



June 2017

Dear Honor Roll Student,

I was kind of chubby in elementary school. In fact, my greatest embarrassment was when my mom would announce to her friends, "I have to buy Lindy (my childhood nickname) *husky* pants at Sears." "*The fit is sooo good.*"

I learned to be stoic when my mom said this or I would garner the sympathetic attention of her friends; "Oh look, he's sensitive," or "You're not really *husky*, you're just growing into your body." I hated this discussion and stoicism quashed the topic most effectively.

The truth was, it bothered me to no end to be labeled chubby, and my younger brothers knew it, too. If they wanted to yank my chain, they would call me "fatso" for which there was always an appropriate retaliation.

So what does this have to do with you earning the President's Honor Roll for the second semester of the 2016-2017 school year?

I want you to think about how you integrate praise or criticism in your life. This letter affirms that you have done well in school. It is simple praise because you earned strong marks at Menaul School. What I want you to hear is that you are being noticed for hard work and strong efforts, period. Don't get a big head. Don't think you are smarter or superior to the person next to you. You have done well but this is temporary – you need to keep working to earn additional accolades – keep learning more, examining the world from a variety of perspectives and developing skills to help others.

Now I have no doubt you received some criticism as well this year – maybe for a low grade, a funny haircut, or maybe you are chubby like I was.

Let me tell you how it affected me. It motivated me to stay involved in sports, pay attention to eating well, but mostly I grew tall and slimmed out. Even now staying fit is a lifetime activity for me. I train at the gym early in the morning, and stay active outside the gym by hiking, swimming, biking, and staying active. I love being able to hike faster and longer than my children or ski with them at 59 years-old. Staying active and maintaining good physical health is like the work you've done to achieve in the classroom, both a goal and a process. Even if I didn't achieve my own fitness goals, working toward them would still be worth it.

So I will close today with three things: I hope you were encouraged this year mind, body, and spirit. That is our mission and my daily prayer for you. Second, when you get criticism, when you fail, I hope you will look hard at what it can teach you, how it can motivate you to care for yourself and care for others. Finally, great work this semester!

Love and Blessings,

Lindsey R. Gilbert, Jr.  
President and Head of Menaul School