

“It is what I was born for – to look, to listen, to lose myself inside this soft world – to instruct myself over and over... “- Mary Oliver

Dear Armatage Families,

We are entering our fourth week of school and it has been a fabulous beginning! I know many of you were able to attend Curriculum Night last week and had your first opportunity to see the new lobby and lunchroom. It is amazing to walk into the school each morning and see such a bright and welcoming entrance. I encourage you to visit the school and see our new and improved building.

5th grade camping trip

Last Thursday night, the 5th grade teachers and I met with about 40 parents to talk about the decision to cancel the long-standing 5th grade camping trip to Lake Country Land School. The decision to eliminate this 3-day trip in the spring was made after many difficult conversations with the teachers. They have loved giving this opportunity to the children, but can no longer support it for two reasons; the first is liability. Taking 70 students out of state for three days is quite an undertaking. The teachers are on duty for approximately 60 uninterrupted hours. Although there are additional chaperones on the trip, they are not legally permitted to handle discipline issues and other responsibilities that inevitably occur when you have kids away from home for an extended period of time. The second issue is equitability. Over time, a disparity between who went on the trip and who had to remain back became an issue that cannot be ignored. Almost all of our white students met the criteria while our Somali and African American students for multiple reasons could not go on the trip. Field trips are designed for all students and when consistently the same group of kids cannot participate, it is necessary to reflect, examine and make adjustments.

The 5th grade teachers and I will be organizing a committee to develop a new opportunity to replace the camping trip. We are looking for a few parents to join us in designing something new and exciting. If you are interested in being on the committee, please email me at Joan.franks@mpls.k12.mn.us. We are hoping to

get parent representatives from all grades, as it will affect every Armatage child at some point.

Strategic Plan

Two weeks ago at the Site Council Meeting, a concern was raised about an article written in a community newspaper indicating Minneapolis Public School magnet programs could be in jeopardy. After a lengthy discussion, it was decided that I should invite someone from the district to speak at the next PTA meeting. I contacted Brian Zambreno, Associate Superintendent about this request. He shared with me some important information. First, the district is looking at all programs as part of the Strategic Plan and how we can effectively address the issue of integration and closing the achievement gap. The board met last Saturday to begin discussions about this issue. It sounds like there is an interest in creating community programs with a specialty focus i.e. Montessori. You can view the tape by going to the district website school board meeting link. In addition, he noted there would be community meetings coming up in October for families to hear more about this topic. Further information will be forth coming from the district.

Family Fun Walk & Ribbon Cutting Ceremony

On Saturday, October 13th the PTA will be hosting our annual Family Fun Walk. This is our biggest fundraiser of the year. As always, there will be a pancake breakfast served by City Church members, a D.J., food and other activities. We hope that all students and family members can attend this amazing event. This year, we will add one additional feature; our ribbon cutting ceremony to celebrate the new working spaces added to Armatage. The ribbon cutting ceremony will take place at 11:30 a.m. near the D.J. station. Following the ceremony, families are welcome to continue walking around the building and stop in the new lunchroom for a piece of pizza and lemonade compliments of Steve Bonine and Community Education.

Culinary Services

By now, I hope you child/ren have had a chance to taste some of the amazing culinary delights coming from our lunchroom. For years, I have heard from other schools about the incredibly tasty food the cooks prepare, however, I had no idea how yummy it would be! Right now, the kids are learning how to dish some of the food onto their trays, go through the salad bar and then punch in their codes. The

next step will be mastering reusable plastic trays and silverware in addition to putting their empty trays on a conveyor belt. Strategically it was a great decision by the culinary staff to do these things in stages. You are always welcome to come and buy lunch and see the fantastic food your kids are enjoying.

New Staff

Each year during staff adjustment, we have to balance the budget and that often affects our teaching roster. The good news is, we have some fantastic new and returning staff this year. I am thrilled with our staff roster and believe your kids are getting a great education from phenomenal educators.

Returning staff:

Kelly Borchardt – Associate Educator

Cristina Swift – 3rd grade teacher

New to Armatage:

Vanita Cleaves – Prep Cook

Nancy Dobbratz, Media Associate Educator

Montana Fileteo – Special Education Associate Resource Intervention Specialist

Michaela Gallagher, School Nurse

Anne Kempainen, Food Service

Carey Seeley, Assistant Principal

FAST Testing

Beginning this week, all 1st – 5th grade classrooms will be taking the FASTBridge formative assessment tests. This approximately 30 – 45 minute assessment gives teachers precise data more quickly using a combination of assessments for reading & math. Teachers can use this data to identify areas of strength and development that will guide their teaching.

Peace Walk

Thank you to all family members that were able to join us last Friday for the second annual Peace Walk. There was something so magical about watching approximately 750 people walking quietly together around the perimeter of the building in support of our school. The 1st/2nd grade classrooms made peace signs and carried them with pride. We plan to do this every year as a way of supporting our school and the amazing things that take place each day at Armatage Montessori School.

Painting

After adding a brand new lobby, office, conference room, health office, staff lounge, workroom, lunchroom, art and music rooms the rest of the building needed a facelift. The district will now be painting the outside and inside of the building on existing spaces. Already, they have painted two rooms and will continue moving forward for about the next four months. When a classroom is slated to be painted, the kids and teacher will spend two days in the media center. Hopefully, we can get several rooms painted during MEA to help expedite the process. Every room will be painted a cream color with the Armatage blue as an accent stripe. When this project is completed, I can't envision anything else needed for a long time to come.

I hope you have a spectacular week as we begin to watch the thermometer drop and the leaves change. If I can be of service to you, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Joan Franks, Principal