

October 2008

Dear Parents,

We have had a wonderful start to the school year in KM. The children have settled in and learned many of the daily routines already. It has been so much fun to hear about the children through the sharing of the "All About Me" posters.

This month, we have a tremendous amount going on in KM. In literacy, the children will be focusing on the letters D, P, B and R. They will also spend a week reviewing the first few letters studied. Although we focus on one letter a week, the children are engaged in daily activities that work with all the letters of the alphabet. For example, they may do alphabet puzzles, match capital and lower case letters, trace dotted letters, "read the room" looking for assigned letters, use letter stamps, play letter games such as Bingo and Boggle Jr. as well as match pictures with the same beginning sounds. These are just a few of the many activities your children will encounter this month. Each child will also be included in small group work with me during activity time a couple of times a week. These groups are based on each child's specific needs and instruction is geared to each group's current skill level. The groups are flexible allowing children to move at their own pace. Some of the skills we are working on now include rhyming, recognizing capital and lower case letters, identifying letter sounds and beginning reading skills. When children are ready, they will be included in a guided reading group.

In the afternoon, the children have Writer's Workshop. We have begun the year with books by

Isabelle Harper and her family. I always start with these books because Isabelle wrote these books when she was a child. Her grandfather, Barry Moser, is a professional author and illustrator and helped her publish three books about her pets. These books show the class how children can be authors and can write about what they know. They are simple books that go along well with our unit on the family. I am using the books to teach the children about such concepts as author, illustrator, title, title page, and dedication. After reading a story, the children are offered the chance to sit in the "author's chair" and tell a story. I modeled a story for them first and talked about how good stories have a beginning, middle and end. The children are encouraged to share real life stories with the group followed by the audience stating something they understood or something they are curious about.

In math, we are beginning a new unit this week entitled "Counting and Comparing." This unit is the first of three units that focuses specifically on various counting skills. This unit develops the children's sense of numbers and quantities, allows opportunities to count and compare amounts, and measure objects through direct comparison. We will begin by reading some commercial counting books as the children work on creating their own counting books. Many of the activities in this program ask the children to participate in hands-on activities that involve some type of recording that shows the work done with the manipulatives.

In science, the class has begun learning about the five senses. They have talked about what a scientist does and what professions involve science. We have started

looking closely at objects and creating a list of seeing and feeling words to describe the objects. We will continue this activity throughout October. This exercise is in preparation for our first experiment that involves growing mold. The children will be asked to keep a journal documenting the changes in their jars. The words we are listing now will be used later when they are writing in their journals.

In social studies, we will continue talking about families. We have read several books about families and have discussed who is in a family and how people in a family help each other. This week we are continuing to look at ways families can be different.

In Open Circle, we have started to create a list of class rules. The children have come up with many important rules about school behavior. Now, we will attempt to combine these rules and rephrase them into positive statements (ex. Be nice or Be safe) rather than negative ones (ex. Don't hit). The result will be four or five rules that we will all agree to live by while in KM this year.

On October 22, we will be going on our first field trip of the year to the Spring Street Farm in Millis. I have attached a permission slip to the end of this newsletter giving all the details. Please print this page, sign it and return it to me with the \$6 fee before Thursday, October 16. Thank you to the parents who signed up at Back-To-School Night to chaperone this trip.

We will be taking our fall nature walk on October 16. The children will explore the schoolyard and the brook path that borders the playground. They will be asked to

find signs of the fall and to use their senses as they walk around. The children will be given a clipboard and recording sheets to document their walk using pictures. Please be sure your child is dressed appropriately for the weather on this day as we will be outside for 30-40 minutes.

Beginning the week of October 20, the children will begin staying for two stay days. Those who have been staying on Monday or Thursday will begin staying every Monday and Thursday. Those who have been staying on Tuesday or Friday will now stay every Tuesday and Friday. Please be sure your child knows what he/she is doing for lunch on stay days. We have already had a couple of mistakes.

Parent volunteers have begun helping in KM at activity time. Thank you to everyone who has signed up so far. There are a couple more openings for October if anyone is interested. Remember to check in at the office before you come to help in the classroom. Some of you may have heard from your children that we are lucky to have a Wellesley resident, Cliff Baden, volunteering in KM on Monday and Tuesday mornings for about one hour. Cliff is a retired educator and has been working at Hunnewell for a couple of years in different classrooms. I am so happy that he has the time this year to lend a hand in KM.

Parent/Teacher conferences begin on October 29 and continue on November 4, 5 and 12. This is an opportunity for me to share with you how your child has transitioned into kindergarten, how they are doing socially, behaviorally and academically. I will go over the

assessment that I did during the first two weeks of the year when your child came back for his/her time alone with me. On October 14, I will post a conference sign-up sheet in the hallway outside our classroom door. Please stop by and sign up at your convenience. If you cannot get to school to see the schedule, send me a note with two or three possible times you are available, and I will assign you a slot. On these four days, I will typically schedule parents beginning at 12:30 and end at 3:00. I will have a few 8:00 times as well. Conferences last twenty-five minutes. Let me know if you have any questions about the conferences.

On October 31, Hunnewell will be having its annual Halloween parade. Children should come to school in costume that day with school clothes underneath (if possible). The parade begins behind the school at 8:45. Bring your cameras. We will be walking in the parade with our third grade reading buddies. After the parade, I'd love for two or three parents to come inside and help take off the costumes. Please send a bag to put the costumes in once the parade is over. No weapons or face masks are allowed. Later that morning, KM and KK will get together for a Halloween centers time. Thank you to all the parents who volunteered to help with this fun event. If anyone else wants to join us, just let me know. The centers time will be from about 10:30-11:45.

As I said in the beginning, October looks like it's going to be a busy month!

Sincerely,  
Donna McFarlane

October 2008

Dear Parents,

On Wednesday, October 22, we will be going on a field trip to the Spring Street Farm in Millis. The Tangerini family owns and operates the farm and is a former Fiske School family. Mrs. Laura Tangerini typically speaks to the children about the work involved in running a vegetable and flower farm. She takes us on a hayride out to the pumpkin patch where each child is allowed to choose a small pumpkin to take back to school. There is also a hay maze set up in the barn that the children love. We will have snack at the farm so please pack a small snack and drink in a disposable bag labeled with your child's name. The cost of the trip is \$6.00. The cost of the bus will be covered by our generous Hunnewell PTO. If anyone needs assistance with the fee, please let me or Sheryl Boris-Schacter know. There is money available to help cover the cost of the trip.

We will be traveling by bus and will be leaving Hunnewell at 8:50 and returning by 11:45. Parents who signed up to chaperone should come to the classroom by 8:45 that morning. Please be sure your child is dressed appropriately as we will be outside the entire morning. If it rains, we will not be going. Please sign the permission slip below and return it with \$6.00 (cash only please) by Thursday, October 16.

Sincerely,  
Donna McFarlane

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I give my child, \_\_\_\_\_, permission to go to the Spring Street Farm in Millis on Wednesday, October 22. I understand he/she will be transported by bus. I have enclosed \$6 in cash to cover the cost of the trip.

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Parent's Signature