

“Every Great Why Needs a Great How. What is Your Why?”

Dear Armatage Families,

Happy New Year! I hope you had a wonderful winter vacation and were able to do some fun family activities during the break.

It appears we will have some interesting weather challenges this week, so please send your kids dressed for the elements. Boots, gloves, snow pants and hats are always a necessity this time of year.

Office

By now, many of you have heard that Pam Durand, School secretary had a mild stroke during winter break. She spent a few days in the hospital followed by some rehabilitation. Pam is now home and making great strides to get rid of the cane that assists her when going up and down stairs. The doctor is not letting her drive yet, so she will not be returning to work until early February.

During Pam’s absence, I am making a staffing adjustment to ensure the office runs as smoothly as possible in her absence. I have asked Mary MacRae, testing coordinator to cover the office from 7:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. and then Paul Scanlon , A.P. and I will tag team the rest of the day. Clearly, there will be some glitches as inevitably, we may stumble now and then, but rest assured we have a whole lot of people offering to help us in any way possible.

For now, anything that requires attention i.e. bus changes, messages to the classroom or other urgent requests should be called into the office and not emailed to Pam. Because there will be several of us overlapping, I want to ensure all messages are conveyed. Therefore, a phone call would ensure the issue gets attention in an expeditious manner.

FAST Testing

Within the next few day, we will begin our second round of assessments of all students. Assessments will be in reading and math. The purpose of this test is to see the growth between fall and winter. Each test should take approximately 30

minutes to complete on a computer (gr. 1 – 5) in the lab. A test coordinator and the classroom teacher supervise the test taking.

The information garnered from the assessment will help teachers in completing the report cards coming home in the Wednesday envelopes on February 21.

School of Excellence Celebration

On Monday, January 22 from 8:40 a.m. to 9:20 a.m., we will have an all school assembly in honor of our 2017 School of Excellence recognition. The ceremony will be in the big gym where we will have a few speakers and receive a plaque from the Director of the Minnesota Elementary School Principal's Association. Superintendent Graf and Associate Superintendent, Lucilla Divila will be present to help us celebrate.

You are cordially invited to attend the ceremony. If you choose to come, I would encourage you to park in the Park Board lot as the construction is taking a lot of our spaces in the front of the building. We will unlock Door #15 at 8:15 a.m.

Construction Update

The new addition is taking shape. Over winter break, the construction crew worked vehemently to complete some major jobs in several of the existing classrooms and hallways. In addition, cinder block and beams were added to the new area creating a visual of what the rooms will look like upon completion of the project. Tom & Keith, building engineers mentioned to me how huge the space looks and feels. There will be a lot of additional footage for them to take care of come next fall.

Mural

Prior to winter break, every Armatage student had a hand in creating a 70 yard mural in the main hallway. Watching this piece of work go from a blank canvas to an extraordinary piece of art in 5 days was fabulous. I know the entire staff was in awe watching Elizabeth execute such an amazing event.

The construction created a little snafu over winter break in which several panels had to be removed in order to put up cinder block. However, the majority of the masterpiece will remain on place for the rest of the year.

Feel free to stop by and look at what 634 students, a paintbrush and a few cans of paint can create.

2018 – 2019 Budget

This year, Minneapolis Public Schools will be facing a \$33 million dollar deficit. Although the impact of each school has not been determined yet, we know there will be a reduction in allocation for next year.

This Thursday, Superintendent Graf and his support team will be meeting with principals to begin rolling out a framework for the budgeting process. The agenda is forthcoming and I am anticipating we will hear some information that will help guide us in creating a balanced budget for each school.

Yesterday afternoon, I met with the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) and dialogued about the ramifications of a reduction in funding and the need to begin thinking about our priorities and the essential question, “What staffing must we have to ensure our students will thrive in a safe and educationally sound school”. I have asked each ILT member to give me one question they believe would be critical as part of a survey to parts to elicit your input in the budgeting process for Armatage Montessori School. The survey will be developed and sent home next week in the Wednesday envelope. Please send it back with your child by Wednesday, January 24 as this will give us some time to collate the information to guide us with the budgeting process.

In addition, the district will be offering three opportunities for families to attend Community Budget Discussions. The purpose will be to discuss why MPS is recommending changes based on the budget reduction for 2017-2018. In addition, they will discuss how the changes may affect our school next year. The meetings are:

Zone 3 – Southwest High School (3414 W. 47th St.)

Wednesday, February 7, 6 – 8 p.m.

Zone 1 – Davis Center (1250 W. Broadway)

Thursday, February 8, 6 – 8 p.m.

Zone 2 – Transition Plus Wilder Complex (3320 Elliot Ave.)

Thursday, February 15, 6 – 8 p.m.

You are welcome to attend any of these meetings. Light refreshment, beverages, childcare and interpretation will be available. For further information, call Shantel Shorter at (612. 668.0128). There is additional information on the district website regarding Parent Advisory Council meetings with budget discussion on the agenda.

School Information Night

On Thursday, January 18 from 6:00 – 7:00 p.m., we will be hosting our annual School Information Night. This is an opportunity for families to visit the school, talk with staff and see some of the classrooms and other learning areas.

If you have a friend or relative who is unsure about which school to select for next year and is considering Armatage as an option, please encourage them to attend our School Information Meeting. Also, if they have not already done so, have them contact the school at 612-668-3180 to register for a tour. The school choice cards are due February 17 and so the number of tours is quickly winding down.

Have a wonderful beginning to January. Please be sure to mark the February 8 PTA meeting on your calendar as I will share the latest news available regarding the 2017 – 2018 budget.

Sincerely,

Joan Franks, Principal