

October 2, 2009

Dear Park Hill Families:

School is in full swing and we are all enjoying a wonderful start to the year. We hope your children are enjoying school and settling into their new classrooms. I wanted to share some news and information about our fantastic Park Hill School. The CSC would like you to know that you can have input into the new Denver Plan to continue to improve our schools. Please go to the DPS website www.dpsk12.org for more information and use 2009DenverPlan@dpsk12.org to email your input or comments/suggestions about the plan. The district wants to collect feedback through the 22nd of this month.

Our school enrollment projections were very accurate this year, with 21 more students than district projections estimated, as demand is up to attend Park Hill. The largest class sizes are in second grade (27), where we have devoted extra paraprofessional time. We are very glad that we hired a fourth first grade teacher; with the four teachers our classes now have 20-24 students.

DPS released their School Performance Framework (SPF) scorecards for 2009 and they are all available on the DPS website. For the second year in a row our school was identified as one of the top performing schools in Denver. DPS uses the SPF to evaluate school performance. Our school met or exceeded expectations in all of its categories at the elementary school level. Student progress over time (showing the progress a single student has made over the year) is particularly high compared to other schools. Our school was also recognized for adding high growth in rigorous state standards for the second year. Our ranking in all areas is up from last year, and we look forward to continuing our upward progress this next year. Our middle level growth increased from 34% to 58% (now beating the state average) primarily due to the students' work using Fast ForWord. Most of our students moved on to high school reading at grade level. We are proud of this work and the difference that our teachers make throughout the school each day.

We have several partnerships that are making a huge difference in helping us meet our students' needs. Each week, teacher candidates from area universities assist in our classrooms. CU Boulder sends 26 students, DU sends 9, and CU Denver sends 9. Also, students from the East High School Student Council are reading to our kindergarteners and first graders once a week. This additional assistance goes a long way in allowing us to reach students needing additional help and those needing extra challenges.

As you may have heard, our second grade students became the face of students nationwide watching President Obama's speech to students. Thanks to John Moore, a professional photographer in Park Hill, photos of our students were picked up by the New York Times, USA Today, and other national papers. Our students had the opportunity to watch the president's speech in their classrooms on September 8. The CSC agreed this was an important and interesting opportunity to remind students of the value of their schooling.

Our school improvements from the DPS Bond Program continue. The boiler is in place just in time for the fall drop in temperature this week. New lighting has been replaced throughout the school, increasing lighting quality and energy-efficiency. Still to come this year are our new fire sprinkler system and a learning landscape playground remodel and update. We have integrated \$33,000 worth of technology equipment from the bond. Please visit our new all MAC lab in the wing next to the library. We also have a Fast ForWord lab across the hall. Our teachers are beginning to integrate projection systems, document cameras, interactive whiteboards, and a clicker system into their teaching routines.

Below are some reminders:

- ✓ We will have our first Early Release Day on Friday, October 16. School will release at 12 noon and children will eat a lunch from home or a sack lunch from our cafeteria prior to departure. PTSA will not organize enrichment activities like they did last year for Late Start Days, so please plan accordingly. Kaleidoscope will offer after-school activities to children who are currently enrolled in the program. If your child is not enrolled in this program, please be sure to pick up your child from school at 12 noon. If

you child usually rides the school bus, the busses will be running 3 hours ahead of the scheduled drop off time. This school year we will have six Early Release Days: 10/16, 12/9, 1/19, 2/11, 3/26, and 4/19. We use these days to concentrate on professional development, improving our abilities to assess our students in both math and reading and accelerate achievement.

- ✓ October 27th will be the last day of school before Fall Break. We will have our costume parade and classroom celebrations starting at 2:00 that afternoon. That evening is our much-anticipated Talent Show for 4th and 5th grade talent and an audience from all grades. Thanks to everyone that tried out and all that were accepted into the show. Some practice times will be available during lunch recess and the formal dress rehearsal is just before the big show. The staff plans to enter another surprise act. The show will run from 4:30 pm – 6:30 pm.
- ✓ Please sign up for Parent-Teacher Conferences. In addition to scheduling times with your teachers, sign-up forms will be available in our new Community Room (across the hall from the office) on October 7-8 before school, throughout the day, and immediately after school. We look forward to meeting with you and discussing your child's progress. For most teachers, conferences will be held on October 20th and 22nd from 4-8 in the evening for your convenience.
- ✓ Please inform prospective Park Hill parents and students that school tours are scheduled each Wednesday, when school is in session, starting at 9:00 AM. We have two scheduled ECE and Kdg Open House opportunities on November 5 at 7:30 am – 8:30 am and 5:30 pm – 6:30 pm. We ask that parents attending school tours and/or the ECE/Kdg Open House call the office at 303-322-1811 to RSVP.
- ✓ Please do not send your children to school sick during this flu season. The school nurse requests they remain home to rest and limit the spread of illness at school.
- ✓ Please do not pull into the parking lot before and after school. Our children's safety is at risk when unnecessary cars are pulling in and out.

If you should have any questions regarding the above information or anything else, please feel free to contact your child's teacher or myself. The school's number is 303-322-1811. Thanks for your help and support of our school.

Best,
Tonda Potts, Ph D
Principal Park Hill School