplishments of our current and past students. What about their social development?

I am continually impressed by the creative and meaningful ways the staff and kids transition through the school year. Our school allows students to get to know each other, have fun, and develop leadership skills at the same time.

Liberty's unique strategy to assist our kids in their social, moral and leadership development is through our seventh-grade and eighth-grade Order System.

At the beginning of each school year, incoming seventh graders are placed in an "Order" of approximately fifteen other seventh graders. They remain in the same Order with the same students and the same supervising teacher for two years.

The Orders are named after the teacher who oversees the Order. As such we get Order names that sound rather dramatic and are just fun to say. Junior high students identify themselves as belonging to "The Order of Lock," "The Order of Ogg," "The Order of Scarlett," "The Order of Hultin," "The Order of Werner," among others.

The Orders meet regularly during school with their Order advisors to plan dances, raise money for charities, plan fun intra-Order activities, organize friendly competitions with other Orders, ask advice, and bond with other students and faculty in a small, orderly environment.

Each Order establishes a student leadership structure. Orders choose their own leaders who then meet regularly with other Order leaders. They learn to create a meeting agenda and stick to it. They learn to raise and manage money and how to set spending priorities.

Through the Order System students learn to participate in meetings, work in committees, plan and host events, speak in public, and interact with adults, as well as how to be held accountable.

These kids work extraordinarily hard, and it is important for them to have opportunities to relax and enjoy time together. The Order system gives our seventh and eighth graders a unique opportunity to combine competition, community service, leadership, and social experiences to enrich their junior high years at Liberty Common School.

The Order system leads nicely into the high school's House System where student leadership skills are further developed. Through the House System, the older high school students serve as role models to younger students so they can learn the virtues and character expected at Liberty Common School.

It is always fascinating, sometimes even magical, watching our children become young adults. Liberty's Order system helps our kids get the best and the most out of their junior high years.