

K-K News

October 3, 2008

Dear K-K Families:

After learning of the stock market's plummet on Monday afternoon, I attended services for Rosh Hashanah that evening. Our rabbi wisely opened the service by saying, "I know that many of you enter the sanctuary anxious about the news of the day. I just want to remind you that we have weathered far worse, and we come together tonight to celebrate over five thousand years of Jewish communities gathering to celebrate the beginning of a new year." I was struck by this opening. It was so wise to acknowledge the proverbial elephant in the room that night, and so helpful to be provided with a sense of perspective when most news outlets were screaming of the catastrophes of the day. I write about all of this because it caused me to think a lot about the sense of perspective adults can offer to children in times of difficulty, and the sense of perspective I hope I can offer all of you as your children spend this year with me.

In addition to the comments at temple, I spent a lot of time this week thinking about two other sources of perspective that I have had the opportunity to enjoy recently. The first was from Rob Evans, head of the Human Relations Service in Wellesley and a frequent consultant to the Wellesley schools. In multiple presentations in the past few years, and in his book, Family Matters, he speaks of the uncertainty of raising children in today's world. He summarizes nicely the certainty that came from being the child of a farmer a century ago by pointing out that there was little opportunity to go beyond your known world, and that the certainty parents had -- in terms of what skills children needed and what they could expect -- was great. He points out that while the myriad opportunities now available to children are wonderful, they are anxiety-producing for parents because we don't quite know how to prepare our children for what they will need to know, because we have no idea of what they will be doing with their lives. It is a fair point.

This point was further driven home by a clip on YouTube* that was shared with the Wellesley Public Schools faculty on opening day this year by our Superintendent, Bella Wong. In the clip, it talks about an astonishing variety of changes in the world, and the rate at which those changes are occurring. For example, the average American worker will hold 14 jobs...by the age of 38. This furthers my anxiety as a parent, but it also presents an opportunity for us to consider what really matters for children, and what I can do in the classroom to insure that they are prepared for whatever the future may hold for them.

Predictability is one thing that provides great comfort for children. Regardless of what is going on at home or in the outside world, the daily rituals and routines of our mornings help them have a sense of control and predictability. This was very clear to me on the morning of September 12, 2001, as children entered the room with varying understandings of what had occurred the previous day. The fact that school was still the same was of great comfort to them. In this week of uncertain economic news, that was true as well.

Social skills are a piece of the curriculum that will consistently support your children, no matter what field they choose or what the world looks like when they are adults. Being able to listen effectively, work in a group, make decisions, and try new things will be critical to their success. This is part of why choice time is part of our schedule four days a week, and why I do not assign choices or snack spots. The ability to make decisions and negotiate only comes with practice, and your children are practicing these skills daily in KK.

Of course, a solid foundation in literacy, mathematics, science, geography and technology are also critical to our children's success, and we spend a great deal of time on these subject areas, as well.

In summary, I want you to know that I am aware of the stresses that the week just past held for everyone, and recognize the uncertainty that the months and years ahead may hold as we attempt to recover from the economic impact of this week's events. I remain confident, however, that your children are being prepared for whatever may lie ahead!

In other news....

- There has been a great deal of illness already this year. Julie and I appreciate the number of people who have kept children home to insure that they, and the other members of our class, remain healthy. If your child comes to school with some medical concern that does not merit a day at home (e.g., a rash, coughing during the night, a bout of allergy troubles), it is tremendously helpful for us to have a note about that in the home folder. Then, if your child complains during the day, we can be aware of the history and respond more quickly and appropriately. Also, those notes can be sent to the office so that if your child does need to see the nurse, she is already aware of the background when your child walks in the door. Thank you for your cooperation with this.

- Flipping the calendar to October always brings great excitement about Halloween. We will participate in the Hunnewell Parade at 8:45 that morning...details to come. If you are interested in volunteering as a photographer for the class that morning, please let me know next week. Also, Donna McFarlane and I are planning a joint kindergarten centers time on Halloween morning, approximately 10:30-11:45. If you are available and interested in helping out that day, please send me a note or e-mail next week.

- New book order forms are in home folders today. Orders are due no later than Tuesday, October 14. Instructions for online orders can be found in the newsletter section of the website.

- Found in the classroom: A plastic food storage container. It is square, with a gray, "Arctic Zone" lid. No one claimed it after snack the other day. (It contained string cheese, carrots, and frosted mini wheats, if that helps with identifying the loss.) Please label containers that you send to the classroom! Thank you.

- Sign ups for parent conferences will be posted outside the classroom door by October 14. If they are available earlier, I will send out an e-mail. If you have a specific need for a conference date, please let me know and I will do what I can to accommodate your needs.

- Please remember that there is no school next Thursday, October 9, due to Yom Kippur, and no school Monday, October 13 because of Columbus Day.

There will be no newsletter next week due to the timing of the holiday. Thus, I wish everyone a good two weeks, and look forward to being back in touch on Friday, October 17.

Sincerely,

Lynn

*In case you are interested, the YouTube clip -- which is long, but fascinating -- can be found at:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pMcfrLYDm2U>