



March 27, 2017

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Link Letter

Principally Speaking

Back to School! Possible August 28 Start

We have applied for a waiver with the Michigan Department of Education to start school on August 28 next school year. Our request is based on some of the following reasons:

- Our authorizer Grand Rapids Public Schools (GRPS) is already approved to start the same date we are proposing (August 28, 2017). We don't want a different date to cause a hardship to our families.
- We are listed on the GRPS website and also have generally tried to align our calendar with GRPS.
- We want to be able to line up other major dates with GRPS like the end of the school year and major holidays.
- Similar to the beginning of the year, we don't want differences in end dates to be an additional hardship. We also recognize that families and students are ready for a break once the summer hits and want to minimize the number of days students spend in school in the month of June.
- It aligns us with other districts throughout the county as well.
- It helps to accommodate the additional instructional days per year that are required by the State of Michigan.

For now, please do not book any vacations or camps the week of August 28. If this waiver is granted, please plan on starting on August 28 and attending school that entire week. That will be our expectation as you might otherwise lose your spot on the class roster. We have a deep waiting list and want to be fair to the students attending, as well as the many families we have had to turn away.

Congratulations to Jason and the Minecraft Club

Jason Wagner, parent of a student in Discovery A, started a Minecraft Club after school. For the past couple months the club has been meeting and enjoying playing Minecraft together. However, there were only 7 computers they could use for Minecraft, so the students had to share computers and take turns. As a result, Jason started a Go Fund Me campaign and was successful in raising enough funds to purchase Minecraft for all the computers in the Media Center! Great job Jason and thank you to all the donors who made this possible!

Help Children Build a Growth Mindset

I sometimes get questions about what families can do at home to help their student. Two weeks ago, I shared the resource MobyMax.com. Last week, I gave suggestions about ways to praise your child. Research suggests that parents should think twice about praising our kids for being "smart" or "talented," because this may foster a fixed mindset. Instead, if we encourage our kids' efforts and acknowledge their persistence and hard work, then we will support their development of a growth mindset. Children with a growth mindset believe that with effort and persistence they can learn and achieve in school. A growth mindset will better equip them to persevere and pick themselves up when things do not go their way.

Thanks for starting and/or deepening your growth mindset practice with your children. As we head into spring break, I hope all of you have a restful and fun week. Be Kind, Keep Discovering, and have a great spring break!

John Robinson, Principal/Executive Director/Superintendent
robinsonj@grcdc.org

Family Team Corner

We're in the last week of the T-shirt Sale! If you need to place an order but don't have an order form, that's ok - just check in the Office or email us at grcdcfamilyteam@gmail.com. We take checks or you can pay with a Visa/Mastercard.

The Family Outings Committee put together a fun list of things to do over Spring Break—check it out: <http://bit.ly/2nvDjY2> There are some great free & inexpensive things to do for families. We hope everyone has a wonderful Spring Break!

Mark your calendars for the First Friday Food for our GRCDC Teachers & Staff for Friday, April 14th (later because of Spring Break). April's Theme is Salad Extravaganza! <http://signup.com/go/cwhj7w>

This week is also the start of the Family Team Flower Sale Fundraiser! Fliers will be sent home in folders and the info is also available here: <http://bit.ly/2nvDjY2>. We have a wonderful assortment of plants for your Mother's Day needs or for just around the house. This is the same greenhouse we partnered with last year so expect great quality!

Family Team Meeting Minutes from the March 2017 meeting: <http://bit.ly/2nlL7oX>

Central Office Updates

- Information about the **Summertime Discovery Care Program** will be coming soon! The program will offer full days of child care for the summer months, after the last day of school in June. We hope to have more details for you after Spring Break.
- **Spring Break starts this Friday, March 31st** and goes through Friday, April 7th. See the article above for activities to do in Grand Rapids during Spring Break.
- **M-Step testing for 5th grade students** begins right after Spring Break on Monday, April 10th. Fifth grade students will be tested in 3 content areas. They will test for an estimated total of 8 hours over a 3 week period of time. Check out the Link Letter article by Sarah Cooper from March 20th (page 2) for more info and ways you can support your testing student: <http://bit.ly/2odlKZl>

Calendar

The calendar also available at grcdc.org

2/27—3/30	Family Team T-Shirt Sale— Order form available here: http://bit.ly/2nm4m5l
3/27—4/14	Spring Flower Sale Fundraiser: http://bit.ly/2nvDjY2
3/27	Girls on the Run M/F Team until 5:00 PM Girl Scouts begins at 6:00 PM
3/28	Girls on the Run T/Th Team until 5:00 PM
3/29	Early Release Day, Dismissal at 1:10 PM
3/23	Girls on the Run T/Th Team until 5:00 PM Minecraft Club, 5:30—7:00 PM
3/31— 4/7	Spring Break—NO SCHOOL
4/10—5/26	M-Step Testing Window for all grades
4/14	First Friday Food: http://signup.com/go/cwhj7w
4/29	Family Dance @ GRCDC, 4:00—7:00 PM

Please arrange for your child to **arrive at school between 7:45—8:00 am**. Please sign your child in at the office if arrival is after 8:05 am.

