

September 2008

Dear KM Parents,

Even after teaching for 24 years, I still feel the excitement and nervousness associated with the beginning of a new school year. By the middle of August, I am in the classroom cleaning, putting away new supplies and getting ready for a new group of children. It always feels like a fresh start and every year is different from the ones before it. I am looking forward to another wonderful year and can't wait to work with you and your children.

You will be receiving a newsletter at the beginning of each month. It will contain information about curriculum to be studied that month, special events, items we may need, volunteer opportunities as well as other important information. I ask you to please read each newsletter carefully. If you have not already visited the KM website, please do so soon. Beginning in October, all my newsletters will be available only online unless you make other arrangements with me. On the website, there is a "Newsflash" button that allows me to email you a notice when a new newsletter has been posted or timely information that needs to be sent to everyone quickly. Please subscribe to the "Newsflash" when you visit the website. To get to the KM website, go to the Wellesley Public Schools website and click on my name or go to <http://TeacherWeb.com/MA/Hunnewell/KM/>.

This year's Back-To-School Night will be on Wednesday, September 17. The K-2 portion will be from 7:20-7:50. This is your opportunity to hear about what your child will be doing in KM. I will be sending home a packet with detailed information prior to Back-To-School Night. It should help answer many of the questions you have about kindergarten. There will be a parent volunteer sign-up sheet, so bring your calendars on September 17! This evening is for adults only.

The beginning of any kindergarten year is filled with learning routines and getting to know one another. There is a great deal for a 5 or 6-year-old child to learn about how to function in an elementary classroom. We will spend most of September working on the routines that will support the work we do the rest of the year. In addition, we will be working on learning each other's names as well as a little about our classmates. The All About Me posters are a nice way to begin learning about the people in our class.

Beginning in September and continuing throughout the year will be literacy activities that deal with vocabulary development, comprehension, phonics, spelling, writing and book handling (ex. identifying the front and back cover and where to begin reading). As children show readiness throughout the year, they will be included in guided reading groups.

Although we will be working with the entire alphabet throughout the year, we will be focusing on one letter each week. The children will be learning to recognize the letters, provide the sounds they make and write them with the correct formation. They will also be asked to provide words beginning with each letter. Because there will be children who are at various levels of learning these skills, I will provide choices in activities or plan activities that can be completed in different ways depending upon a child's abilities. In September, we will begin with the letters F and E. We use the Handwriting Without Tears program and follow the order of the letters in the book. They are grouped by how the capital letters are formed. For example, the first several letters are called "frog jump letters" because you jump up to the starting point after making the initial straight line down. I will be sending home a sheet that shows how the children will be learning to write the letters this year. It would be helpful if you could keep it readily available when your child is writing at home.

In math, we will be using the revised edition of Investigations by TERC. The kindergarten team tried it out last year and loved the new curriculum. In September, we will be focusing on routines such as taking attendance, using a calendar, the counting jar and today's question (data collection). The children will spend quite a bit of time exploring those materials they will be using later in more structured learning activities. The program comes with parent letters that I will be sending home to you from time to time.

In social studies, we will be talking about families. The children will have the opportunity to share information and personal experiences from their families. We will look at who is in a family, how families are the same and different, what family members do for or give to each other, what people in a family like to do together, how families change over time and develop an appreciation for our own families as well as other families. During this unit, the children will hear about my family as well. For those of you that don't know me well, I have a beautiful 10 1/2 year old daughter, Grace. Grace was born in China and adopted as an infant. I share this now because the topic of adoption may be new for some of the children in KM. Feel free to preview this topic with your child if you feel he/she needs it. I'm sure the children will hear lots of stories about Grace and may even have the opportunity to meet her during the year.

Beginning the week of September 22, the children will start staying for 1 full day each week. You should have received your child's assigned day in the summer mailing. Please send a small blanket or beach towel in a plastic bag on or before the first stay day. Your child's name should be on

the bag as well as the blanket/towel. After lunch, the children have a very short quiet time in which they sit on their blankets/towels and look at books. Once stay days begin, it is important that your child arrive at school knowing what he/she is doing for lunch. There are 4 choices: buying hot lunch, buying cold lunch, buying just milk, brought everything. They will need to know what they are doing so that they can put their attendance sticks in the correct cup. Also, please pack snacks and lunches separately. Lunches have to go in a lunch bin first thing in the morning. On stay days, I tell the children that they may eat a second snack in the afternoon during free play time. Some children choose to do this and some do not. If you think your child might like a second snack, then pack 2 snacks on stay days.

If you have not already sent in your child's photo, smock, extra clothes and poster; please send them in as soon as possible.

I look forward to seeing all of you at Back-To-School Night.

Sincerely,
Donna McFarlane