

Dear Jason,

I want to thank you for the opportunity to participate in the middle school field trip to Columbia for three days. I came away with an incredible sense of appreciation for USL, for the enthusiasm and camaraderie of the students, and for the educational experiences the school provides. I was pretty convinced my daughter was in the best environment for her-- now I am absolutely sure! As a middle school teacher for over a decade, I am really impressed with the caliber of educational experiences provided at the University School of the Lowcountry.



It is heartwarming to watch these young men and women enchant those they come in contact with. The school has obviously instilled in them a deep belief that they have something valuable to learn from everyone they meet. From the moment they confidently introduce themselves to someone, making eye contact and shaking hands, they manage to communicate both respect and interest in whatever the speaker has to say. It was a delight to watch them participate in an honors college class at USC, deconstructing Shakespearean sonnets at the level of college freshmen. They provided answers, ventured educated guesses, and asked thoughtful questions. They made great connections with the University's oral history program and the oral history they had explored in Mount Pleasant. They were able to explore their current humanities project regarding the separation of church and state while interviewing protestors and legislators in the State House Lobby. They watched the state Senate deliberate and were delighted to be recognized from the floor. They took copious notes and asked relevant questions almost constantly during the tour of the SC Military History Museum, taking far more time than we had allotted.



They definitely learned a lot about a host of academic topics, but what was impressive was their (and your) ability to constantly make connections with their current curriculum, their insatiable curiosity, their collaborative teamwork, and their clear respect for you, the hosts and speakers, and one another. They waited patiently when they needed to, they gently corrected themselves and each other if they got wiggly, they offered feedback about the plan when you asked-- all within a framework of obvious rapport and respect. When we sat down to watch graduation ceremonies at Fort Jackson, they politely introduced themselves to those sitting around us, explaining what we were doing there and asking about the soldiers the families were there to support. When we needed to clean up the gym to depart on the last morning, there was no shirking or bickering-- we were even ready early!!!



As I said during our moment of reflection, my favorite part of the trip was the reflection in the round that took place on Thursday night. Each child's written reflections provided them with a springboard for discussion, and they were allowed to share however much they were comfortable with. They even have a whole language that supports the school culture-- concepts like "psychic bonus points". The whole conversation was imbued with warmth and humor, and the gentle banter was fun to watch and participate in. Even when they gently tease each other about music preferences or linguistic styles, there remains a sense of safety and respect for differences. It was like being in the midst of a very intelligent, well-adjusted, funny family.



I was honored to be part of it. Thank you!

Judy Drew Fairchild