Dismissal is 3:15 pm M, T, Th, F and 1:10 pm on Wednesdays

The Philosophy

Our Reggio Emilia inspired approach honors parents as essential components of the school, active in learning experiences and helping to ensure the welfare of all the children. Without a doubt, the work happening at the GRCDC would not be possible without the generous and diverse support from our families. Part of family support includes sharing feedback with the school that can improve teaching and learning. With this vision in mind, this month's Family Team meeting offered an opportunity to gather parent feedback. Family Team meeting participants considered the following focus areas within our annual, School Improvement Planning: Math, English language arts, science and family involvement. A question was posed: **What are we NOT doing in (math, science, English language arts, and parent involvement) that would help increase student learning?**

Parents responded with the following ideas:

In Math:

- More group math work in class, big projects and school wide engagement in the projects
- Monthly or bimonthly updates on student progress
- Communicate ideas for how to help children at home
- Different methods to communicate concepts to parents other than parent math sheets; (videos, parent night, etc.)

In Language Arts (Reading and Writing):

- Updates on reading levels, areas of concern and strengths
- Using reading instructional videos or other outside resources to share with parents
- Send paperback books home that do not contain words beyond their reading levels
- Establish a library (mentioned by multiple parents)
- Host a book fair

In Science:

- Need bimonthly or mid semester update on content and student progress
- Science lab to increase hands on work and experiments
- Science Fair, small scale by classroom
- Additional communication about content being taught and when

Parent Involvement

- Create a separate, safe and open discussion group with a dedicated team and minority leaders to help determine how to connect with all families.
- Vary communication strategies to share tools for learning
- Relationship building and networking events during the school year, specifically after work hours and/or weekends.

General Feedback:

- More communication around progress (progress reports more often, online access to grades, updates on extra instruction, etc.)
- Communicate long term yearly goals with parents
- Establish math levels like reading levels to communicate progress and motivate
- Create a parent resource library, a place for adults to find information and ways to support
- More online interaction: Blogs, Pinterest, class pages

After spring break this feedback and the parent survey results will inform our School Improvement Planning Teams and help to revise planned activities within these focus areas for the 2017-18 school year. Please feel free to call or email me with any additional ideas or feedback.

I look forward to connecting with you,

Sarah Cooper, Pedagogista coopesar@grcdc.org

Grand Rapids Nutrition Center		
The full menu is available on our website: http://grcdc.org/be-connected/link-letters/		
Breakfast (\$1.50):	Lunch (\$2.75):	Milk
only: \$0.50		
T—Turkey bacon, egg & cheese	Chicken patty	
W — Scrambled eggs	Deluxe nachos	
Th—French toast sticks	Philly steak sandwich	
F 3/31—4/7— NO SCHOOL—Spring Break		
M 4/10—Cereal	Italian dunkers	

Email Communication regarding Illness @ GRCDC

Last week we sent a special communication via email to inform our community about a spike in illness that was observed at GRCDC and also in the Grand Rapids area. In case you missed that email, we are providing that information for you here. In 2016, influenza like illnesses spiked in March and it looks like 2017 is also seeing a spike in March illnesses as well (see the Kent County stats here: <http://bit.ly/2nCcYYz>).

As of last Wednesday, March 22nd, we had 17 students out with a fever and a combination of 1 or more other symptoms (headache, stomach, congestion and/or cough). These combined symptoms are generally called influenza-like illness. We have also had 5 students out for stomach issues without fever, which range from extreme nausea to vomiting plus diarrhea. In the past couple of weeks we have had 2 cases of strep throat reported. The class with the highest number of reported influenza like illnesses is Discovery D.

We are informing you because these trends are higher than the average for an illness with similar symptoms and we want all families to be vigilant about illness prevention, proper sanitizing technique (like hand washing) and also making sure to follow the 24 hour rule:

Students must be fever free and/or vomiting/diarrhea free for 24 hours before they can return to school. For those with fevers, students must be fever free without the use of fever reducing medicine (Tylenol or ibuprofen). Tylenol and ibuprofen typically last for a 6-8 hour period. The same rule would be true for any medication that helps relieve the symptoms of vomiting and diarrhea.

For example, if you give your child fever reducing medicine at 8:00am on Monday, the 24 hour period starts after the medicine has worn off, in this case it would be 2:00pm. So if your child does not develop a fever between 2:00pm on Monday and 2:00pm on Tuesday, they are free to be able to come back to school on Wednesday morning.

At school we are giving all the surfaces an extra cleaning with a germ killing sanitizer. At home you can continue to make sure children are getting enough sleep (9-11 hours for school age children) and eating a balanced diet. It is also not too late to get a flu shot if you have not already done so: <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/season/flu-season-2016-2017.htm>

Thank you for reading and for helping our school community stay healthy!

Community Corner—

This information is for students who are participating in the Daisy Girl Scouts at GRCDC. Here are the upcoming meeting dates and locations:

Monday, March 27 6-7 Discovery Care Room

Monday, April 10 6-7 Discovery Care Room

Saturday, April 22 11:30 - 1:30 Humane Society of West Michigan Daisy Girl Scout Badge Day: Three Cheers for Animals

Monday, April 24 NO Daisy Meeting