

Fast forward 10 years. I've just read two articles that have me a bit freaked out. One is about how high-end college admissions and scholarship applications are so demanding that parents make it a second, full-time job, turning their dining rooms into "Application Central," complete with strategy maps and deadline charts. The other article says it is no longer enough to have high grades, edit the school paper, have the lead in the school musical and be a three-season athlete. You also must create a thriving non-profit organization or discover a cancer breakthrough. Right around the same time, my husband and I meet a couple of parents who tell us that they have spent tens of thousands of dollars having their teens "packaged" for college applications because, "It's such a gamble; you've got to invest to shift the odds in your favor."

Okay, did I say a bit freaked out? I mean very freaked out. We haven't set ourselves up for any of that. So, I tentatively ask another High Meadows mom I know how college applications have been going for her 18-year-old daughter. She smiles, "Fine." Really? No Application Central, overloads or packaging? My friend shakes her head, "Applications are a gamble for lots of kids. But High Meadows kids are different. When they look at schools, it's not about picking the impressive name or the best marketing. It's about looking for the school or program that resonates with the answer to that question, 'Who am I?' It's much less of a guessing game."

That's the value of our children's High Meadows education: They know what it is to be secure in their own skin, to be themselves, regardless of what anyone else thinks is cool. They try new activities out of curiosity and pursue passions because they bring joy, not because of how they'll look on a resume or college application. They can answer that question, "Who am I?" And all these years later, they still seek out the engagement and connection, the sense of wonder and discovery that was nurtured so well for them here.