

August 24, 2010

Dear Janney Families,

Welcome back! I am thrilled to be writing my first principal's letter of the year, and even more overjoyed to have the sounds of construction replaced by the sounds of excited and engaged students. For those of you who are new to our community, this weekly letter is intended to discuss broad topics related to the growth of our students and school, to inform our stakeholders of upcoming events, and to convey our response to any issues that may arise. Although you are receiving this first letter in hard copy, future editions will be included in the electronic PTA newsletter.

Last year, we talked extensively about fostering an inclusive school community founded on our Janney values and the concepts of respect, responsibility and safety. Inclusion means differentiating instruction for all students in the general education classroom and creating space for a wide variety of personalities, interests and learning styles throughout our school day and in all of our conversations, whether among adults or children.

Inclusion will continue to be at the core of our work this year (and beyond), with our specific theme identified as "Knowing, Planning and Delivering for the Individual Student." In every way possible, we aim to understand our students and to create learning opportunities that will capture their interests, build on strengths and bolster growth areas.

To provide some examples of "Knowing, Planning and Delivering for the Individual Student," we are expanding student play and leadership at recess, asking students to invent, plan and invite their peers to join a vast and changing selection of activities. In October we will launch our club period at lunch, which will allow students to join groups that will explore areas of individual interest such as robotics, nature exploration and dance. Each grade level will integrate the arts through a community partnership such as the creation of a school mobile or by writing and performing as part of a reader's theater. We will also augment the use of and response to classroom assessments, such as one-on-one conferencing between the teacher and student and our new interim assessment system (ANET) for grades three to five that provides space and tools for teacher planning, re-teaching and enrichment. Finally, we will use electronic file storage to share and reflect on unit plans so that all teachers, whether classroom or special subject, will have the access necessary to support individual learning goals.

While we are enthused about the aforementioned efforts, we are equally motivated by a more difficult conversation that we must have about the persistent race, and income, and learning needs-based achievement gaps that exist at Janney. We believe deeply that all of our students have the ability to achieve at high levels and that it is our duty to grow students to reach the pinnacle of learning, both in academic and social realms. And while the staff at Janney has already begun a solution-based and reflective conversation, we need you to join us. As we attack a decade-long issue, we need the support of each and every community member; we

ask you to volunteer in classrooms, join the Diversity Committee, stand up to inequities, get involved in after-school tutoring and recognize the role that all of us, as adults, have in shaping our individual students and our inclusive community. We must participate in respectful dialogue and must challenge our own beliefs and actions to ensure that every student who enters this building exits as a stronger learner, leader and citizen.

To explore more about the achievement gap in the United States education system, please visit these three websites:

- Edtrust: www.edtrust.org
- The Schott 50 State Report: www.blackboysreport.org/bbreport.pdf
- A variety of scholarl articles:
<http://www.ecs.org/html/issuesction.asp?issueid=194&s=Selected+Research+%26+Readings>

As we consider the bright prospect of the year ahead we do so with the knowledge that the strongest part of a community like ours is the desire and capacity to grow, without excuses and with the tenacity that every individual student deserves.

I look forward to overcoming our obstacles and celebrating our successes over the next 10 months. As always, please feel free to contact me at any time with questions, suggestions or contributions: norah.lycknell@dc.gov.

Sincerely,

Norah Lycknell
Principal

UPCOMING DATES

- Lice checks will take place on Thursday and Friday of this week. Please consider a bath or shower night so that our volunteers are combing through clean hair!
- Individual DC-CAS results will be sent home in the next Take Home Tuesday folder. If you wish to retrieve your student's scores before that time, please email Maureen.leventhal@dc.gov.

THANK YOU

- To all the volunteers on Beautification Day for helping to prepare our landscape, building and classrooms for the first day of school (especially one energetic lawn-mowing mom!)
- To our fantastic faculty and staff for their summer work, planning and engagement during a wonderful professional development week. Our students are lucky to have you!

CONSTRUCTION UPDATE

- The construction team has promised to erect tents on the greentop by the end of this school week.
- The library has also been asked to grade and restore the space they borrowed for construction, returning it to our playground area, by September 10th.
- Construction noise levels have been reasonable during the classroom day (so far, so good).
- We are putting together a furniture committee as we begin to make purchases for the new addition and building.