

# K-K News

January 16, 2009

Dear Families:

Progress reports will be coming home in three weeks. While I will write more about those documents before they come home, the upcoming date of those reports has Julie and me thinking about assessment a great deal. Progress reports are important as ways of sharing with you your child's progress towards the learning goals for kindergarten in Wellesley. We do assess students in preparation for writing these reports. There are two factors that complicate that statement, however. The first is the difference between the ways that we assess children regularly from how they are assessed for the reports, and the other is the reality of child development.

We assess children all of the time. We observe their work, question their thinking, and consider what they need to know or be able to do next as they work towards goals in the classroom. This assessment occurs daily as children work on activities in math workshop time; read with us in conferences and reading groups; and work independently during writing workshop. We are constantly looking at student work to shape the content of the next day's lessons. We ask ourselves, "What does s/he need to know next?" "What are they struggling with?" "Is it time to move on, or do we need to review something?" "Is it more effective to work on this skill or content knowledge with an individual child, a small group, or the whole class?" This is known

as *formative assessment*. The answers to these questions form our decisions about what and how to teach.

Progress reports reflect a different kind of assessment. They look at *summative assessment*. That is, an assessment of a child's achievement towards a marked set of goals. While we do this type of assessment regularly as well, it is usually within a specific unit. We ask, "Can s/he create a pattern?" "Is s/he able to identify Mexico on a map?" "Is s/he using letters and sounds to support independent writing in the classroom?" Since progress reports ask us to report on all of the learning goals at one time, it becomes a very complex task.

Further muddying the waters in all of this assessment is the nature of child development. Children's growth is unpredictable and uneven. While there are clear and developmental stages in everything children learn to do, the time frame and speed with which children pass through those stages is highly variable. One child learns to walk at eleven months, another learns to walk at eighteen months. Children go through growth spurts at unpredictable speeds, as well. These sudden spurts are not unusual, but they are no less remarkable. We complete progress reports with the full knowledge that your children are growing and changing at remarkable speed at this point in their lives. Thus, we like to think of the progress reports as a snapshot of a brief moment in time, rather than a fixed mark of your child's success in school.

### **In other news...**

Please note the change to dismissal plans for next Tuesday. Students who are typically dismissed at 12:00 may be picked

up in the classroom at 12:00, as we will be watching the swearing in portion of the inauguration at our normal dismissal time.

We will be visiting Newton Wellesley Hospital on February 5. A permission slip will come home in the next few weeks, but I wanted to extend an invitation to parents who are interested in acting as chaperones that morning. If you are available and interested in joining us from 8:30-11:30 that morning, please send me a note next week.

Remember that book orders are due this afternoon.

Our class has had some wonderful conversations about the importance of the work of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. this week. I hope that you will have the opportunity to speak with your children about their learning and appreciation of his legacy on this long weekend. Enjoy the extra time with your children!

Warmly,

*Lynn*