

Wow! I am not even sure where to begin. Gavilan Hills Academy is the best thing that could have come into our family's life! When our daughter was 4, we began the daunting task of finding just the right school for her. The problem started when we were told by Gilroy Unified School District they could not do much for our child's education until she started 2nd or 3rd grade. So, in other words, if your child can read, write, count and meets California State Kindergarten Standard, they will still stay in kindergarten and do everything else the other kids do. This was frustrating to us because our daughter gets bored when she is not being challenged.

We came across Gavilan Hills Academy in the phone book and set up a meeting. At first I thought the school would be way too small for our very shy 5-year-old. We thought a bigger school with more social opportunities would be the way to go. However, after sitting in on the kindergarten class, I was absolutely amazed and knew this was the perfect placement for our daughter. These 5- and 6-year-old students were so polite and eager to show me how they code words in phonics class. They could not wait to show me how many bears they had earned as rewards throughout the day, and chant "The Mighty A Bears" song for me. It was such a great, positive and nurturing environment. This is what every kindergartner deserves to have for her first year of school!

Our daughter could not wait to start school at Gavilan Hills, and once she did she was eager to go to school every morning. What we like most was the fact that the curriculum for each student was designed to meet the child's individual needs. For instance, our daughter was placed in a 1st grade math but stayed in the kindergarten phonics class while other students were placed in a kindergarten math and 1st grade reading. This style of curriculum goes on through the highest grade at Gavilan Hills Academy, so our daughter has been able to excel where her strengths lie and meet all other grade level standards in her other classes. The students learn how to study properly and even take short finals in kindergarten! This technique has given our daughter the confidence necessary to excel in test-taking situations now that she is in junior high. She does not fear tests, nor does she have anxiety beforehand. We know this will be a great benefit to her in high school, college, and beyond.

We cannot say enough positive things about Gavilan Hills Academy. The exceptional learning environment is enhanced with fairly enforced discipline. Our daughter once slammed the door out of anger and her punishment was to open and close it quietly fifty times! She has had to copy the definition of the word "quiet" and have us sign it due to talking in class too much! The director and teachers do an outstanding job of teaching the students right and wrong. This not only helps to keep the students orderly in school, but helps our children to become great adults.

Gavilan Hills Academy has also taught our daughter the value of giving and taking care of others. Every year the school collects gifts for the less fortunate children of our community and has a huge "present parade" to give the gifts to the local firemen. The students of Gavilan Hills look forward to this event months before it arrives. The students also exchange small gifts with each other during the holiday season. They are taught at all times to care for others, to look out for each other, and to help others up when they fall. .

Our daughter is now in the 6th grade and is flourishing because of the balanced academic instruction and nurturing environment she has enjoyed for the past seven years. She is now a confident, outgoing, social child. She enjoys learning and loves going to school. She loves to volunteer her time to help others and genuinely cares about people.

We will soon be moving out of state, but we know our daughter will succeed at any school we choose because of the study habits and organizational skills she has acquired at Gavilan Hills. She has had a phenomenal academic education in a caring environment where she has been able to meet her potential. From the days of picking up our little 5-year-old and finding her in the lap of her teacher reading a book; to pulling up to the school and seeing our now 11-year-old surrounded by friends, we have always known we chose just the right school.

Stephanie Stachura